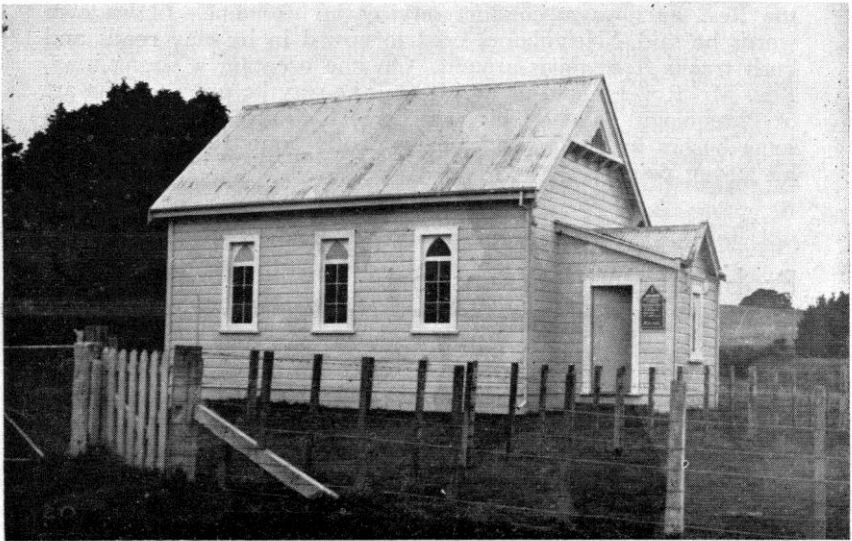


MAKOMAKO CHURCH

50th
Anniversary



1916 - 1966

First Services in the District

The very first memories of a Church service being held in Makomako were recalled by the late Mrs. Charlie Ebbett in her story of '*Life in the Early Days*', written for the local Women's Institute. In her own words she recalls

“ For a time we had Church services in a neighbour's house (Mrs. Andrew Gardiner). A Methodist Minister came from Woodville once a month. but when the school was built, in 1896, and a minister stationed in Pahiatua, we had services every Sunday.”

The late Mr. Andrew Gardiner, who was in his 92nd year at the time of the 50th Anniversary of the Pahiatua Methodist Church, was the rock on which Church worship was built in this area. In about the year 1890, a few months after having moved from Pahiatua to take up a section of land at Nikau, he invited the Rev. Farrows to conduct services in his home. In his own words he said,

“Neighbours used to crowd in by clay roads and bush tracks from miles around. On one occasion a young man, Rev. Mr. Rogers, paid us a visit (by the way he practised the art of Phrenology) and on his way home his horse threw him into some bushes by the wayside, so evidently equestrianism was not his strong point. “

Problems With Transport

These were the days before motor cars and the preachers had to rough it, sometimes facing fierce storms of wind and rain on horseback, to the detriment of their starched collars. They often preached in the discomfort of wet clothes. Sometimes the preachers were exhausted after propelling their bicycles along the rough metal roads or muddy clay roads or tracks.

Transport of preachers to their various appointments were certainly a problem in those days. One circuit steed had a tantalizing style of careering wildly around the spacious paddock at the moment he was required for duty. These preliminaries would last some time before he would yield to the clerical collar. Later there was a hired animal that was prone to stumble in awkward places or suddenly deviate to the centre of the road at the near approach of speedy and luxurious limousines, no doubt the creature that disposed poor Mr. Rogers.

In 1896 when the Makomako school was opened, the Rev. J. W. Griffin commenced regular Sunday services in the schoolroom. The congregation would have included a number of well known identities; names such as: Groves, Ebbett, Reeves, Harding, Vile, Rowse and Corkill.

Church Built in a Day

In 1915 a move was made to have a Church built, and the following year it was decided that the building should be erected in one day, by means of a working-bee under the direction of the late Mr. H. H. Godfrey. The roof was not sufficiently completed to keep the rain out for the wedding of Mr. William Angove and Miss Myra Constance Groves. The weather was by no means the best when the happy bride

arrived, and with the organ occupying the most protected corner of the church, the Rev. H. Cottom found it necessary to requisition all the available umbrellas during the ceremony, in order that the service might proceed uninterrupted. Miss R. Groves still has in her possession a photograph of the patient bridegroom (in his bowler hat), standing by the organ, awaiting the arrival of the bride. The infant daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Angove was later to be the first to be Baptised in the Church.

The site for the building was generously donated by the late Mr. Herbert Sowry, whilst the pulpit Bible was the gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Ebbett. The Church schoolroom was begun during the ministry of the Rev. Ray Richards, who evinced much interest in the welfare of the young people, and is spoken of in affectionate remembrance by those who were brought under his influence. The Rev. H. Cottom displayed considerable energy in carrying out the scheme to a successful conclusion. The late Mrs. F. Groves must be remembered as the driving force behind the whole building programme, as well as taking on the unenviable task of collecting building funds, She was also an ardent supporter of the Sunday School, and in this, as in everything, an indefatigable worker.

The early records disclose that Mrs. O. Sonntag (nee Miss Groves) was the first organist, while Miss Annie Ebbett (now Mrs Tait) followed by her sister Edie, were subsequent organists for many years. Miss Daphne Ebbett will be remembered for the fact that she accompanied on her violin at services as well as often acting as organist. She also kept a children's choir going until she and her mother went to live in Palmerston North in 1934. Since around this time Miss R. Groves has very capably filled the capacity of organist, being relieved at times by Mrs. Horace Sowry or Mrs. Ron Sonntag, whenever she has been indisposed.

Today

It is encouraging to record that the spirit of worship is as strong as ever it was, with regular fortnightly services. The attendance, according to the proportion of Methodist families in the district, is remarkable. Mrs. Clark from Nikau is running a very well attended Sunday school and for the past year a senior Bible class has been in operation. Apart from the Methodist services, Anglican services, though now not so regular as they used to be, are also held in the Church.

This brochure is issued on the occasion of the Makomako Church's 50th anniversary celebration. A United service is to be held conducted by the Pahiataua Ministers' Association, the guest preacher being the Rev. R. Day of Thames, an ex-minister of the circuit.

In a concise history of this kind, where limits to both space and resource material prevent one from providing more details, it is unfortunate that many names have been excluded and facts unrecorded, thus many people who have faithfully served our church, particularly as Sunday school teachers and Lay workers, have not been mentioned, This we sincerely regret. It is also a pity that several of the best stories that have been passed down would hardly be publishable in a document such as this. The data herewith compiled, was gathered at the request of the Jubilee Committee.