

Fact sheet: a guide to Methodist terms used in the Parish Archives Collection

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Introduction

The Parish Archives Collection is a rich source of information about those who were Methodists in New Zealand.

Because the Methodist Church had its own terminology and ways of organising its activities, this fact sheet is intended to help researchers by briefly explaining some of the terms which are unique to the Methodist Church. Until the 1960s, the Methodist Church did not use ecumenical church terminology, and to this day, still uses terms not used by other religions. The fact sheet also includes a list of common abbreviations used in parish archives.

These terms and rules of governance, are defined in great detail in the Methodist law book, which is regularly revised and up-dated. The law book gives guidance on how the Church as a whole, operates at a local, national or international level.

A more detailed explanation can be found in *Layman's handbook. A practical guide for officers of the Methodist Church of New Zealand.* George I Laurenson, Methodist Board of Publications, 1970.

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Archivist
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Sources:
The law book of the Methodist Church, 1951 and 1969
Oxford English Dictionary
Personal knowledge and experience of the late Frank Paine and late Rev Fred Baker

Definitions of Methodist Terms and Names

Term or name	Definition
Baptism Register	A written record of all people baptised was kept in a register book, and a certificate given to the candidate, parent or guardian. Registers were kept by a circuit or local church, with details of dates of birth and baptism, candidates name, parents' names and address and signature of officiating minister.
Benevolent Fund	Society or Sacramental Stewards were originally called Poor Stewards. No more than three in number were elected annually by the local church to administer the Benevolent Fund. The Fund was to assist the poor of the Church.
Bible Classes	In New Zealand these began in the early part of the 20th century. Separate classes were organised in a local church - Junior, Intermediate and Senior - for both girls and boys. They met each Sunday for Bible Study and organised other activities. There was a national ruling body for each gender until the late 1940s, when the CYM(M) - Christian Youth Movement (Methodist) was established with mixed groups.
Campaign for Christian Order	This campaign commenced in 1942 and was launched by the National Council of Churches. As the Home Mission Department of the Methodist Church, was also the Spiritual Advance Committee, they were responsible for overseeing the Methodist Church's participation.
Central Stewardship Committee	This was a national Committee which promoted circuit stewardship, and conducted reviews in local churches or circuits.
Christian Endeavour Society	This was a interdenominational youth organisation for teenagers which promoted teetotal abstinence and Christian service.
Christian Youth Movement (Methodist)	In 1944, the CYM(M) - Christian Youth Movement (Methodist), later known as the Christian Youth Movement Methodist, was established with separate groups of men and women.
Church Meeting	The annual congregational meeting in a local church. Originally only open to those on membership rolls. In more recent times, the meeting has been open to all active members.
Church Union	As early as 1903 there was a move for the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches to begin conversations about Union. In 1940 the Joint Commission on Church Union was launched, and each Church had its own committee. A plan for Union was submitted to the member churches for study in 1970. Finally a vote for Church Union was taken which included the Anglican Church. It was defeated.

Term or name	Definition
Circuit	An area determined by the Methodist Church of New Zealand Conference, in which is situated a church, or number of churches. The ministers for a circuit are appointed annually, one being designated as Superintendent. Today, is more commonly called a parish.
Circuit Quarterly Meeting	This was the governing body of the Circuit. Its agenda was set out in question form, and covered all aspects of the Methodist Church's work within the Circuits' boundaries.
Circuit Schedule Book	These registers recorded: general returns of Circuit statistics, church property, area, title, trustees etc, circuit and society officers, Home and Overseas Mission contributions.
Circuit Stewards	A full description is given in New Zealand Methodist law books. The executive officers of the Circuit Quarterly Meeting. Elected annually by the meeting to provide the ways and means of efficient working of the Circuit. They were responsible for paying ministerial stipends and allowances, making sure there was suitable transport, keeping minutes of meetings and keeping proper accounts of receipts and expenditure.
Circuit Youth Council	Many churches had a Local Youth Council (LYC) which planned youth activities. Large parishes had a similar group - Circuit Youth Council (CYC). There were also District Youth Councils (DYC) who would plan Easter camps, winter and summer schools, rallies etc. The Schools were usually held on holiday weekends with studies, tutorials and recreation.
Circuit/Local Home Mission Secretaries	Were responsible for collecting subscriptions for Home and Maori Missions in a circuit or local church. For many years donations to this fund were acknowledged in the annual reports of each organisation.
Circuit/Local Overseas (Foreign) Secretaries	Were responsible for collecting subscriptions for Overseas Missions. In New Zealand Methodism the Overseas Mission was mainly conducted in the Solomon Islands and Bougainville. For many years donations to this fund were acknowledged in the annual reports of each organisation.
Class Meeting	John Wesley inaugurated these adult groups. They met weekly for fellowship and mutual support. Class Leaders were appointed by the Leaders' Meeting to take oversight of the Class, including the keeping of a roll.
Conference	A short name for Methodist Church of New Zealand Conference. The governing body of the Methodist Church of New Zealand. It has vested in it, final authority on all matters of the Church.

Term or name	Definition
Connexion	Is the Methodist way of being family, with parishes linked together in synods, together associated with the Conference. The word itself has the sense of being connected, as family, in terms of ethos and commitment to the Methodist way, associated with the Wesleyan tradition. The spelling of the word is a memory of John Wesley's eighteenth century usage.
Deacon	A deacon is called to ministry of special service. This may be expressed in any form of caring service and outreach in the name of the Methodist Church.
Deaconess	Women were trained as deaconesses from 1907 until 1968. They gave service to the Church in city missions, churches, Maori missions, and overseas missions.
Fireside Clubs	During the period when Ladies' Guilds and Methodist Women's Missionary Auxiliaries were active, these meetings catered for women who worked, or were unable to attend the afternoon meetings of the other groups. Some evening meetings continued after the formation of the Methodist Women's Fellowship.
General Secretary	Responsible for the day-to-day administrative functions of the Methodist Church, secretary to Conference, Custodian of Deeds and Archives, secretary to Church boards, committees or funds. Previously called Connexional Secretary.
Home Mission Department	This Department had oversight of Methodist missionaries in New Zealand, deaconesses and Maori churches.
Home Missionary	<p>The Methodist Church law books defined a Home Missionary as "a Local Preacher who is employed as a full time agent of the Methodist Church of New Zealand and is in receipt of remuneration for his services."</p> <p>Home Missionaries were allowed to use the title "Reverend" without having been ordained. However they still had to pass exams to be a Home Missionary.</p> <p>Home Missionaries were directed by the New Zealand Methodist Conference as to where they would be stationed. They were paid at a lesser rate than ministers.</p> <p>The first Home Missionaries in New Zealand were appointed about 1875.</p>
Ladies' (or Women's) Guilds	Ladies Guilds had a social programme, raised funds for Trust, and in early times oversaw the furnishing of a parsonage.

Term or name	Definition
Lay Preacher or Local Preacher	Lay Preachers were previously called “Local Preachers” until 1962. A Lay Preacher was a person approved at the parish quarterly meeting to take services. They usually sat exams to be a lay preacher, and acted in this role on a part-time basis. Both men and women could be Lay Preachers.
Lay Worker	Someone appointed by the circuit/parish to do a special task – eg youth worker or organiser of some particular activity.
Layperson	Traditionally a term for those who are not members of the ordained ministry.
Leaders’ Meetings	These had oversight of the activities of a local church.
Methodist Women’s Fellowship	MWF combines the activities of the guilds and Missionary Union, in later years expanding their scope of activities and joining with the Association of Presbyterian Women in special projects.
Methodist Women’s Missionary Union	MWMU (known locally as an Auxiliary) was formed in the early years of the 20th century, to raise funds and collect useful articles for workers in both the Home and Maori Missions, and Overseas Missions, (the latter earlier known as Foreign Missions); they also gave publicity to these missions.
Minister	Called “Presbyter” since 1978. A minister is called to a life-long commitment to the study of the word of God, to the practice of Christian devotion, to preaching and teaching the Christian message, to administering the sacraments, to pastoral care and to witness and service in the community.
Ministers’ Association	Ministers of different denominations in a suburb met regularly and planned combined activities or gave joint publicity to areas of concern or of national importance.
Mutual Improvement Society	Mutual Improvement Societies could be found in many churches from the early 1870s until the 1920s. One Society was described as a group of men “with a community interest in politics, philosophy, economics, and the general affairs of the Country”. They would hold classes, hear lectures, have debates and often build up a lending library.
Overseas Missions	These were originally known as “Foreign Missions”. For New Zealand Methodists, the Isles of the Solomons were the mission they actively supported financially, providing personnel, medial assistance and gifts. Women’s groups were actively involved in this work.

Term or name	Definition
Parish Council Meetings	When Union and Co-operating Ventures were formed they were referred to as 'Parishes'. The introduction to the list of stations in the 1981 Conference Minutes uses the word 'circuits'; in the 1982 minutes the word 'Parishes' was used, so we can take the year of 1983 for when 'Circuits' became re-named 'Parishes' with no change of agenda.
Presbyter	From 1978 the term "Presbyter" began to be used instead of "Minister".
Quarter Day	A Primitive Methodist Church term for 3 months of a year. The year was divided into 4 quarters.
Quarterly Meeting	See Circuit Quarterly Meeting.
Sewing Circles	In the late 19th century these were part of the local church activities. Ladies met to sew for needy people or plan sewing that they would do at home.
Society	More commonly a Primitive Methodist Church term meaning the local church and congregation.
Society Stewards	The executive officers of the Leaders' Meeting. Elected annually by the Church Meeting, two for the first 20 members, 1 for each additional 20 members.
Station	A Primitive Methodist Church term which is equivalent of a circuit. A station might include several preaching places.
Stipend	A living allowance paid to ministers.
Synod	The meeting of a District, involving representatives from Circuits or Parishes, as well as other persons specified in the Law Book, to provide governance for the Parishes and for other work within its boundaries. Responsible to Conference.
Trust	The name given to the body which gave oversight to local church property. Its members were known as Trustees. By 1985, Trusts were abolished and the holding of title was taken over by the Methodist Church Board of Administration. The Trust appointed a Church Steward who was responsible for the oversight of the buildings and contents.
Trustees	Under the Methodist Model Deed of 1887, trustees held the title of the property and were appointed without limitation as to term.

Term or name	Definition
Wesley Guild	Founded in England, and still flourishes there. It has the aims 'Comradeship, Consecration, Culture and Christian Service'. It was strong in New Zealand up to the 1930s.
Young Worshippers' League	In the years when Sunday Schools were held on a Sunday afternoon Young Worshippers' Leagues were held on a Sunday morning at 10.00 a.m. or prior to the morning service. Children received some instruction and collected small religious cards marking their attendance.

Abbreviations used in the Parish Archives Collection

APW	Association of Presbyterian Women
BC	Bible Class
BC	Bible Christian
CE	Christian Endeavour (or Christian Education)
Com.	Committee
CYMM	Christian Youth Movement Methodist
DC	District Committee
DEC	District Education Committee
DFS	District Financial Secretary
DPAC	District Property Advisory Committee
DYC	District Youth Council
EACC	East Asian Christian Council
GB	Girls' Brigade
GLB	Girls' Life Brigade
HM	Home Missionary
ITIM	Inter-church Trade and Industry Mission Central
LEC	Local Education Committee (or Local Ecumenical Community or Congregation)
LFC	Leaders' Fellowship Committee
LM	Leaders' Meeting
LP	Lay Preacher
LYC	Local Youth Council
MG	Methodist Girls' (Fellowship)
MIS	Mutual Improvement Society
ML	Methodist Ladies' (Guild)
MP	Methodist Parish
MWJE	Methodist Women's Junior Executive
MSSA	Methodist Social Services Association
MSW	Methodist Social Work
MWF	Methodist Women's Fellowship
MWM	Methodist Women's Missionary
MWMA	Methodist Women's Missionary Auxiliary (Local)
MWMU	Methodist Women's Missionary Union (National)
MYMBCF	Methodist Young Men's Bible Class Fellowship
MYMBCU	Methodist Young Men's Bible Class Union
NC	North Canterbury
NCC	National Council of Churches
NE	North East
NZMLPA	New Zealand Methodist Lay Preachers' Association
NZSSA	New Zealand Social Services Association
PAC	Prince Albert College
PM	Primitive Methodist
PQ	Public Questions
QM	Quarterly Meeting
SCM	Student Christian Movement
SS	Sunday School
SSC	Social Services Committee/Sunday School Class
SSU	Social Services Union
UMF	United Methodist Free
UMFC	United Methodist Free Church

WFMW	World Federation of Methodist Women
WHS	Wesley Historical Society
YMBC	Young Men's Bible Class
YPD	Young People's Department
YPF	Young People's Fellowship
YPSCE	Young Persons Service Christian Endeavour
YWBC	Young Women's Bible Class
YWL	Young Women's League
WCC	World Council of Churches