



*Stir gently
for 100 years*

The story of the Takapuna Methodist Church



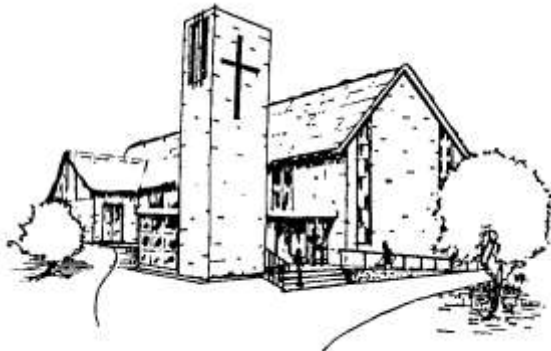
A Methodist Eye-View of Takapuna

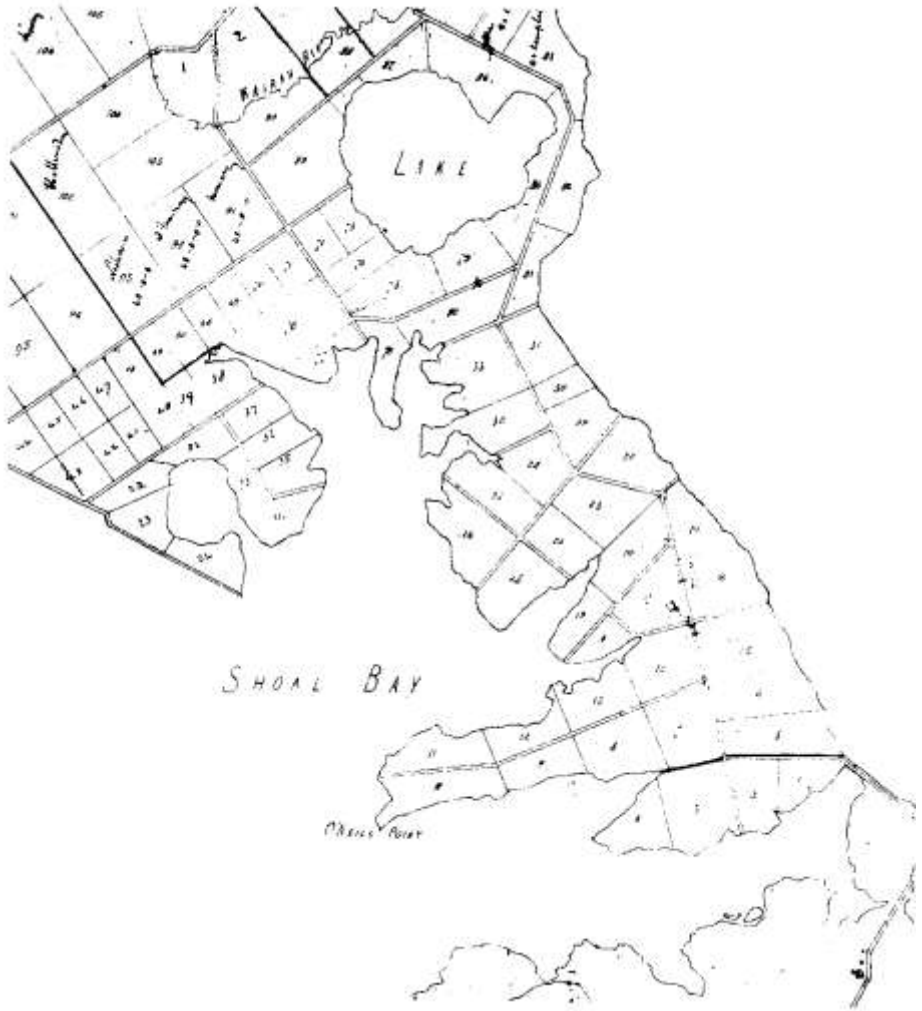
Any booklet that tries to compress 140 years into 40 pages will leave a lot out. In deciding what to leave in, I have tried to make this a book that illustrates our congregation's views of life, rather than just a series of reminiscences. So I have matched our church records and memories against things that were happening in the wider community at the time. To show this involvement in the community, it has been necessary to select a small number of Methodists and follow their stories through. Thousands of members have worshipped at Takapuna—I mention only a few dozen. About 15,000 sermons were preached—I refer to ten. But I hope this loss will be balanced by giving a more critical picture of what remains, and a better understanding of what other members of our church, past and present, have been working for. Where possible, I have checked old memories against newspapers and documents written at the time, but this has not always been possible. Takapuna and the Methodist Church do not often hit the headlines. And our members, especially in the 19th century, seem to have had a chronic shortage of paper, pens and cameras. I would like to thank David Shirreffs for setting the type and arranging the printing, Tan Harris for casting an editorial eye over the articles, the many people who have been willing to put their beliefs and experiences on record, and the Takapuna Methodist Centennial Committee for entrusting me with the task of writing the church's story.

David Hines — September, 1983

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The original subdivision of Takapuna in 1844.

Among the earliest owners were: Robert Hunt, Lots 13, 14, 17, 71-73, 94; William Nicholson, Lot 93; Benjamin Menary, Lot 91 (which included the community church hall site); Eruera Patuone, Lots 29-32.

THE MISSION ERA - A LOST CAUSE

The date that has always been celebrated as the start of Methodism in Takapuna is 1883, but that in fact was the re-birth of a cause which had died out around 1863.

Records of this period are sketchy. But we should at least attempt to answer the question of why no Maori names are included in the lists of our Takapuna church founders, when the area had only 40 years earlier been Maori land.

Most land around Auckland was purchased from Maori owners by the Government in 1841, following the decision to make Auckland the capital city.

The purchase of the Mahurangi block including Takapuna was not completed till 1844 because of the complexity of Maori claims. At that time the Maori population of Auckland had been decimated by tribal warfare. The last wars were particularly devastating, a series of invasions in the 1820s by Ngapuhi from Hokianga, many armed with muskets.

With the arrival of the Europeans in Auckland, many Maoris began moving back into the region as well, and set up market gardening on a large scale to trade with the settlers. The purchase price for the North Shore included not only blankets and clothing, but also cattle, horses and a "vessel" which was probably a scow for coastal trading. But some land remained in Maori hands, including villages at North Head and Narrow Neck, and land north of Castor Bay. And the land between Takapuna Beach and Shoal Bay, which had been sold by a chief at North Head, was given by the Government to a Ngapuhi chief, Eruera Patuone, in 1852, as a reward for fighting on the Government side against Hone Heke in the Northland war in 1845-46.



Eruera Patuone

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Governor Grey's invitation to Patuone to move to Takapuna in the late forties was not just from gratitude. It was a strategy to have friendly Maoris around the capital in case of further wars. A similar invitation was made to the Ngati Whatua chief Paora Tuhaere, who settled at Orakei around the same time.

It was the Northland war which also led to the arrival of the first European settlers in Takapuna, in 1845. They were refugees from Hokianga, and were given Government grants of land near Lake Pupuke, as compensation for land they had abandoned in the North. We know at least two Methodist couples were among these refugees, because the baptisms of their babies in 1846 by missionary Walter Lawry were the first two recorded Methodist services in Takapuna.

The baptism register shows Mary Hunt, daughter of Robert and Catherine Hunt, was baptised on November 24th, 1846. The land records show a grant of farmland to Hunt in March 1845, on the west side of Northcote Road. He also purchased another five farm lots in Takapuna and Bayswater, so was apparently a speculator as well as a farmer. Land speculation was rife in 1845, and the *Southern Cross* newspaper warned settlers to check who really owned the land before they parted with their money. It claimed wily Maoris had sold Rangitoto Island to gullible would-be farmers three times in a single week.

Goldmine

The Hunts' son William also knew how to make money. He made a fortune from discovering the Martha goldmine in Thames in the sixties. Though the Hunts' activities are well documented, the same cannot be said for another early Methodist family. The baptism register shows a William Nichols, son of William and Elinor Nichols, baptised by Lawry on October 8th, 1846. It describes Nichols as a farmer at Takapuna, which makes it surprising that early memoirs do not name him, but do name a William Nicholson, who is said to have settled at Lot 93, next door to the Hunts, in 1845, also on land granted by the Crown. A search of the land records only deepens the confusion, for it shows a Crown grant of that site in February 1845 to a William Nicholas, who signed his name with an X. The likeliest explanation is that all three were the same man, and that people kept getting his name wrong because he was illiterate.

Nicholson sold half his farm in 1857 and started a ferry service in an open rowboat between Barrys Point and Auckland. But after an argument with his partner, Connor, the two ran rival ferries, which also reflected a religious rivalry. Nicholson's boat was patronised by Protestants, and Connor's by Catholics. Both nearly went broke. There is no mystery about the minister at these baptisms. Walter Lawry arrived in Auckland in 1844, and began a mission aimed at Maoris, but caring for European settlers as well. The fact that both "baptisms were on weekdays suggests they took place in the settlers' homes. The nearest church then was at High Street in central Auckland, and in 1846 it took a walk to Devonport and a ride in an open boat to get there.



Rev. Walter Lawry

Within months of Lawry's arrival it was decided to train Maori teachers and preachers to spread Christianity and education around the country. A training college was set up in Grafton; it was later moved to Three Kings. The first aim was to teach Maoris to read and write in their own language, and the syllabus also included English, religion, agriculture, mathematics and geography. The students, as part of their training, ran a small farm, and they conducted worship at a dozen locations around the city. A preaching plan in 1855 shows they preached regularly at North Head and Shoal Bay; and a preacher named Anatipa was responsible for the North Shore.

This Shoal Bay preaching place is the real beginning of Takapuna Methodism. But it is uncertain whether the services were held at the Shoal Bay Hall built by the settlers in Northcote Road between 1855 and 1860, or at Patuone's settlement. There was no sharp division then between Maori and European worship, though the two races were concentrated in different parts of the city, and the team's efforts were directed to Maoris. This work died without trace long before our Methodist anniversaries began in 1883. We know when it died, but have to reconstruct the picture of how it died. In the official Methodist history written in 1900, Rev William Morley says the native preaching plan continued weekly services at Takapuna "as late as 1862". i.e. the services stopped about then.

Waikato war

The Methodist Maori Mission had been losing support throughout the 1850s following land disputes and war in Taranaki. The final collapse in Auckland was caused by the Waikato war, which broke out in July 1863.

There's little direct evidence of the state of race relations in Takapuna, but the indirect evidence is that they were cool. Although the fighting reached only the southern edge

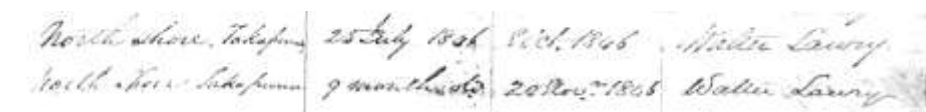
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of Auckland, the whole city was reared for war, and the Europeans were treating even "friendly natives" with suspicion. The Maoris at Takapuna were regarded as friendly.

The initiative lay with the Waikato Maori King leaders, who in November 1862 said they would oppose any extension of the Great South Road or any sending of troops south of the Mangatawhiri Stream. Vessels along rivers were stopped by armed Maoris in canoes, who charged a customs duty; the jurisdiction of the European courts was rejected and a magistrate was expelled; a Maori newspaper was set up; there were local outbreaks of violence; and Maori-European married couples were ordered to separate.



The oldest documents of Methodism in Takapuna are entries in the baptism register. Until 1882, Wesleyan baptisms on the North Shore were included in the Auckland register. This begins in January 1844 and includes 40 North Shore baptisms over that time. Only three gave Takapuna addresses—the Nichols and Hunt families in 1846, and the Willetts family in 1880.



Only three Maori names appear on the North Shore list, though there were 80 in other parts of Auckland, particularly in Orakei and around the Manukau Harbour. There were none at all after 1859. Two fathers of babies baptised in Auckland region over this period were inn-keepers, which suggests the Methodists were not as opposed to the liquor trade then as they were later.

The Methodist missionaries showed sympathy with the Maoris over the underlying land grievances, but it was a paternalistic sympathy. There was little understanding of the Maoris' efforts to gain some of their lost political power. In the end the missionaries opted for law and order and many became chaplains to the Government troops. At Takapuna on Boxing Day, relations were calm enough for a group of Maoris to stage a war dance as part of the festivities, and Maoris took part in canoe races at Takapuna in the New Year. But at the same time across harbour at Point Chevalier, General Cameron was demolishing mock Maori pas with his artillery, for practice, and the Southern Cross commented "the destructive effect was wonderful". Thousands of guns were being purchased in Auckland, many of them by Maoris. In May 1863 a group of Maoris accused Waipa Methodist missionary Alexander Reid of being a Government agent, and demanded he pay tax and acknowledge the Maori King. He refused and fled to Auckland in fear of his life. The Government sent weapons and ammunition to settlers at Raglan so they could defend themselves against bands of marauding Maoris. The settlers sent the weapons back, afraid of antagonising the Maoris, and later fled to Auckland as well.

On July 11, Auckland Maoris were ordered not to leave their homes at night, because it would be difficult to tell a friendly Maori from a hostile one. They were also

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forbidden to use their vessels at night. Maoris around the Manukau were ordered to sign a declaration of allegiance to the Crown, or leave for the Waikato. Many of them chose to leave.



The Auckland Anniversary Day regatta 1862, showing races for Maori and European vessels. By 1864 the regatta included no Maori canoe events, and many of Auckland's Maori canoes had been destroyed.

An etching from the Auckland Public Library collection.

Europeans and Maoris on the North Shore were not compelled to take sides at this stage, but take sides they did. On July 19, 1863, a group of Maori canoes crossed the Waitemata and stopped at North Head overnight. They left next morning, taking nearly the entire population of that village; and set sail for the Firth of Thames, joining their relatives in the Waikato.

Two weeks later the Europeans in Devonport formed a volunteer rifle corps, and were fully armed a few days later with Government-issued weapons. Most European males signed on, "up to Patuone's pa". At Takapuna, Patuone remained loyal to the Crown, but advised the Government not to send troops across the Mangatawhiri. In Orakei another pro-Government Maori, Paora Tuhaere, returned by canoe from a visit to Northland, and raised a panic among the Europeans, who thought it was an invasion. Leiters to the newspapers asked why his people were still allowed to carry weapons.

The same week, 80 Tauranga Maoris offered to fight against the Waikatos, but their offer was rejected. They were invited to serve the Government as road-makers (itself a hostile act to the Waikatos). But the message would not be lost on the "friendly" Maoris remaining in Takapuna. In the Northland war, Patuone had been an ally of the Europeans. Now he would not be trusted. And the feeling may well have been mutual. The Southern Cross spelled it out: "To be a native at all is the strongest presumptive evidence against any friendliness towards us. We should not drive out natives who profess friendliness, but treat them with suspicion, and not arm them".

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On July 14, the newspapers reported that General Cameron had crossed the Mangatawhiri. Two days later they reported his ultimatum that he would confiscate the land of any who waged war against him. The war raged on into 1864. The Maori lands in the Waikato were confiscated. Seventeen canoes in Auckland owned by presumably "friendly" Maoris were destroyed by naval volunteers.

But for our story in Takapuna the main effects were five.

- (a) Many of the Maoris who left the district never came back.
- (b) More European refugees moved into the district including Anglican priest Rev B. Y. Ashwell.
- (c) The Three Kings mission school, which had supplied Methodist preachers to Takapuna, closed down through lack of support. Its roll had dropped from 150 to 12.
- (d) Nearly all adult European males had served in the militia against the Maoris,
- (e) The Maoris who remained at Takapuna farming Patuone's land to the end of the century boycotted a number of European institutions, the Methodist church and the Shoal Bay school among them.

The war damaged the reputation of all missionaries, but the Methodists had a further disadvantage. The mission board in Australia which paid the bulk of their wages chose this very period to tell New Zealand Methodism to stand on its own feet. Their budget was slashed from £4000 a year to £2800. St Mary's Catholic School in Takapuna was similar to the Methodist one in Three Kings, and lasted a little longer, but after 1860 it too had fewer and fewer Maori pupils. It closed in 1869, remaining shut till 1924.

In some areas the Maori Mission revived, and Takapuna Methodists supported it with their "Back Blocks Mission" appeals. But there was no revival of the work in Takapuna. The memories of our oldest members take us to around 1900, when there were Maoris living at Tank Farm and on farms in central Takapuna; but none of them was in our congregations. It was a nation-wide pattern. In 1855 the Methodist Church membership included 508 Europeans and 3070 Maoris. By 1896 the situation was reversed, with 11,236 Europeans and a mere 616 Maoris.



The war canoe owned by 19th century Maori chief Paora Tuhaere of Orakei, with Mt. Victoria and North Head in the background. Auckland Public Library collection.

1883 -- NEW BEGINNINGS

While war explains the death of Methodist Maori work at Takapuna, the slow development of work among Takapuna Europeans was because there were so few of them. Takapuna was an isolated rural area till well beyond 1883.

In 1883, Auckland was a busy town, with a new telephone service, a railway line to Onehunga and gas lighting, and that year sent its first shipment of frozen mutton to England. Devonport was a small township with boat-building and other industries, and a Methodist church was built there in 1865.

What held Takapuna back was the lack of transport. From the 1860s, Takapuna and Lake Pupuke were popular areas for picnics and fairs, with special ferries to Barrys Point over holiday periods. But it was not a good place to commute to. The ferries could get in only at high tide, and often picnickers had to wade through the waves to reach the shore.

A Devonport ferry service started in 1869, but was given up a year later. In 1881 a more reliable steam ferry service began in Devonport. But even this was of little use to Takapuna until the turn of the century, since there was no road between the two areas. At spring tide, seawater washed over the sandhills at Narrow Neck, making Devonport virtually an island.

First soiree

Some church activities did go on at Takapuna. at a small hall in Northcote Road, The *Southern Cross* in August 1868 tells of a soiree at "the Lake church," with crowds coming on special ferries from the city. Rev J. Wallace congratulated the congregation on keeping free from sectarianism by having combined worship for two years, and said it was the first soiree to be held there.

Those preparing the food included three whose surnames suggest they were Methodists, Miss Robinson, Mrs Hunt and Miss Hunt. The two ministers present were Presbyterians, Wallace and Rev J. Hill. According to Presbyterian sources, Wallace was appointed to Devonport in 1866, and held fortnightly services at Takapuna. An Anglican history says Rev Ashwell was appointed to Devonport some time after the Waikato war, and local memoirs say he took services at both the Northcote Road hall and at the Maori settlement.

The Maori chief Patuone was baptised into the Anglican communion a few years before his death in 1872.

In 1883 the Anglicans built their own church in central Takapuna. The Presbyterians seem to have faded from the scene by then. They reappeared in 1896 and built their first church in 1902.

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So the Methodists had the Northcote Road hall to themselves when they revived the cause in 1883.

There is no clear picture of who began the cause or how. The likeliest explanation is that 1882 saw the formation of a separate North Shore circuit, with its first resident minister, Rev G. W. Spence, based in Devonport. The only activity shown on the records as starting in 1883 was a Sunday School, so strictly it is only our Junior Church that h 100 years old. It had 33 children on the roll, and four teachers.

Class meetings

Adult activities began in 1884 with a class meeting on Wednesday nights, led by a layman "brother", William Robinson. Other members were his wife Eleanor, Luther and Sarah Hames, Enos Stevenson, Joseph Murrav, William Wray, and Robert and Margaret Johnson.

The Robinsons had arrived in Takapuna in the 1860s. Murray was a bachelor who arrived from England in 1880 and began farming what is now known as Murrays and Mairangi Bays. Luther Hames was a school teacher who arrived from the Thames district in mid-1884. He was a lay preacher, a later Sunday School Superintendent, and was probably the driving force of the new cause, though obviously not the initiator, since he arrived a year later.

The class meeting was a traditional Methodist form of pastoral care. The leader checked up once a week on members' spiritual welfare, and they met once a week to share experiences. Regular worship services in the Northcote Road hall do not seem to have started until 1887, which seems surprising to us. But a comparison with other Auckland churches shows class meetings or Sunday Schools were often the first activities in the suburbs, depending on the interests of the settlers.

The first evidence of church services at this time is a note in the Auckland local preacher association minutes in 1885 saying C. Renshaw would preach at Takapuna. That same year the class meeting spent 11 shillings on hymn books and bibles. The first evidence of more regular worship was the appointment of Luther Hames as society steward (the man who took up the collection) in 1886. And the first collections were not handed in to Devonport until 1887.

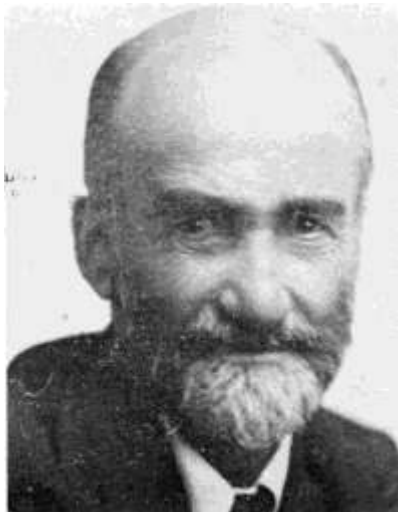
MY FATHER WAS A FANATIC

"My father was an absolute fanatic." So says Rev Eric Hames, now living in Remuera. He is referring to Luther Hames, mainstay of the early Takapuna Methodist Church, and his battle against the liquor trade.

The anti-liquor movement was sweeping the world in the late 19th century, and in Takapuna it had a particular relevance, since the area was developing as one of Auckland's major recreation centres. It was a move the early Methodists did not entirely welcome. From the 1860s there had been horse racing along Takapuna Beach, and Coupland's barn at the corner of the Promenade and Hurstmere Road had a liquor licence and was used for dances and luncheons. Lake Pupuke was popular over the Christmas period, with boat racing, archery and picnicking, based at the present Anglican church site. People from all over Auckland visited the area, with special ferries to Barrys Point, or by sailing to Takapuna Beach. The accessibility of the area increased around 1890, when settler Edwin Harrow built a wharf at the northern end of the beach, which brought hundreds of pleasure-seekers from the city.

But the development that raised Luther Hames' ire was Harrow's plan to liven up the scene still further with a stylish hotel between the lake and the beach. The local reaction was furious. Harrow said he was treated like a leper. A public poll was held, and Anglican layman Henry Brett (founder of the *Auckland Star*, later Sir Henry) used his carriage to bring anti-hotel voters from as far as the Wade River.

Luther Hames used his influence on the school pupils to persuade parents to vote "no licence". Supporters of the hotel were so angry they started their own petition to have Hames expelled from his job, which residents then had a right to do.



Luther Hames

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But both polls failed. The Lake Hotel was built in 1888, but Hames was kept on as schoolmaster. The anti-liquor brigade did not accept this as the end of the matter. Several attempts were made to burn the hotel down, and in 1909 it was destroyed. Members of the Women's Christian Temperance Union were blamed. The hotel was not rebuilt, but the licence was taken up by another resident, Paul Hansen, for his beachfront home, the Mon Desir.



**The Lake Hotel, about 1905.
Auckland Public Library Collection**

A more lasting success for the WCTU was its role in getting women the vote in 1893. New Zealand was the first full nation to take this step; among the reasons, were the high level of education among New Zealand women, and the relatively high number of them owning land, in business and in the paid workforce. Among these was Luther Hames' wife Sarah, who took sewing classes at the Takapuna School.

Women's suffrage was welcomed by the North Shore Methodists, who asked their minister to give a sermon on the subject. Nationally, woman's suffrage was supported by the Methodist and Baptist churches and the Salvation Army. Anglicans and Presbyterians were divided on the issue, and the Catholic church was strongly opposed. Not all Methodists were total abstainers in those days. A history by the New Zealand Alliance notes the Methodists of the 19th century with disapproval. It says it doubts whether half of Methodist ministers were total abstainers in 1874 and it notes that the Methodist Conference in 1878 issued two standards of behaviour for its members; one for abstaining members and one for the non-abstainers. In fact, the first Methodist national conference in 1874 was celebrated with a champagne luncheon. Luther Hames may have been a fanatic on the drink question, but his views on

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scripture were extremely liberal. Eric Hames, who later became principal of Trinity Methodist Theological College, says he had his first lessons in "higher criticism" of the Bible at family prayers around 1900, where he learned that the story of Jonah and the whale was "just a tale". And he recalls anxious parishioners coming to his home to discuss such matters with his father. But Eric says he never mentioned his father's views in Sunday School. "I respected my teachers and I kept my mouth shut." A feature of Sunday School was memorising slogans, and two have stuck in Eric Hames' memory ever since: "God is Love," and "The superfluity of naughtiness."

OUR FIRST HOME WAS A SCHOOL

The hall used by the Takapuna Methodists from 1883, and possibly for the early mission services as well, was on a site donated by farmer Benjamin Menary. He bought a section in Northcote Road from the Taharoto Road corner, on the western side of the road.



**The Northcote Road Hall in 1902,
with Sunday School pupils Katherine Hames and Minnie Waterworth.**

Takapuna school memoirs say the hall was built in 1855, but other memoirs say it was not until 1860. The only documented date is 1867, when Menary subdivided the site off from the rest of his land and donated it to a group of trustees.

It was a dual-purpose hall, intended for use as a school during the week, and for any Protestant denomination to hold worship on Sundays. But the church side of its life seems to have died out after the 1860s. Its use as a school was also limited to Protestant children, which was one of the terms of Mr Menary's gift. But the Catholics had their own residential school nearby, opened in 1849. The settlers paid a shilling a week to support the teacher. But from 1872, when education became free and compulsory, it received Government funds. This led to a sudden expansion in the roll, which rose from 28 in 1878 to 90 in 1890. So in 1879 a new public school was opened in the corner of Taharoto Road. It had the added advantage that Catholics could attend; and there was less restriction on its use for dances and other social events.

By then the old hall was near derelict, and it took months of argument before the school committee agreed to repair it. It was another four years before it came back into more regular use, by the Methodists.

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Methodist lay preacher Luther Hames was one of the first head teachers at the new school, from 1884. The pupils used to sing, "Luther Hames is a very good man; he goes to church on Sundays, and prays the Lord will give him strength to cane the boys on Mondays."

Classes at the early school could be exciting. One of the first teachers used to keep a loaded shotgun on the table; not to discipline unruly pupils, but to take potshots at passing pheasants. Though education was compulsory, it appears that none of the Maori children in Takapuna attended, since in 1879 the teacher asked permission to try to encourage them to attend. The new education system was a jolt to their culture, since all teaching was done in English. The mission schools had done their teaching in Maori.

But this was not the only reason for loss of interest by Maoris. In the dying years of Methodist mission schools, the teachers complained that discipline was becoming impossible. Many Maori parents were questioning the schools' value and showing a despair of their own race. "What is the value of education to us? We let you have our children to educate, and they either return to us and are Maoris still, or sicken and die."

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FULL STEAM AHEAD INTO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Takapuna Methodists remained a rural congregation with no church of their own until 1901. By then the membership had risen from nine to 18. At that time, Devonport's membership was 71 and Birkenhead's 54.

It was realised from the start that the Northcote Road Hall was only a temporary arrangement, since the present Halls Corner area had been surveyed for residential sites as early as 1863.



**The paddle steamer *Britannia* at Takapuna, 1898.
Three years later it was hired for a Methodist picnic here.
Auckland Public Library collection.**

And for the Methodists, the first move to the new centre was made in 1885, when a Ponsonby solicitor, Thomas Buddle, donated a section for a future church. It cost £20, which was not expensive, even for those days—about ten weeks' salary for a minister.

Around 1900, Eric Hames recalls, the Maoris farming Patuone's land between the Strand and Hauraki Road sold up. He says they didn't realise what a suburb was and couldn't see that land that was worth £1 an acre in the Waikato could be worth £100 in Auckland.

That year the section donated by Buddle was sold for £25, and the money was put towards a Huron Street property which cost £36. The Takapuna school was shifted to central Takapuna the same year.

For a time, the Methodists held worship at the old and new centres, worshipping at Northcote Road in the evenings, and at a public hall in Anzac Street in the mornings.

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But the Northcote Road hall was discarded once the new church was built in Huron Street.

Some of the first nails in the new church were hammered in by George Collins, still a trustee at the age of 90. He was eight years old at the time, and lived just across the road. He says his efforts were not appreciated by builder Fred Souster, who had to pull the nails out again.



**The Huroa St Methodist church, built in 1901,
and sold after 1923. It later became the Silknit factory in Hurstmere Rd.**

Despite his help, the church was ready in 1901. The stone-laying was celebrated with a massive picnic. A band was hired for the occasion and the paddle steamer *Britannia* brought Methodists from all over the city, with stops at Chelsea, Birkenhead, Northcote, Auckland, Devonport and on to Takapuna. It says something for the roads of the area that this was not regarded as a bad way of getting from Chelsea to Takapuna. It took about an hour and a half.



The choir in 1921,

Back row: Nellie Collins, Kath Cammell, Alma Cammell, Alfred Brawn, Mabel Niicholson, S. Riggs, Ada Carlquist, G. Branscombe, Ella Wilson, Wilf Collins, Mrs Carlquist.

Front row: Myra Nicholson, Florence Myers, Doris Sutherland, Dolly Collins, Frank Sutherland, Rev. Thomas Wooloxall, Frank Myers, Miri Cammell, Maimi Mills, Bell Diprose, Hilda Cammell.

A Family Tradition

The first Sunday School superintendents noted on circuit records were Luther Hames from 1893 or sooner, J. Rendell from 1898, Joseph Murray from 1899 and Charles Roper from 1908. The earliest superintendents recalled at the 1933 jubilee were John Lillewall, John Press, Mr Rendell and Luther Hames. Of those four, only Hames is on the members roll. Clearly there was a much larger group working for the Sunday School than those on the roll, and the congregations were also probably much larger than the roll numbers.

Joseph Murray is remembered for taking pupils to and from Sunday School in his farm cart. His successor Charles Roper went one better and delivered them in a covered, truck, which must have been one of the first motor vehicles on the North Shore. He had the truck specially upholstered, so the girls' Sunday dresses would not get dirty; and the truck was also used as a makeshift classroom.

Roper was given a presentation in 1927 for 25 years' work with the Sunday School, but his contribution did not end there. He was followed by two sons-in-law who took on the job for long periods after him; Ray Sutcliffe (now at Torbay) and Jack Lydster.



Charles Roper, Sunday School Superintendent

Roper's daughter Joy Sutcliffe recalls the disappearance of the last Maori settlement in the Takapuna area. She was brought up in College Road, Northcote, and a Maori village was opposite on the water's edge. The land was owned by the Catholic Church, which wanted it for future Maori education. Two-thirds of these Maoris died in the

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disastrous influenza epidemic in 1918, the virus brought here from Europe by the returning troopship Niagara. Charles Roper helped bury them. The Catholic Church later had a legal battle over the land with the Maoris still living on it, and ended up finding land elsewhere for them.



Charles Roper and his van.

Joy also recalls the big fire at a Catholic girls' orphanage there in 1923. Two rows of girls in their nighties arrived at their front door in the middle of the night, looking for somewhere to sleep. And Charles Roper helped in the bucket brigade to try to put the fire out.

The whole area went mad

The years from 1910 to 1925 were a period of dramatic growth for Takapuna and for the Methodist church there. For this the main credit must go to the opening of a steam tram service which linked with a ferry at Bayswater in 1910.

Although Takapuna had roads to other North Shore centres by the turn of the century, there was no public transport to use them. The early Wesleyan preachers walked from Devonport to take services at Takapuna; a "Takapuna horse" was not purchased until 1897. The first cars appeared on Takapuna roads about 1896, but Eric Hames comments that he had ridden in a car only twice before 1919.

But as he puts it, "with the opening of the tramway, the area went mad". The tram made it possible for large numbers of people to work in Auckland and live at Takapuna, and the population boomed. Farms were cut up into residential sections. Public water was laid on, gas lighting, metalled roads, and in 1913 Takapuna became a borough with its own council.

The Methodist Church took its share of the boom. Its membership, 18 in 1900, stayed around that mark until 1910. But by 1914 it had doubled to 37, and by 1925 it had passed 100.

The pressure was on for Takapuna to have its own minister. From 1882, Takapuna had been part of the North Shore circuit, with its leaders attending a quarterly meeting in Devonport.

From 1913 Takapuna got its own part-time ministers, including a student, S. J. Mogridge, and retired minister J. Blight in 1914, followed by D. McNicol.

The first full-time minister at Takapuna was a probationer, Rev. W. H. Hocking, in 1917. Angry telegrams were sent to the National Conference next year, when Hocking was removed and not replaced. Emergency meetings were held by the congregations at Devonport, Takapuna and Stanley Bay, but to no avail.

The situation was not resolved until the middle of 1919 when Rev. Thomas Wooloxall was appointed and a year later Takapuna became an independent circuit.

The first leaders of the new quarterly meeting were Wooloxall, Angus Gunn, Charles Roper, John Wallace, George Winstone, Frank Myers, Robert Gunson, Thomas Arthur and Alfred Brawn. At their first meeting they immediately thought of further expansion. They planned a service for reception of new members and decided to start regular services at a public hall in Browns Bay.

Meanwhile the Takapuna Trust was already at work getting a new parsonage built. This was the present parsonage on the corner of Lake Road and Tennyson Avenue. It was designed by George Collins and completed in June, 1920.



The steam tram at Halls Corner, 1922
Takapuna Public Library Collection.

Is Christianity a kill-joy?

In July 1946, the Takapuna Methodist young men's bible class got together with the young women's bible class and discussed "Is Christianity a kill-joy?"

The minutes do not record their findings, but other records suggest the answer must have been "yes." The main "activities frowned on by Methodists over the past 140 years have been drinking, gambling, Sabbath breaking, the theatre, dancing, card playing and from one "account they even opposed mixed bathing!"

In the 19th century, North Shore beaches were mainly used for boating and paddling, and those who wanted to swim were a minority, so that a council by-law could forbid men and women from swimming at the same beach at the same time of day. Later, swimming became more popular, and modesty was satisfied by mobile bathing sheds near the Mon Desir. The sheds were wheeled to the water's edge so the young ladies could get into the water before their legs could be seen by passing males.



Preachers confronting Sunday revellers on Milford Beach, 1914. (The revellers won.)
From the Auckland Weekly News, courtesy of New Zealand Herald.

"Immodesty"

But the popularity of swimming kept growing, and so did the area of skin being exposed. Civic leaders fought a rearguard action, while others watched with amusement. One of the first by-laws of the new Takapuna council in 1913 was that bathing costumes for men and women must cover neck-to-knee.

But the by-law was often broken, and it came to a head in March 1914, when it was alleged at the Takapuna ratepayers' association that scenes of "immodesty" could be seen any Sunday at Milford Beach, and the bathing sheds were a disgrace. The *Weekly News* rushed to the scene, camera in hand, and published a montage of photos showing mixed bathing, a trouserless young man changing behind a gorse bush, and a

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team of preachers beside the "controversial bathing sheds holding a mission. "Preachers implore picnickers to beware the perils of mixed bathing," said the *Auckland Star*.

Improper character

Methodist records suggest that these well-dressed missionaries were indeed our lot, and that the mission was an embarrassing disaster. A few months earlier, Rev George Mann had proposed the series of beach missions at Cheltenham and Milford, and the church had two active mission bands. But the church roll shows no new converts were added, and three of the missionaries resigned, including two lay preachers.

One of them had a mysterious row with Mr Mann four days after the *Weekly News* expose; he was hailed before the leaders' meeting for a trial, found guilty of improper character and his name was struck off the roll. Another preacher resigned in sympathy and both mission bands were closed down.

After the battle against immodesty was lost on the beaches, it moved to the dance floor. In 1942, Dorothy Muller asked the Takapuna Methodist leaders to let the young people include dancing at their socials. The leaders replied, "Only if they don't touch each other," and the dances went ahead on that basis. But the battle was lost. Later in the 1940s even church leaders were indulging, and the no-touching rule was dropped, allowing even the salacious maxina.

Other contacts between the sexes gradually followed. Combined Easter camps began in the mid-fifties. Officially their purpose was evangelism, but one church leader commented that their real purpose was to make sure Methodist young men paired off with Methodist young women. In 1958, John Osborne surprised many in the church by taking a group of young men and women off to a camp in two tents in the Hunuas with no bible study, no programme, and no aim apart from having an enjoyable weekend together.

The experiment worked, and has continued ever since with youth camps, leaders' camps and family camps. Social contact is now recognised as a main theme, and the youth group's weekend camps no longer see any need for sleeping in separate tents.

It was a hard-won battle and dates back to 1868, when Takapuna Protestants held their first soiree. Rev J. Wallace observed that "they had gathered with the purpose of being social with one another, but should take care how their inclinations in this respect were gratified." It seems to have been dancing he had in mind, since when a second school hall opened in the district in 1879, one of the main reactions from other residents was delight that it was now possible to hold dances and other less restricted social activities.

Not that the Methodists were opposed to all enjoyment. On the contrary, they themselves organised a vast amount of recreation, but it had to be the right kind. The 1940s bible class had regular socials and teas and their meetings were enlivened by a

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gramophone. Their favourite records were "The Sweet Bye and Bye," "Jesus thou art everything" and "Deep Harmony."

Crusading groups, such as the Bands of Hope, were not crusading all the time. They also practised what they preached by providing a drink-free social life. A surprisingly large proportion of the concerts advertised in 19th century Auckland newspapers were organised by churches and temperance groups.

And many serious Methodist activities led to a considerable amount of socialising on the side. In the 1890s, the Devonport Sunday School teachers used to hold regular picnics, not for the pupils, but for themselves.

The large debt raised to build the Tennyson Avenue hall in 1923 led to a long series of floral exhibitions in the Forresters Hall (now the Tudor Theatre) to pay it off. That debt was also the reason behind a series of garden parties at the Winstone and Tremain homes in the twenties and thirties.



Dancing the maxina at Jenny Hines' 21st birthday party in the Takapuna church hall, 1959. From left: Margaret Roberts (nee Sutcliffe), Claire Kronfeld (Beresford), Ted Baker, Iris and John Osborne, Jenny Hines (Service), Moss Lawson.

The Tennyson Avenue land purchase also led to the formation of a Methodist tennis club. No church was built on the site for 36 years, so that left room for two tennis courts, and 36 years of tennis. George Collins, whose nail-driving efforts were not

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appreciated in 1901, had apparently gained better co-ordination by 1923, and he poured the asphalt for the courts, cooking it up in kerosene tins.



**A house party at the Campbells Bay health camp, 1956.
Alan Gibson, Jock Miller, Jenny Hines, Ruth Baughen (nee Crabtree).**

In the early fifties another group relaxed by forming a Methodist cricket team. And, perhaps reflecting the increasing age of the congregation, it now boasts an indoor bowls group. The longest-lasting recreation group would be the choir.

But the largest social activities were these organised by the Sunday Schools. Picnics in the 19th century were big enough for paddle steamers to be hired, and up to 300 tickets sold. In the 1940s Sunday School anniversaries were also major events. The children practised their singing for months, and there was an orchestra and a grandstand built to hold 300 children, it was filled, and was used not once but three times each anniversary Sunday.

But even with this event, questions were raised as to whether it was justifiable to have so many children there just enjoying themselves. Leaders questioned the cost-benefit of running a popular Sunday School for children whose parents did not contribute to church funds, and who were not likely to become church members themselves. Jack Lydster, who was one of the superintendents at the time, strongly defended the idea. He accepted that if children stayed with the church as they grew older, that would be "a by-product." But he adds: "They put everything they had into it. I can't think of anything that gave me a greater thrill."

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In some cases the church's criticism of recreation was based on moral principle, as in its opposition to alcohol. But more often it simply reflected the different life-style of an older generation. In the 1950s there was a swing in the community to sport on Sundays, and some church people objected, particularly if it was organised sport. "You can play sport on Saturdays," they said. But this was difficult if the rest of the team was playing on Sunday.

The church is proud now of sportsmen and women who reached national and international success: Bruce and Ken Goldsworthy in cycling, Winifred Griffin in swimming. Ralph and Clive Roberts in yachting, Raewyn Dixon in tennis and Allison Roe in running. But there was a time when such people had to "drop their standards" to excel as they did.

Some faced more opposition from school rugby coaches than from the church in pursuing their chosen sport; rugby was another national religion losing its monopoly of the weekend.

Most of these objections have now died. Even the official disapproval of alcohol is now largely in deference to older members. Alcohol is still banned on church premises; Methodist communion "wine" is still unfermented grape juice; and many Methodists are still total abstainers.

But the conference shut down its temperance committee in the 1960s. In Takapuna in the fifties, some members were offering the minister alcohol instead of tea when he visited them. Alcohol is served at many Methodist wedding receptions. And in the late 1970s, wine was served at several dinners organised by the adults' social group, Club 47.

Another continuing debate is over social activities for teenagers. Some church leaders feel the youth group should be aimed at making teenagers come to church. Others feel that socialising is a serious purpose in its own right.

One of the second group is 1983 youth leader Warwick Ellis, who sees the group as a body of people working together with an emphasis on understanding yourself and understanding others. He would like this to be more of a feature of the adult church life as well. "We should show love working, making a group where people can disagree without hating people. Family camps are a good example, and once a year is not enough. At present, people haven't got time, because they're too busy just trying to survive!" Warwick was one of the group planning for a 1983 family camp which was cancelled through lack of support.

And what about traditional church worship? "We should ban it tomorrow," he says, "and use the time more constructively." The main fault as Warwick sees it is that "one person delivers his interpretation of Christianity, whereas everyone; should be participating, leading the session, dancing; acting. We should be grappling with issues like 'What's my role in life?' 'How can I disagree with what's written in the Bible?' and

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offering leads to the community in social issues, better ways of coping, better styles of sex and .love."

Warwick adds the church should not be our whole life. "The church limits you. We must keep in touch with society as well. You couldn't have a beer drinking session in a church hall, yet that's what some of our people are doing. We must go with our young people, not against them."



The Methodist tennis club about 1925.

Back row: Mrs Coultas, —, Mrs Nicholson, Elwood Nicholson, Percy Cammell, George Hinton, George Collins, —, Frank Sutherland, Alee White, Tom Rollo, Arthur Bow.

Front row: —, Mrs Thomas, Doris Sutherland, Anne Service, Bell Diprose, Mrs Bow, Mina Jones, Mrs Everiss.

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

Many Methodists up to the second decade of this century were keen supporters of the "social gospel." In 1912 the *Methodist Times* remarked: "If the church has no live and bold thought on social problems, its teaching on all other questions will dwindle and be despised." And in 1914 the Methodist conference drew up a list of what it described as political issues for members to put before candidates at the general election, including the questions of liquor, gambling, bible in schools and the candidates' personal morality. When large numbers of church people in the 1960s again began involving themselves in social pressure groups, they were criticised for bringing their religion into areas where it had no right to be. But the question could equally be put the other way round: Methodists around 1914 believed they should comment on social issues; why was this belief put into cold storage for the following 50 years? The change seems to have happened around the time of the First World War.

"Vile jingo spirit"

Rev D. McNicoll, who was Takapuna's part-time minister in 1913, wrote a letter to the *Methodist Times* attacking the Government's new Defence Bill, which introduced compulsory military training. He described it as "the outcome of a vile jingo spirit that has defiled our fair land," and complained that it "put a yoke on thousands of young people who have no votes."

But letters like this, and there were many, were silenced when the war broke out. The editor explained his reason for stopping discussion of the morality of war: "This paper will be read by hundreds whose relatives are taking part, who believe that the honour of the British name is involved."

Takapuna Methodists seem to have been less affected by the war than other congregations were. Collections were donated to causes such as the Military Fund and the Belgian Fund, and a harvest festival display of produce was given to a soldiers' hospital in Devonport. But it was decided not to put up a roll of honour in the church. James Houston was the only person on the members' roll noted as killed in 'action; and only one leader, Roy Fordham, was noted as leaving for the war.

Switch of sympathy

Another major social issue of the early 20th century was the growing trade union movement, and here the Methodist Church showed a switch of sympathy away from the working class. Former Sunday School superintendent Ray Sutcliffe says the Methodist Church had a higher proportion of working class members before 1914, but lost touch after the war; and such records as we have are consistent with this.

The Methodist Church began among working class people in England in the 18th century, and in 19th century New Zealand it still had a larger proportion of working class members than did the Anglican Church. In the 1840s, a Maori said he had been taught the Anglicans were all chiefs and the Wesleyans all slaves.

This predominance of working class members had been reduced by the 1920s for Takapuna at least, where Methodist marriage registers show bride-grooms and fathers with a wide range of occupations, but mainly in the middle-income groups. The first hundred occupations listed from 1918 (including a few women) include 14 unskilled workers, 32 tradesmen, 23 white-collar workers, one professional person, 20 farmers or gardeners, and 10 businessmen.

A switch of sympathy in the Methodist Church can be seen over a couple of years, in issues of the *Methodist Times*. In 1912, commenting on labour unrest, the Methodist Conference was clearly sympathetic to factory workers, and said the first charge on industry should be to pay its workers a living wage. Most letters to the *Times* showed a similar leaning.



Devonport Wharf 1913.
Farmers help break the waterfront strike.
Auckland Public Library Collection

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But for many writers, this view vanished overnight following the Auckland waterfront strike of 1913. One article noted that there were very few church members among the strikers, and denounced strikes as the weapon of atheists. The president of conference, in his inaugural speech in 1914, attacked union militancy and in turn was attacked for treating industrial workers as less than human. However, he was not attacked for bringing religion into politics. The feeling that this was a legitimate field for Christian comment continued, and a study committee on industrial affairs was set up. But from then on, no writer to the paper regarded striking as an acceptable activity.

Prohibition

But the Methodists' strongest social involvement was in the prohibition movement. Takapuna Methodists who took a leading role included Luther Hames, George and Gertrude Winstone and later, Les Gilmore. Even children signed the pledge and were enlisted in Bands of Hope, and apparently faced lively opposition in the streets. In 1919 the Sunday School's flag had to be replaced because it was ripped during a temperance procession. Eric Hames describes it as an obsession, and notes that during the war, only one issue of the *Methodist Times* did not include an article on liquor. But just as 1914 proved a turning point for debates on war and unionism, so also for the liquor question. Up to 1894, the main control on liquor was through licensing committees, and by electing anti-liquor members on to these committees, citizens could have unruly bars closed down. "Local option" votes, where citizens could vote their own districts wet or dry, began in 1894. By 1908 the number of dry areas in New Zealand had increased to 12. From 1911. New Zealanders could also vote on national prohibition and that was the peak year for the anti-liquor movement. Over half the country voted for prohibition, but it was not carried into effect, since that required a 60 per cent majority. The 60 per cent rule was dropped in 1918, but by then the prohibition movement did not have even 50 per cent support. The vote dropped below 50 per cent in 1914, and a poll in 1919 showed that the swing away from prohibition was caused by the young male vote. Because of the war, the votes of servicemen overseas were counted separately, and while 51 per cent of voters within New Zealand favoured prohibition, the votes from the troops overseas gave prohibition only 19 per cent support.

"Too political"

Support for prohibition has gone down ever since. Eric Hames comments that the soldiers were looking for relaxation from the regimented life they had been leading. The *Methodist Times* blamed it on the New Zealand Alliance being too political and alienating moderate candidates. But whatever the reason, the swing began in 1914, and it was a swing of young men against the views of their parents. The Methodist Church sided with the parents on this issue, and did not go back to its acceptance of non-abstaining members for some decades to come.

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On other issues: In July, 1914, the North Shore Methodist quarterly meeting supported the Government's idea of holding a referendum on Bible in schools. The Protestant churches had been left behind by the Catholics in religious education since the 1870s, when church schools were declining and state schools began. And the main opposition to Bible in schools came from Catholics. The same quarterly meeting expressed concern at the Government's new Gambling Act, which was passed later that year and increased the number of racecourse gambling facilities.

Methodists were also involved in local body politics. The first Takapuna Borough Council in 1913 included Methodist member John Collins. He was joined by Thomas Arthur a few years later. Other Methodist councillors included Norman Galbraith and William Henderson (who became mayor) in the 1950s, and John Osborne, who is a councillor now. The present mayor, Fred Thomas, was also brought up a Methodist.

In sum, Methodists in the first decades of this century were keenly interested in social issues, the liquor issue in particular. They also opposed war, conscription, militant unionism and gambling. But in every case they backed the losing side, taking arms against a sea of social movements which they could not stop. This could explain the reaction of a later generation that religion and politics do not mix.

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"He did it in a very nice way"

George and Gertrude Winstone played a dominant role in the Takapuna Methodist Church from the 1910s to the late 1950s. Their family's story in New Zealand began in 1859 when 16-year-old William Winstone arrived in the country and began hauling wagon-loads of provisions to the British troops fighting the Maoris in Waikato. His brother George arrived in the country in 1864 and together they set up the beginnings of the Winstone empire of today.

The George Winstone known in Takapuna was the son of this first George Winstone, and followed him as chairman of directors of Winstone Limited in 1932. He and Gertrude bought their section on Takapuna Beach in 1911 for a summer holiday home. Two years later they made it their permanent home, and George began his long service on the Takapuna Methodist Trust.

One church member comments that "George Winstone always got his own way." His son Eric recalls how his parents walked to the Huron Street church one Sunday morning in 1919 when his mother saw a very desirable section for sale on the corner of Tennyson Avenue and Lake Road. His father asked the minister to call a trustees' meeting after church, and negotiations to buy the section began immediately.



**The Takapuna Methodist Church built in 1923.
The present social hall was added to the left of this unit in 1951.
Auckland Star photo**

At that stage the trustees had been looking only for a parsonage site, but George Winstone and Thomas Arthur (both former members of Pitt Street church) pressed for a dual-purpose Sunday School and church hall to be built on the new section as well. Opposition to this plan came from the Methodist Building and Loan Fund Committee in Christchurch, which said a separate church was needed; and also from former

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Sunday School superintendent Joseph Murray, who offered \$200 if the Sunday School facilities could be expanded immediately on the old Huron Street site.

But the Winstone-Arthur move succeeded. The Christchurch committee's advice and money was rejected, so was Murray's offer, and he resigned from the trust. The building, erected in 1923, was the main hall of the present Christian education block and it continued as a dual-purpose worship and Sunday School unit until 1959, when the present church was built.

George Winstone was a prime mover for the 1959 church project as well. In 1947 he donated several thousand shares in his company to a secret fund whose income went to the church trust. He added more shares over the years, and when they were cashed in, in the late 1950s, they totalled more than 6000.

At that time, there was a move to build a church parlour, linking the Christian education block with a church that would be built later. It is now history that the church was built, not the parlour.

Secret fund

At that time, the balance of the decision was tipped by a recommendation from George Winstone that the shares in his no-longer-secret fund should be cashed in. This money, plus an additional \$5000 donation from George Winstone, paid the bulk of the church's equity in the new church.

The special fund was looked after by a committee including Alan Davis. And he agrees with the comment that George Winstone always got his own way, but Alan adds: "He always did it in a very nice way. He could be domineering, but he was always pretty fair."

No such criticisms were levelled at Gertrude Winstone. Women's Guild records show she also was a strong leader and a worker for the Women's Christian Temperance Union. But they also show a warmth and down-to-earth manner, and as one member put it, "a lack of any sense of class distinction." Gertrude Winstone used to give presents to all brides who married at the Takapuna church, and made her purchases at church fairs after everyone else had made their pick, so she could make sure the church got an income from the left-overs.

For the Winstones, keeping a friendly eye on other Methodists was a family tradition, and in today's industrial climate they would have been accused of favouritism. When Alan Davis was starting out in business as a builder, George Winstone pushed a number of jobs his way, and when he tendered to build Owen Winstone a house, Owen changed the contract to a "cost-plus-10 per cent" basis, so Alan wouldn't face any financial risk. Another church member, George Collins, was offered a job with Winstones and doubled his previous salary.

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During the depression, Eric Hames was on the staff of Trinity College in Grafton, and took a short-cut to the bank through Winstones' yard. Because of tense feelings among working men at the time, he expected a hostile reaction from the labourers in the yard, but he found the opposite happened. The reason, he says, was that many of them were Methodist men who'd been given secure jobs to tide them through the depression.

On another occasion a church hall was being built in Taharoto Road and the budget allowed for only an iron roof. But without it ever being approved by a church meeting, the roof ended up being a tile one at no extra cost. George Winstone paid the difference.

One church member comments that George Winstone was extremely generous even for a wealthy man; another says he was too generous, and probably gave more than his family thought he should.



George and Gertrude Winstone

The largest Winstone contribution to the church was in 1943, when George and his sister and two brothers set up a trust which has paid the stipends of Methodist ministers in hard-up parishes ever since. The trust began with commercial properties in Sandringham with a value of \$50,000.

These have been turned into investments with a present value of about a quarter of a million dollars, giving an income of \$27,000 a year. Connexional secretary Alan Woodley says the grants are still of considerable help, and are still largely kept secret.

After George's death in 1958, his widow Gertrude set up a trust which still provides a sizeable income for church projects. Eric and other members of the Winstone family have donated a number of organs to churches around Auckland. One member of the family is quoted as saying: "Not another organ, Eric."

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Selwyn Dawson, who was Takapuna's minister during the 1950s, comments that the Winstones and others were mainly interested in church buildings, and he was glad to leave it to them. But from Eric Winstone's recollections, it would be fairer to say that the family's main interest was in worship and Sunday Schools.

Eric recalls being taken to church as a child every Sunday wet or fine, including one morning when he was caught in a violent thunderstorm and forked lightning walking along Takapuna Beach. His other favourite recollection include the welcome given by Sunday School superintendent Charles Roper when they arrived at Takapuna in 1911, the quality of the choir under the baton of Frank Sutherland, the choir's gifted soloists Stan Riggs and Ada Carlquist, and the large enthusiastic Sunday School.

It is true that the Winstones' main contribution has been to church buildings, but that was over a period when they were members of a congregation that kept outgrowing its buildings. More recently, under Eric's guidance, his mother's trust fund has been used to upgrade the church organ rather than for building projects such as the centennial lounge. And his main regret on looking back is not about buildings, but at the small number of adults and children now using them.

Takapuna links with overseas missions

So many people have moved from Takapuna to Methodist mission fields and vice versa, that it seems the Church could have saved money by uprooting Takapuna and rebuilding it somewhere near Bougainville. Altogether, 30 Takapuna members have been missionaries, clocking up 260 years' service between them, as teachers, nurses, carpenters, engineers and ministers.

The first and longest term was served by Rev Harry Voyce and his wife Beryl, who pioneered a mission in South Bougainville in the Solomon Islands from 1926 to 1958. During the Second World War, Harry became an army intelligence officer because of his knowledge of the area, and he was also chaplain to the forces at Gaudalcanal and Vella Lavella. After the war he returned to Kihili, where church plantations had been devastated by Japanese and allied bombing. He was the first European allowed back into the area, and negotiated the purchase of military boats and materials, and Australian government grants to rebuild the area.

Reprimanded

Coralie Leak was a nurse in Choiseul in the Solomons from 1929 to 1931, when her stay was cut short by the Depression. But she never ceased supporting missionary work, and she never forgot the Choiseul language and culture. In 1971, after saving for three years so she could return for a three-month stay, Coralie, then aged 70, was disappointed to find that none of the local children knew any traditional native songs, and reprimanded the women's fellowship. On a second visit a few years later she was welcomed by 19 local children, each singing her a different native song.

Clary Leadley was a minister in New Britain from 1934 to 1942 and he returned as chairman of the mission district from 1966 to 1968. And Vera Cannon from Takapuna was a nurse in the Solomons from 1934 to 1942.

Depression and war dried up the missionary effort, but from 1946 to 1970 the Takapuna church averaged a new team overseas every two years. First was the Voyces' son Grenville, who was an engineer and captain of a mission vessel in the Solomons from 1946 to 1954, John and Edith Boal were in Fiji from 1947 to 1950; John was a builder and technical adviser.

In 1949, Gordon Gapper began about 20 years' service as lay treasurer of the missions department. He was based in Auckland, but in 1949 went to the Solomons to inject some long-term financial planning into the mission.

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Brian Sides went to the Solomons as a builder from 1950 to 1953, then after marrying his wife Joyce and becoming a minister, they returned to Buka in the Solomons from 1963 to 1968.

Olive Money did secretarial work in the Solomons church from 1954 to 1956. George and Joan Beckingsale went to Samoa from 1956 to 1959. George was head teacher at the Methodist high school near Apia.

Another Auckland-based missionary was Rev Albert Blakemore, who was acting secretary of the Methodist missions department in 1958. Next were John and Pat Gatman, from 1958 to 1961. John was an engineer, responsible for the Solomons mission fleet of vessels, and according to the mission history book, did a lot for the morale and skill of boat crews, and "was not frightened to scrub a deck."

Colin Law came to missionary work in Samoa by a devious route. He offered for the Order of St Stephen, who offered him to VSA as a broad-casting technician with the Samoan Government. After a year there in 1964, he became a teacher in science and maths at the mission high school near Apia until 1969. Dorothy Gilchrist was appointed teacher to the same school in 1966, and they married in 1968.

Deteriorated

The Boals' daughter, Margaret, married into missionary work. Her husband, Geoff Tucker, was appointed to Honiara in the Solomons in 1969. He is now the general superintendent of the overseas mission department, based back in Auckland. Diana Thornley, daughter of Takapuna's minister at the time, also came into the missions through the Order of St Stephen, and was a teacher in the Solomons from 1969 to 1970.

In 1980, Gordon Michie went to the Solomons to visit a young man he had trained in electrical engineering. And Gordon helped John Gatman on a return trip to the Solomons in 1982. The mission vessels and plant had deteriorated considerably since John was in charge of them in 1961 and they had a backbreaking task repairing them. Other Takapuna members have given time and skill to help people in developing countries outside the Methodist missionary field. They include Suzanne and Roger Biddle. Roger taught in a Government school in Niue in 1982, and besides teaching children was also responsible for training local teachers. And Ian and Jill Harris went to Indonesia in 1960 as fraternal workers for the National Council of Churches for three years. They trained secondary school teachers at the Christian University in Salatiga, mid-Java.

Nearly all these people began their overseas service between 1946 and 1970, a period during which the Takapuna parish roll also made its greatest growth. It is open to conjecture why this interest seems to have decreased since then. A similar rise and fall in Takapuna people going into the ordained ministry may shed some light on the question.

Depression

Reading some Takapuna Methodist minutes of the 1930s, you could get the impression that the depression passed the church by. References to financial hardship in the community are few, and unsympathetic.

The ladies' guild was disappointed to learn in 1931 that a building project had to be deferred because loan money was being diverted to more needy causes. And the guild advised its members who were making dolls for a church fair to make them cheaper than in previous years, so they'd be more saleable. The minister, Ernest Emmitt, was concerned at falling collections and preached a sermon on "false values."

Though hardship was universal, some of our members survived better than the community at large. Alan Davis had recently started in business as a builder employing six men, and though he had to make unprofitably low tenders, he kept in business rather than go on the dole, clearing gorse as well as doing building jobs. Ray Sutcliffe gave up carpentry, and kept going with scrub-cutting contracts with the borough council. He recalls the resentment he faced from other workers on council jobs, because he was earning more than they were. George Winstone, as we have mentioned, helped keep a number of Methodist men employed throughout the depression.

But the church was feeling the pinch. The parson-age phone was cut off from about 1932 to 1934. The minister's stipend was reduced 10 per cent from 1932 to 1936. The ladies' guild held special fundraising efforts to pay off the church building debt. The young women's bible class distributed self-denial money boxes. And for a number of years, George Winstone paid off the annual trust deficit.

But by 1936 the church was breathing a sigh of relief. And by 1939 it was planning to spend money on new buildings in the East Coast Bays . . . plans which were deferred not by shortage of money, but by the war.



Unemployed men at a soup kitchen in the early 1930s. Evening Post Collection, A.Turnbull Lib.

The Second World War -- Two styles of commitment

The Second World War brought out some surprising strengths and weaknesses in the Takapuna Methodist congregation, as in the church as a whole. The strengths included a concern for the young men serving in the forces, and the weaknesses an intolerance of the pacifists who saw things differently from the majority.

The young men's bible class was led by Frank Pilkington, who kept up a close correspondence with the class members on active service, continuing after the war, and even after Frank left the Methodist church. And members kept up a strong loyalty to the group, returning to it when they were on leave, and bringing other members of the armed forces back to visit with them. A number of letters came to the group also from Norman Lydster, who was in a prisoner-of-war camp.

The same concern shows strongly in the records of the ladies' guild led by Gertrude Winstone. "Our hearts and thoughts are so much with our boys. We felt it a comfort to offer prayers to Almighty God for their safekeeping." Besides prayers, the women sent parcels of chocolate and clothing to the troops, served in a military canteen in central Auckland, sent food parcels to Britain, and campaigned to have liquor banned from the troop canteens.

Less sympathy was felt for those who were conscientious objectors to war, including present members Jack Lydster and Les Clements, who spent the war in prison camps. East Coast Bay; member Edith Boal was sacked from her job as deaconess at the Pitt Street Methodist Church in Auckland because of her anti-war views. But though she was given three months' pay in lieu of notice, she refused to leave, and served out her term. She got married as soon as possible after the three months, so many of the young people she had led at the church were not aware of the reason she had left. Her husband John not only spent much of the war in a defaulter's camp, he also spent three terms in a regular prison, for speaking against the war at public meetings.

Auckland newspapers in 1941 reported court cases involving defaulters almost every day, and the largest single group of them were Methodists, but they were still very much a minority within their own church.

Alan Davis says serving in the First World War was the vilest thing he ever had to do, and he admired some of the better known pacifists such as Ormond Burton. But he couldn't see how a renunciation of war could work unless other nations were prepared to do the same thing.

Ray Sutcliffe was strongly opposed to pacifism, and also opposes the present anti-nuclear movement. "It was the bomb at Hiroshima that finished the war." And he

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asked pacifists at the time: "What would you do if a Japanese soldier was in your living room pointing a gun at your wife?"

There is no sign in Takapuna Methodist records of any difference of opinion about the war. In 1941, the quarterly meeting voted to have the national anthem sung at church services, and a special wartime prayer was pasted into hymnbooks.



Boys' senior bible class about 1945.

Back row: Howard Clarke, Stan Clarke, Frank Pilkington, Athol Davis, Alan Bailey, Don Cammell, Harold Marsh.

Front rows Russell Kerse, Cliff Davis, Laurie Everiss, Gordon Clarke, Ron Collins.

The same year a trust meeting thought that a church worker, A. T. Bote, should be expelled from his job because he was a conscientious objector. And in 1944, when a group of leading Methodists asked quarterly meetings to reaffirm a 1940 peace manifesto "in view of the probable action of a small militant minority" (presumably pacifists), the Takapuna Eaders said they emphatically resented the matter being brought up at all.

Takapuna's minister, J. Draper, was unanimously given permission by the leaders in 1941 to serve as a military chaplain. Later ministers to serve as chaplains included Selwyn Dawson with the J Force and Merv Dine in Vietnam. By the time of the Vietnam war, the Methodist church once again was in an anti-war mood, and this time it was the chaplains who were the butt of religious intolerance.

I took it to its logical conclusion

Church members at a Takapuna family camp in 1982 spent several hours cutting out paper bombs and missiles, in a simulation war game, to sound out each others' views on nuclear war. The game was very effective, and young members were surprised to find what strong anti-war views several older members held, including Jack Lydster, who was imprisoned for his views during the Second World War.

Jack only gradually became a conscientious objector after a lot of heart-searching and reading. He was a member of the St John Ambulance and considered serving with the forces in a non-combatant role; but decided against this because it would still mean supporting the war effort. "I took it to its logical conclusion. No army can function without support, including food and medical care."

Takapuna's former minister, Ernest Emmitt, supported Jack at the tribunal and came in for a lot of abuse himself, since he had served in the First World War and won a Military Cross. He did not share Jack's views, but respected them.

History had turned full circle between the wars. Emmitt's Primitive Methodist church in England was so anti-war he was not allowed to become a chaplain, so he gave up the ministry till the war ended, and served as a private.

After being rejected by the tribunal, Jack was called up for service, then convicted as a defaulter when he failed to report for duty. He was sent to a detention camp at Strathmore near Rotorua. Later he was moved to a camp at Riverhead where the area was being prepared for forestry, to provide jobs for returning servicemen. Jack was nearly the last to be released at the end of the war, because when people were being paroled he was working in the camp office arranging the parole papers for the others.

The punishment did not end there. It was several years before New Zealand was officially declared to be no longer at war, and the "defaulters" were restored to their full civil rights. Jack was thirty years old before he cast his first vote.

But it was rejection by fellow church members that hurt most. Walking down Queen Street after the war, Jack met an old bible class leader for whom he had considerable respect. Jack moved across to talk to him and was cut off dead, as if he didn't exist. Some of the greatest intolerance came from Christian leaders, and this led Jack to question his own faith. "I had plenty of doubts and plenty of time to dwell on them. The pressure of being away from home and helpless made things loom larger. My thinking became warped."

Abuse was directed not only at the objectors, but also their wives, and even in-laws who did not share their views at all. Jack still cannot fathom why people rejected him as a Christian "because of this one facet" of his beliefs, when they had known him for years before as a Sunday School teacher and brigade member.

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Some of the hostility continued after the war. There was opposition to Jack going back into Sunday School work; but minister Jack Bailey told the objectors: "If you'd help, we mightn't need to ask him." A similar answer silenced the critics when Betty Hines was accused of teaching pacifism to the junior girls' bible class. For Jack, it was this acceptance as a leader that removed the bitterness of the past. "I got involved and it helped me to stay in the church."



Youth leaders about 1952,

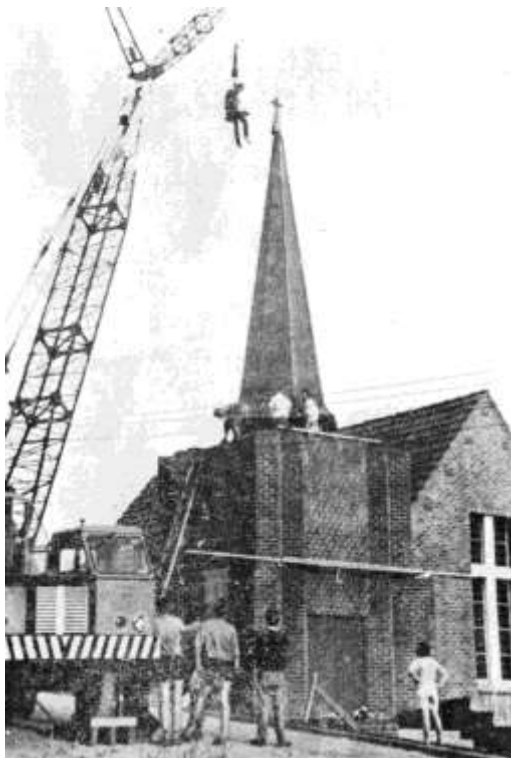
Back row: Frank Pilkington, Alison Corkill, Doreen Cameron (McDonald), Bev Barnes (Lusby), Joan Sharrock (Gilchrist).

Middle row: Mrs Adams, Ken Leak, Gladys Lydster, Gary Cook, Valda Biasco (Goldsworthy), Gwen Rigg (Cherney), Olive Money, Alan Gibson, Frank Sutherland.

Front row: Fay Read (Hawkridge), Fay Voyce (Marsh), Joy Oliver (Poole), Jack Lydster, Raewyn Ferkins (Dickson), Shirley McPetrie (Collins), Kathleen Watson (Leak),

THE 1950S – A RASH OF CHURCH BUILDING

The 1950s saw a rash of church building in the Takapuna circuit, which has not been equalled before or since. The pressure came from booming population along the East Coast Bays and in Takapuna itself. The Winstone family continued pouring money into these projects, but the church's dependence on this source of revenue began to end in 1957, with a controversial stewardship campaign. The church agonised over where to build to serve the new population, and eventually purchased 12 sections, sold eight of them, and put up eight buildings, of which only five are still in Methodist use.



**The Campbell's Bay Methodist Church, built in 1951. The spire was added ten years later.
Photo by Mike Millett for the Auckland Star.**

The first "outpost of empire" was in Browns Bay, where services began in a public hall in 1920. Services began in a hall in nearby Torbay in 1950. Sections for new churches were bought at both bays, but after years of debate it was decided to sell both, combine the two causes, and build a new hall between the two areas, at Waiake. The hall was opened in 1958, by which time there were 26 members at Browns Bay and 15 at Torbay. The Methodist cause at Campbell's Bay started its run later, but the

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church was completed sooner. Services began at the health camp in 1937. A section was bought in 1943, but war delayed the effort to build a church until 1951. It cost \$12,000, of which a third was donated by the Winstone family. The building had growing pains from the start. The bulldozer, for some reason, dug the foundations too deep, so a Sunday School hall was added in the basement. Four years later, Eric Winstone donated a pipe organ, and the building was extended four metres to make room. The new church had 43 members. The building this year is getting another expansion, \$60,000 worth. Services at Rothesay Bay began in a public hall in 1949, and a section was bought the same year. But it was exchanged for the present site in 1954. The church was opened in 1957 with a membership of 24.

Harbour bridge

In the decade up to 1959, Methodist membership in the Bays grew from 35 to 132, and there was equal growth in the Takapuna roll, from 241 to 358. The circuit continued growing after this period, reaching a peak of 750 members in 1968, then slowly declining to about 600 early this year, before the Bays became a separate parish.

Selwyn Dawson, who was Takapuna's minister from 1954 to 1961, comments that the postwar building boom was followed by a population boom for the North Shore in the late 1950s, in anticipation of the harbour bridge being built in 1959. He says it was vital for the church to build rapidly or it would have been left behind. And Selwyn says it was essential to call in the Wells fund-raising organisation, to pay for the buildings and for a parsonage for a second minister to serve the Bays in 1959.

The Wells canvas came in 1957, and the church was badly divided over it. The Wells group insisted that the team of canvassers had to publicly declare how much they were giving per week, and they were sent to earners in the same income group, Selwyn says he absolutely hated having to declare his pledge publicly, but he did because it was part of the contract. The other part was the Wells group guaranteed the result in increased giving. Despite his objection to the high-pressure style, Selwyn says he defended the idea as basically Christian, and says it doubled the circuit's income. After helping build the three Bays churches, Takapuna built a new church for itself. Location was not a problem as it had been for the Bays. The site bought in 1920 was still well placed, but the buildings were too cramped. In 1951 Alan Davis added the social hall on to the Tennyson Avenue side of the complex, donating part of his costs. However, Sunday School and church were doubling up in the same building, so the separate church was built in 1959.

Funds were not available then to build a parlour linking the church and hall, though this was seen as desirable, and the parlour is shown on publicity brochures for the stewardship mission. So the 1983 centennial project has completed the complex that was envisaged then. The bulk of the money for the new church came from the Winstone family, and Selwyn Dawson comments that it was an unwritten understanding that the building would consist of Winstone concrete blocks and tiles.

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Takapuna, Campbells Bay, Rothesay Bay and Waiake continue, but there were also other ventures tried and lost.

In 1924, Joseph Murray donated a section for a future church at Mairangi Bay, and in 1939 he agreed to donate \$200 to help build a church on it. The intention was then that the Presbyterian Church would build in Castor Bay, Campbells Bay and Torbay, and the Methodists in Mairangi and Browns Bay. That failed to eventuate and the section was sold.

In 1949 a section was bought in Taharoto Road, and a cause started in the nearby bandroom. This was not far from the scene of our original 1883 church hall, and it was to prove the wrong place for a second time. Just as in 1900, the population moved to the beach, leaving Taharoto a rural backwater, so in the 1960s the motorway cut through Northcote Road, forcing Takapuna's growth into other areas. A small hall was built, largely with voluntary labour, in 1958, but it was sold to the Assembly of God in 1970.



**The Takapuna church being built in 1959.
Vibrapac blocks by Winstone Ltd, photograph by Auckland Star.**

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A third parsonage was purchased in 1963, when the church decided it needed two ministers to develop the Bays, but the effort lasted only 16 years. In 1978 the circuit population had dropped and it decided it could afford only two ministers after all.

In 1974 services began in Sunnynook, with a roster of Methodist, Anglican, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic leaders, using a Methodist building in Lyford Crescent as base. But the venture folded three years later. A similar fate befell an attempt to establish a united church in Browns Bay in 1974, initiated by the local council.

The most promising united bid seemed to be union negotiations between two established congregations, the Methodists and Anglicans in Campbells Bay in 1978. The Methodist congregation voted 77 per cent in favour, and were shocked when they found the Anglicans were only 40 per cent in favour. Union, and even co-operation, appeared to fade from then on.

Last and probably least was the purchase of a section in Sunset Road in 1959. It was sold four years later. Asked why the Methodist church of the 1950s built churches at Campbells Bay, Rothesay Bay and Waiake, when the main population centres were at MiiFord, Mairangi Bay and Browns Bay, Selwyn Davvson says they had church union in mind. Other churches were building in the other areas. With union not coming, rolls declining, and no funds coming from Takapuna now, the new East Coast Bays parish seems to have a financial hurdle ahead of it.

People are important

When the government announced its intention to shut down the North Shore Teachers' College in 1980 there was an outcry throughout the North Shore. The battle to save the college was lost, but the public concern for it was a tribute to the family spirit which had grown up at the college, and the high regard it had won as part of the community. This was largely the work of John Osborne, Methodist leader and principal of the college from when it began in 1963 until his retirement in 1977.



John Osborne

John says faith was valuable in a place like the college, and it had an effect on other people. He once got into trouble with a student's mother for telling the girl to go home and read Ecclesiastes chapter two. When the mother complained, John told her to read it too.

But he says he was not proselytising. His fundamental belief was in being available to people. "People are important; you should know their names." He is proud of the fact that he knew the names of all 850 students and staff. If he met someone he didn't know, he'd say: "Have you told me your name before? If you have, don't tell me." And he would find it out some other way to make himself learn.

Staff meetings too were run on unusual principles, including John's belief that the pyramid of authority should be stood upside down. "The leader is the least important person. He is only there to help others do their job." His family got the same

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treatment. John and Iris's two sons were deliberately not sent to "better" schools than anyone else. John Osborne has made lack of ambition a way of life. He never looked ahead to future jobs. He was reluctantly pushed into applying for the college principalship. John's standing for the Takapuna City Council in 1979 was also somebody else's idea. It was not to give him something to do in his spare time, and he stood down from the council in 1983, so he can play more golf. He told the group which asked him to stand that he had never thought of council, because he had no axe to grind. They replied: "That's why we need you."

Two of his main roles on the council have been chairing the committee on unemployment and also the planning committee, where one of the most publicised decisions was over the Centrepoin commune at Albany. "You have to separate your attitude from your personal feelings. Their way of life does not appeal to me personally; I don't want to chase my wife around naked. But the place has certain strengths. Their acceptance of people is particularly good. Their effect on Albany has a different matter again. It's an experience I've gained from."

Asked about falling numbers in the church, John blames the community, not the church. "The general feeling of the community is such that the church's impact is lessened." He blames rich businessmen for not caring about unemployment, the community at large for not caring about kids sleeping in the open at Glenfield. And he says the schools don't see character training as their job now, because the community doesn't want them to. But he adds: "I seem to be a voice crying in the wilderness."

In the church, John has worked as a Bible Class leader in the 1950s and in the men's fellowship, which petered out in the 1960s. And in the 1970s he initiated a series of house church groups when Sunday evening congregations were dying away. The Osbornes' was the only one of about four that kept going, and still meets once a month, catering for a wide range of people. But numbers now are dwindling, and again John seems to be a voice crying in the wilderness.

Many are called
but few are chosen

Takapuna has been the breeding ground for 12 would-be ministers, but eight of them dropped out along the way. The biggest influx was in the 1950s, when six young Takapuna men set off towards being Methodist ministers, but only one of that group is still a minister today.

The five who withdrew were Bryan Watson, who was a minister from 1956 to 1957, Geoff Scarr 1957-70, David Hines, 1962-71, John Roberts, 1964-69, and Peter Stubbs, who was a lay pastor in 1957. The one still a minister is Brian Sides, who started his term in 1961.

Why so many dropouts? Selwyn Dawson, who was Takapuna's minister from 1954 and encouraged several of these men to become ministers, says they may have been victims of the growing secularisation of New Zealand life, "I always had the original rock theology; I suspect their generation didn't. They had to grow up with negatives."

Bryan Watson came into the ministry believing he should make as great a contribution to the church as he could. He had been involved in youth leadership and an intense religious group at Auckland University. But his first parish, the Wainuimata union parish near Wellington, came as a shock for Bryan and his wife Kathleen, who also came from Takapuna.

"Our first house was not completely built; it was surrounded by mud, with only kerosene boxes for furniture. After a few months, the couple who owned it moved in. Then we moved to a bach behind another church family's house. When we had to leave there, we lived in a lined garage, using the kitchen of the house. When that became too difficult, we moved to another house while the owner was in Australia. He was coming back, so we would be having to shift again, so we left." But the job itself was also a letdown. "I was strongly idealistic, but what happened was quite different. Things were artificial; I didn't make close contact with people." Bryan took up teaching and says: "It was much more of a vocation than the ministry; it was more real." He is now principal of Northcote College. Bryan says he is still a nominal church member, but his effort to rejoin the Takapuna church didn't last, partly because of the number of people who had known him previously. David Hines says his main aim in being a minister was to translate Christian beliefs into secular terms, and he enjoyed the preaching and discussion side of his work. "My favourite reactions from

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parishioners were: "I disagree with what you said, but I like the way you said it; 'You're preaching a framework that I can live in;' and from a stranger in a cafe, 'You're the man who's making my life a misery; I'm still wondering whether what you said was true.'

"But though the church welcomed new ideas, I felt its activities were still stuffy and out of date. The crunch was that as minister I was expected to provide the main initiative for these activities. So I felt I had to either become an administrator and change things, or get out of parish work altogether. I stayed for ten years, continuing my study in the hope of becoming a lecturer in theology. It was when that idea fell through that I decided to leave."

Peter Stubbs served a year as lay pastor in Dunedin in 1957. "I had a wish to do something worth-while, coupled with the notion that perhaps I was meant to go into the ministry." Peter says it was a very satisfying experience, and he was made to feel truly welcome, but it also convinced him that the ministry was not for him, for a number of reasons, including progressive deafness. He took up broadcasting as a career, and has never regretted it.

Brian Sides is the only one of the fifties group still in the ministry, and he has often wondered why. "It is probably because of my naivety." Before becoming a minister he worked for three years in the Solomon Islands as a missionary carpenter, but was forced to return to Takapuna because of a disease, which was then incurable. He worked on building the Rothesay Bay Methodist hall, and hoped to create a full-time carpentry position in the New Zealand Methodist church, but "doors kept closing."

Then, at the suggestion of Selwyn Dawson and others, Brian went into the home mission service as pastor, and trained for the ministry. He says the academic side scared the daylight out of him, and he kept comparing himself unfavourably with other students. But when people in his parishes kept accepting him "despite my lack of academic finesse," his confidence grew, and he has continued to be affirmed by other people.

In 1972, John Thompson, from Rothesay Bay, began 3½ years' training for the ministry, but he says, "I woke up one morning and decided I didn't believe in God." He found his training very valuable, and is not an atheist or anti-church, but says the church has no relevance for him now, and being a minister would have just meant being a clerk. At first he went back to his former career of pharmacy, but now is a pop musician back in Auckland.

Another parish member, Johanna Bouchier, took up the ministry in 1976 after her husband died, but she has since resigned. Jim Hansen did a year's training at the School for Christian Workers in 1965, hoping to follow it up with training for the ministry, but later decided that lay training was enough. But though Jim was immunised against the ministry himself, he appears to have been a carrier. In 1982, his

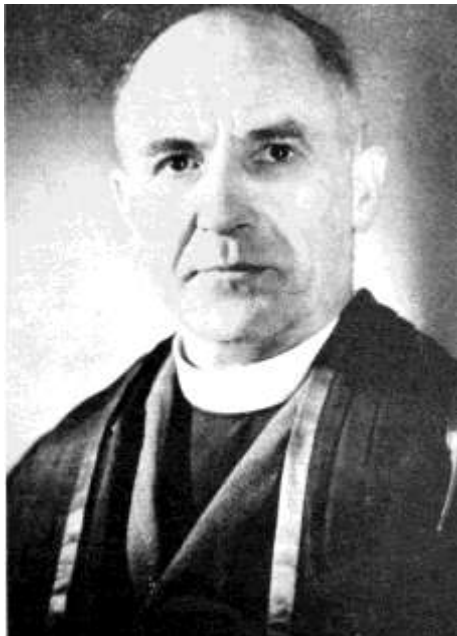
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wife Wendie was accepted as a local presbyter, a minister serving in Takapuna, but not receiving a stipend.

Wendie had previously been a community leader in guides, school lunchrooms and the Citizen's Advice Bureau, but became a minister because she felt she was sailing under false colours. "I'm a liberal bleeding heart, but it's because I'm a Christian, not just for ethical reasons." Particularly in the Citizen's Advice Bureau she was expected to be neutral, and couldn't tell people that she was in that work because she was a Christian.

As a minister, Wendie values the doors her role opens. On a hospital chaplaincy course, she says "people know they have a right to call on you; they know they can talk about things they would not talk to someone else about; you can call on all you know about, including your faith." While the ministry has opened some doors, it has closed others. Wendie says her work now is mainly confined to church people, but "I feel freer, having declared myself."

While Takapuna has produced some of the church's shortest ministries, it also produced two of the longest. William Blight was accepted as a candidate for the ministry while he was in Takapuna in 1913. At his death in September, 1983, he was the New Zealand Methodist Church's most senior retired minister. And the second most senior was also brought up in Takapuna, Eric Hames, who started his ministry in 1923. Both were lecturers at Trinity Theological College, Eric Hames being principal up to his retirement in 1962.



Rev. Eric Hames

WOMEN-- The silent majority

Women outnumber men by two to one on the Takapuna Methodist Church roll, and have done so for at least 40 years. They would similarly outnumber men in membership of church groups, and in working for church causes; yet they have traditionally played second fiddle in nearly every field of church activity.

Until 1959, women's groups raised a large proportion of the money for church buildings, but the trust which spent this money was an all-male group until 1980. Most of the church's Sunday School teachers have been women, but until 1960 nearly all the superintendents were men. In the choir since 1921, women have outnumbered the men two to one, but the conductors have all been men. The Takapuna church has produced eight male candidates for the ministry, but only two female; several dozen male lay preachers, but apparently only one woman. Us ministers have included 18 men and one woman, though there has been no shortage of women in the pews.

One woman member, though, has regularly preached to a congregation in the hundreds of thousands. She is deaconess Sister Rita Snowdcn, who began writing devotional books in 1933, and has now written 65 of them, which have sold up to 146,000 copies each. One of them, *A Woman's Book of Prayers*, went to 17 editions, and has been translated into Norwegian, German, Finnish and Japanese.

Sister Rita began her ministry as pastor of several rural parishes. In the Depression she was a social worker in the Auckland Central Mission, until an infection she caught at a church clothing store put her on her back for two years. A friend suggested she should continue her ministry by putting her thoughts into print.

Besides books, Sister Rita has written hundreds of devotional articles for magazines, and made hundreds of radio broadcasts in New Zealand, Australia and Britain. In 1978 she was awarded an OBE for her work, and is still writing a book a year at the age of 75.

Ministers' wives

Ministers' wives have traditionally taken the role of unpaid second minister, and Joy Dine for one does not object. "I quite enjoy being a minister's wife, having people in our home for small meetings and study groups." She makes a point of inviting people home after church and like most ministers' wives, gets involved in being a receptionist for her husband.

Joy is also a youth leader, and in previous parishes has run a church coffee shop, led women's fellowship, and been a member of the national Faith and Order committee. She was strongly involved in the church before she met Merv, and says she would have continued that involvement, whether she had married a minister or not.

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But Takapuna's previous minister's wife, Mona Clements, did not accept the traditional role at all. "I get no job satisfaction in making cups of tea. People dropped in on our home when we first arrived, but they soon didn't."

Mona had no objection to being involved in church life, and says she would love to have been active in groups like the choir, prayer groups and Christian education as she had in previous parishes. But her arrival in Takapuna coincided with her taking up the position of deputy director of the Plunket Society, responsible for half the country. It was a career she had dropped for nine years while she and Les were based in Geneva with the World Council of Churches; and it was so demanding she needed the weekends to recover. Instead of inviting church people home for tea, she employed someone to come in to get meals ready for her family. The church people, she says, were very nice about it; she felt she had let them down; but she wasn't going to get caught in that role.

Mona Clements spoke on this theme to a group of ministers' wives at St Johns Theological College, and says the older wives agreed with her, that they had been conned into doing a full-time job as parsons' wives. She says it is a problem not only for them, but for any qualified woman who wants to have a career of her own.

Other traditional roles for church women are also being gradually changed. Women have now invaded the trust meeting, with Dorothy Jenner in the position of secretary. And Wendie Hansen has become the parish's first woman minister.

Women have rights

Another tradition-breaker is Pat Gatman, Takapuna's first woman parish steward in a hundred years. Steward is the top lay leadership position in the local church, and Pat says there is still opposition to the idea of it being held by a woman. She quotes the fact that ten men were recommended to be after-dinner speakers at the centenary dinner, and no women. The recommendation was promptly changed following a sharp protest from minister Merv Dine.

Pat's appointment as steward was also on Merv's recommendation, and he says it was not tokenism. "She was the best person available; a very supportive person, and a person prepared to speak her mind."

Pat gained that reputation through 15 years' work at local and national level in the Girls Brigade and women's fellowship, and she has encouraged women to have more say in the church generally. "I'm not an active feminist, but women have rights." Pat was thrown into leadership by her six years in overseas missions from 1958 to 1964. "Before that I never spoke up." But on Munda in the Solomon Islands, she was expected to be a leader simply because she was a European. She had been a teacher and put her training to use taking an all-age women's bible class. A translator helped her put her lessons into Roviana before she delivered them.

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She also organised women's groups, and would help groups of women coming from outer islands to buy cloth and cut out patterns for sewing clothes. Mission work also made Pat believe in culture sharing as a two-way process. She opposed the assumption of older missionaries that Europeans were always right. And seeing how little Solomon Islanders have to live on set a pattern the Gatmans have tried to continue. "Don't buy it unless you need it."



Pat Gadman

Pat faced another culture shock on returning to the Takapuna church. Because of the middle-class church it had become, she felt like a poor relation, and she believes the income gap between members still makes it hard for people to belong. "But we are starting to become more of a family, and there is a real warmth growing."

Where does Pat think the church should be heading? "It has a lot to offer in social service. It is a base for youth wanting to become active in the protest movement. Protestors with an affinity with Christian beliefs will help the movement to be non-violent. She believes in hospitality, and she believes in the community. In her bible class days the church was her whole life, but now she stresses the importance of getting involved in other groups such as Plunket and school committees, "where Christians can have a quiet influence."

The social gospel revisited

Church people who demonstrated against the Springbok tour of New Zealand in 1981 were often surprised to find how many other church people were there marching alongside them. In the front line of one march were Takapuna's present minister Merv Dine, retired minister Ashleigh Petch and parish members Pam Tibbie and Frank Elliott. This type of action was unheard of 20 years ago, and is not without its critics now; but it illustrates a major swing in the church's image of where it is heading.

Where did it begin? The first indication in parish records was in 1955, when the quarterly meeting urged the government to abolish capital punishment. A more controversial step into public issues was in 1958, when the meeting objected that it seemed Maoris might be excluded from the All Black team to tour South Africa.

Reconsider Anzus

In 1971 the leaders approved Warwick Gust's plan to give a series of sermons on racism. In 1974 they set up a social services and public questions committee. In 1975 there was an unsuccessful move to have the parish withdraw its investments from insurance companies with branches in South Africa. The following year the parish urged the government to reconsider the Anzus treaty, because it could involve New Zealand in nuclear war.

In 1976 and 1977 Ashleigh Petch held mission services on social themes including peace, race relations, stress and family life. In 1979, when the government withdrew its financial support from Corso on the grounds that it was becoming too political, the Takapuna Methodist parish urged them to reconsider. In 1982 the church property was declared a nuclear weapon-free zone.

A dozen actions over 28 years do not make the Takapuna Methodist Church a political hotbed. But they contrast sharply with the preceding 28 years, when there was only one such decision, to support a series of sermons by Les Gilmore in 1949 on betting and hotel closing hours.

Two Takapuna members prominent in this movement were Selwyn Dawson and Ian Harris. Selwyn made a regular feature of Christian comment on social issues during evening services. The comments usually related to the past week's news and were at times critical of the government.

He has continued the idea since he left Takapuna, with comments on social issues in church bulletins, letters to newspapers, a morning comment slot on Radio New Zealand and a term on the Auckland City Council. The Dawsons have retired to Orakei and have struck up a friendship with some of the Bastion Point Maori protest group, visiting one of the group in jail. Since his retirement, Selwyn has also joined

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the Labour Party, a step he deliberately refrained from taking earlier, since he believes it would have clashed with his role as parish minister.

As far as Selwyn is concerned, the social side of Christianity was not something newly-born in the fifties and sixties. He did his first social thinking in the depression; his heroes in his Bible Class days were the pacifists; and he says it was only when pacifism became unpopular because of Hitler that some Methodists "retreated into a holiness pocket."

On the national level, a high point of the Methodist church's involvement in social comment was from 1966 to 1979, when it published the *New Zealand Methodist*, later renamed *New Citizen*. Ian Harris was its editor from 1968 to 1972 and says it had warm support from the church at its national conference, positive support at synod, but patchy support at parish level. The Takapuna parish in 1966 expressed general approval of the new paper, but called for a section "dealing more directly with the good news of Jesus Christ."

The paper relished controversy on political issues, most notably the Vietnam war, and was also involved in a side battle over whether social comment was a proper role for a church paper. Ian's reply to that view is "read your Old Testament." He says the paper's aim was to complement the work of parishes by dealing with an area not so easily done from the pulpit.

Magazines burned

One of the paper's hottest controversies was over a Christmas cover design by Takapuna's Miriam Tabuteau, showing Jesus as a foetus in Mary's womb. The Oamaru parish burned its copies of that issue.

The paper's main success, Ian believes, was its outreach to people like W. B. Sutch, who were out of step with the local church, but in basic sympathy with Christianity. It was hoped to make the paper fully interdenominational, and it was in fact distributed to a number of Presbyterian and Anglican parishes, but finally, "the other churches wouldn't come to the party." *New Citizen* had difficulty attracting enough advertising revenue to stay alive, and was suddenly wound up in 1979, following a clash between church authorities and the editor at the time, Ewing Stevens.

In the end, Ian says, he got worn down by grizzling over the paper's content. In some ways the paper was ahead of its time. Before 1979 Christians and politicians debated furiously over whether religion and politics should mix. That phrase is seldom heard now; the Christians are either involved in social issues themselves, or resigned to the fact.

Present members of the Takapuna parish involved in social pressure groups include Les Clements, who is president of the New Zealand Foundation for Peace Studies, Nora Tibble, member of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom,

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Sue Vugler and Denise Flavell in Christians for Peace, and Elizabeth Schiessel in Amnesty International.

Members active in other area; of the political spectrum include Bill Hepplestcne, Alan Moore, Bev Jones and Dorothy Jenner, who have been active in the National Party. Dorothy was also a foundation member of the local branch of the National Council of Women Demonstrations are not her style, and she values NCW as a group which earns government respect on social issues by representing women of all political views.



**A Women's march for peace, Queen Street, June, 1983
Holding the banner are Sue Vugler and Denise Flavell (out of shot).**

Dorothy believes in supporting political candidates she respects, rather than the party as such, Sn the church she believes in discussing social issues, but stresses the need to hear both sides. Some articles in New Citizen were too radical for her, and she agreed with the government that Corso was becoming too political.

Bev Jones was secretary of a National Party branch and also an ardent rugby supporter, and says this placed her in a terrible dilemma during the Springbok tour. Because of the church's opposition to it, she didn't attend any matches, but she watched them on television. She supported an invitation to Opposition leader David Lange in the church's centenary year to address morning worship on "Should a Christian ever disobey the law?" and National Party candidate Don Brash on "The economy—how Christian?"

Neighbourhood tavern

The development of new social concerns has not meant the death of old ones. In 1957 the parish supported a. campaign against an hotel in Browns Bay. In 1981 Ruth and Gordon Michie and Nancy and John Emmitt were leaders in the successful campaign,

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against a neighbourhood tavern being built at Hauraki Corner. Merv Dine quietly lets it be known that he is opposed to alcohol. While he was a military chaplain, he says he became aware of the pressure placed on people to drink, and decided that total abstinence is still a viable alternative.

While the last 30 years have seen a mushrooming of social activism in the churches, they have also seen a growth in social concern in non-partisan service.

In 1961, the Takapuna parish sponsored the resettlement of the Dunatovs, a refugee family from Yugoslavia. Other refugees sponsored have included Nikolaos Haizoudis from Greece in 1965, the Ng family from Hong Kong in 1966, and help was given to a Ugandan couple and a family from Italy in 1973, and a family from Cambodia in 1979. In 1974 the parish helped found Willow Lodge, an emergency housing scheme. In 1975 Emily Morgan, "Roger Biddle" and Chris Gregory launched Purple Patch, a handcraft shop which raises thousands of dollars for charity and provides an outlet for local craftspeople.

In 1959 Tom Morgan began a Christian action group which dug gardens and provided transport for elderly people. In 1974, minister Pieter de Zoete was released from half of his parish duties so he could be a talkback host on Radio 1.

Since the seventies, Nancy Emmitt has been organising afternoon get-togethers for elderly people, Miri Cammell and Gladys Lydster have been visiting sick people and Jack Lydster drives a van for disabled people. Hazel Goldsworthy, Bernie Bissett and Anne Service help run a club for the blind; Betty Hines, Harry Moore, Gordon Michie and Alec Lamond work in the hearing association; John and Grace Lewis serve on the citizens' advice bureau; Nora Tibble is a friend at court, and Phyll Comben helps immigrants learn English.

The social gospel which flourished before 1918 has been revisited in the last three decades. The involvement today seems stronger than it was then, and more diverse. Only a minority of church members are involved in these activities, but they are typical of a new value system among active church members.

MINISTERS OVER 137 YEARS

The first Methodist ministers to serve Auckland's North Shore were based in central Auckland from 1846 to 1881. They included Walter Lawry, Thomas Buddle, John Whiteley, John Warren. H. H. Lawry, William Morley, Alexander Reid, William Kirk and James Wallis.

From 1882, a separate North Shore parish was formed, with its ministers based in Devonport. They were:

George Spence 1882-83
William Parsonson 1884-85
Henry Dewsbury 1886-87
John Dukes 1888-90
Josiah Ward 1891-93
Lewis Hudson 1894
John Crump 1895-97
Charles Beecroft 1898-1900
John Chapman 1901-03
Samuel Griffith 1904-07
Robert Taylor 1908-09
William Beck 1910-12
George Mann 1913-16
William Elliott 1917-20

From 1913, Takapuna had ministers of its own, under the supervision of superintendent ministers at Devonport. The Takapuna staff were:

J. Blight 1913
D. McNicol 1914-15
W. H. Hocking 1917-18
R. B. Gosnell 1918
Thomas Wooloxall 1919-23

From 1920, Takapuna became an independent parish, with Thomas Wooloxall its first minister, followed by:

George Hinton 1923-28
Horace Richards 1929-32
Ernest Emmitt 1933-39
Joseph Draper 1939-42
Jack Bailey 1943-46
Les Gilmore 1947-53
Selwyn Dawson 1954-61
Jack Penman 1962-66
Bob Thornley 1967-71
Ashleigh Fetch 1972-77
Les Clements 1978-80
Merv Dine 1981-

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From 1959, the parish had a staff of two ministers, and from 1964 to 1978 a staff of three. Apart from Rowan Smiley and Wendie Hansen, they were based in the East Coast Bays. The additional ministers were:

- Norman Olds 1959-63
- Ludwig Felderhof 1964-67
- Bryan Walker 1964-67
- Warwick Gust 1968-July 1973
- William Loader 1968-69
- Rowan Smiley 1970-71
- Pieter de Zoete 1972-73
- Cedric Hay August 1973-81
- Bernard Chrystall 1974
- Douglas Pratt 1975-78
- Tony Stroobant 1982-
- Wendie Hansen 1982-

From 1983, the East Coast Bays became a separate parish, with its first minister Tony Stroobant.



Merv Dine

KEEPING IN TOUCH

It is difficult to sum up where the Takapuna Methodist Church stands in 1983 without taking sides. On one hand it has a core of members who have remained loyal to it for decades, so it appears to be a well-established movement, worth continuing. On the other hand its membership is declining, so from the viewpoint of an uncommitted Takapuna resident it seems to be slowly but steadily losing touch with the community. In between is a group of people who support the church but are disappointed or angry with the direction in which it is heading, but to tell only their story would be partisan; perhaps their expectations of the church are unreasonable.

This book has been written mainly from the second viewpoint, asking how the Takapuna Methodist Church looks under a public spotlight, and some, including those in the spotlight themselves, would say "not too pretty." But the conclusion in this final chapter is not to come down on one of these sides, but to suggest there is a need from the church's viewpoint to foster better communication between the three groups. It needs to care more about how it looks to the general public, and it needs to overcome a serious lack of contact between its own members, some of whom are very unhappy, and some who are perhaps too happy with the present state of affairs. The problem of a lack of contact between members is recognised by the church, and is being worked on. The clearest evidence of this is the fact that it has spent \$150,000 in 1983 building a church lounge. The intention is to make it easier for people to stop and talk on their way to and from church services. The need for such a place was felt as far back as 1958, but at that time the leaders voted against it, because they wanted the money for a new church.

Why do members feel they don't know one another, and why does it matter?

The former close contact has broken down partly through pressure of time, and partly through the increased distances members live from one another. In 1884 many members lived within a few hundred metres of one another; now they are spread over a radius of ten kilometres. People will travel further than this for a special purpose such as church, work or recreation, but it discourages more casual contacts, like welcoming a newcomer to the district, or passing the time of day.

A larger problem is the amount of time members are prepared to spend in church activities. Until about 1950, a keen church member would attend up to three church activities every Sunday, and several weeknight activities as well. Some denominations continue this pattern, but in the Methodist church it is seen as neither possible nor desirable. Is the call for more contact between members a cry for a return to the village church of the 19th century? In some ways yes, and as such it must be rejected. Today's wider community calls for wider kinds of interaction. But it would be a contradiction if the church, in its call for involvement in the community, became incapable of providing some kind of fellowship and interaction itself.

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The new lounge is one attempt to provide such a meeting point. Others have been family camps, dances and breakfasts and dinners together. Another was a get-together of about ten families earlier in 1983 for a meal and night out. It was a good example of all-age interaction, including the two girls with walkie-talkies shown on the previous page. The other communication problem facing the church is the image it presents to the public.

The Takapuna Methodist Church's public message has changed considerably over its 100 years, and most of that change has been since 1950.

Divisions over evangelism

Before that time, though there were sharp differences of opinion on issues such as pacifism, these to some were private issues and there was a strong core of agreed beliefs, including evangelism and a strict individual morality. But by the late 1950s the moral unanimity was beginning to crack, especially on the question of total abstinence, and the Billy Graham crusade of 1959 also revealed divisions over evangelism.

Even those who supported the crusade often did so with mixed motives, reckoning "we'll let Billy Graham bring them into the church, and we can update their beliefs afterwards." It didn't work. A number of the crusade inquirers were referred to the Takapuna Methodist Church, but few of them stayed.

The church's public image became even more blurred in the 1960s when a dominant message was church union. The main aim of forming a united church failed, though there were many gains, including a growing tolerance between most members of the negotiating churches. But these were low-key changes, barely noticeable by the public. The Congregational Church and the Associated Churches of Christ ceased to exist as separate denominations, and Methodist leaders warned this could have happened to their church too, if many more united parishes had been formed.

Public issues

The "social gospel" sharpened the churches' image again in the sixties and seventies, as members marched and pronounced on public issues, but this was a movement of minorities within the church. Where has this series of changes left the Takapuna Methodist Church in 1983?

Some members have left the church because of these changes, but they seem to have been only a small proportion. The majority of members, old and young, seem to have accepted a softened version of the social gospel.

When asked where the church should be heading in 1983, the leaders interviewed for this book unanimously spoke of getting involved in the community and caring for people. Surprisingly, almost none of them mentioned traditional beliefs about the bible or faith in God, and none of them called for a return to old-style evangelism. Does this

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mean they no longer believe in these things? That is hardly likely, yet the issue is not being squarely faced. In some ways the social gospel is the lowest common denominator of beliefs today. People who say they care about society can be diametrically opposed when it comes to putting that belief into practice.

And some members, such as Wendie Hansen, feel the church is flying false colours if it does not spell out the faith that lies behind its concern for society. Whereas others, such as some youth group members, question the relevance of the bible or faith to these issues at all. It remains to be seen whether the Methodist church will resolve these issues and present an effective front to the local community.

Styles of worship

It also remains to be seen whether the church can reconcile its members' different styles of worship. In some ways worship itself is a demonstration; members are coming not merely to learn about their faith, but to be counted as standing for a cause, and this can lead to a division over the kind of image that combined activity should present.

There was a crisis in 1980 when a group of younger members pushed for more experimentation in the service, with more people taking an active part. This was supported by the leaders, but a group of older members became alarmed and the minister called the experiment off before it started.

The building of the new lounge has revived this issue. The lounge is being used for evening services, where the main ingredient is discussion, and it is also hoped to use it for discussions after morning worship, though this idea was greeted warily at the members' annual meeting.

The significance of this clash is that morning service is the church's shop window, where the largest number of members attend, and the largest number of members of the public can drop in. It is also for many members the only church activity they attend.

As a result, it carries a heavy proportion of the church's task of bringing its members together, and presenting their message to the community. If they cannot relate to one another there, many will not relate to one another at all. And if they cannot make a public impact on the community there, there is a good chance they will make no public impact at all, except as isolated individuals.