

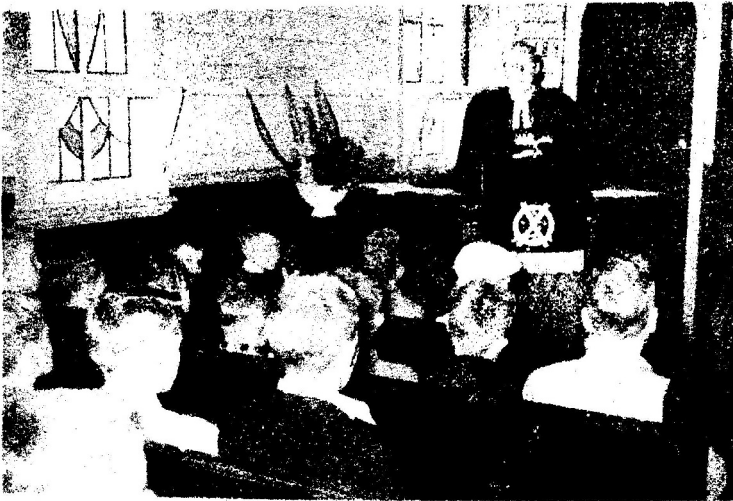
This increased to thirty in three weeks. Mr. J. Ennever was the Superintendent. Mr. D. Peden formerly of Kumeu came to reside at Te Atatu and he was elected an elder. Shortly after Mr. Ennever was also elected an elder. Afternoon services were started on June 20th, 1954, and it was decided to call the Te Atatu congregation St. Giles. Evening services were started in July with seventeen attending the first service.

At this time good reports were received about Youth work. Attendances at Henderson Sunday School were increasing and the Bible Classes flourishing. Mr. M. Andrew, now the Rev. Dr. Andrew, worked during the long university vacation in the parish visiting extensively and a most enthusiastic report was sent to the Knox College Senatus in appreciation of his services. The result of all this was a move to raise the status of the parish to a charge and this was agreed to by the congregation in March 1955, and later on by the Presbytery (12/7/55). Rev. E.C. Walsh of St. Heliers conducted a Mission in the Henderson Church from August 28th to September 8th. The meetings were well-attended by Methodists and others but some disappointment was expressed at the attendance of our own people.

The resignation of Mr. J. Russell, Swanson, as elder was received with regret and appreciation was expressed for his offer to do what he could for the work in Swanson.

In consequence of the growth of Youth Work an enlargement of the Hall became necessary. An extension in front provided for a kitchen and a small class room and a larger addition to the rear provided for the Beginners and Primary, the Main Hall being left for the older children. Over £1100 was spent in providing these facilities - not without delays and hitches. The main part of the work was completed in 1955.

The financing of the project was achieved by borrowing £500, using the Younger legacy of £250 and an anonymous donation of £100 and taking £182 from the Sunday School Building Fund. In the 1955 Balance Sheet a further £130 was taken from this Fund.



Church of Worship

1955 - 1961 A further Forward Move

The latter half of 1955 saw the further steps towards another division with Te Atatu becoming a Home Mission Station and Henderson a sanctioned charge with the right of call. A selection Committee was set up and inquiries made from the Home Ministry Committee and elsewhere and the name of Mr. A.C. Robinson, a former teacher who had become a Home Missionary and then taken the special course in the Theological Hall, was submitted. In order to save the expense of his having to come from Dunedin and preach with a view to a call, both Mr. Robinson and the congregation agreed to his appointment to the charge for five years. (Near the end of the five years Mr. Robinson was duly called and inducted).

The Manse : With the division, the congregation was without a Manse. It had an equity of £1,200 in the Te Atatu Manse. After prospecting houses available, it was agreed to buy a property in Grange Road for £2850 - legal expenses brought it to £2904. It was not very suitable but it was the best that could be done at the time. The congregation agreed to borrow £1450 to finance the purchase.

Arrangements were made for a regular reduction of the debt.

Mr. & Mrs. Robinson and one of their two daughters arrived in the middle of December, 1955 and Mr. Robinson was duly inducted on December 15th, with the moderator of the Presbytery, the Rev. W.R. McD. Hay presiding.

The Rev. Angus Sutherland took over at Te Atatu but in 1956 his health which had not been good for some time became so much worse that he had to resign in February. He died on July 27th, 1956, greatly mourned. He had given varied, self-sacrificing and deeply spiritual service to the Church in the Auckland Area for thirty years.

The cause which Mr. Robinson took over was not really a strong one. It required a great deal of building up, especially in view of the increased commitments with the rise in status. It soon began to be evident by the recurring and increasing debit balances that something radical would have to be done. All the more so because the congregation suffered a sad blow in the departure of the Gilmour family at the beginning of 1957. Mr. Gilmour who had made a wonderfully efficient Treasurer and an outstanding Bible Class Leader, felt the call of the Church to older men to undertake the special course for the ministry. He volunteered and was accepted. The family departed for Dunedin. Mrs. Gilmour who did an equally outstanding work with the children and Bible Class young folk was also sadly missed. Mr. Gilmour has made good and is now in an important charge at Milton. The congregation can take a pride in supplying such a man for the ministry.

None of equal standing came to take the place of these workers and difficulties mounted. The minimum stipend rose from £600 to £650 and the following year jumped to £750. The debit balances grew from £34 to £174 and then to £271. Stewardship Campaigns were beginning to operate in various congregations. Schools were being organised by the New Life Committee. It was decided to send Mr. Robinson and the Session Clerk Mr. Goodenough with Mr. R. Findlay from the Bible Class to a School held on June 21st 1957. They came back filled with enthusiasm and as a result of their representations the congregation decided to undertake such a Campaign. A local School for training workers was held. Authority was given to increase the bank overdraft by £350 in order to meet the expense of printing and the Parish Dinner.

Mr. J. McDonald was appointed Chairman. The programme was carried through and a very successful dinner was held and the brochure distributed. The dinner was held in the Football Shed. The cost of the dinner was donated but even so the other expenses were considerable. The Visitation was carried through in November and December and the results although not spectacular brought about a considerable improvement in the standard of giving. The rapid deterioration of the finances was halted. A follow-up became necessary a little later and a modified Parish Dinner was adopted at the Annual Meetings in order to stimulate the Stewardship spirit of fellowship. Mr. C.M. Spencer became Acting Treasurer and he was followed by Mr. W.J.A.H. Witstyn. Our present Treasurer is Mr. G.D. Kay who is proving very efficient.

In our Jubilee year we have succeeded in wiping out the overdraft by members of the congregation giving over £185 to a special fund which was subsidised by three others to the extent of £128 including a donation of £95.

Billy Graham Crusade 1959

The effect of this event was felt in our parish, not only in new members admitted but in increased attendances and greater interest in Bible Study and Prayer. Large numbers of our people went into the city for the meetings. We hope that this aroused interest will not be allowed to fade away.

The Nine-Thirty Service

An experiment has been made this year with two Sunday Morning services, the first at 9.30 a.m. and the second at the usual time, 11 a.m. So far the earlier service has been much better supported, and it seems that the experiment will become a permanent practice.

Mr. N.S. Conquer, who was appointed Secretary of the Managers Sept. 2nd. 1952, resigned in May, 1960. The congregation is much indebted to him for his service of nearly eight years and for his wood-working skill in doing a number of jobs of work about the Church.

A recent sad event was the sudden death of the wife of our Minister. Mrs. Robinson was attending the P.W.M.U. Conference held while the General Assembly was meeting in Palmerston North. She had not been feeling well but her death was unexpected. She passed away on the morning of Assembly Sunday, November 13th, 1960, while Mr. Robinson was at Church. Very great sympathy is felt with Mr. Robinson and his daughters. Mrs. Robinson is much missed as she gave herself wholeheartedly in supporting her husband in the work.

Ranui Section - Some years ago a section was bought with New Life Funds in Ranui. In the list of New Life Building, the placing of a Hall on this Section was placed sixth. With the struggle to meet our present commitments we have been unable to do anything about this area but it is our hope that soon we may be able to do something with the idle land.

In February of this year an important event took place in the opening of the new buildings of the Bible Training Institute in Lincoln Rd. Henderson. Already the Youth Work is being assisted by students from the Institute. The Rev. Robin Kirkby has now arrived to become a lecturer in Old Testament Studies on the staff and is resident in the borough. With Mrs. Kirkby he has been welcomed into the membership of the Congregation.

Session Clerk - Mr. E.L. Goodenough resigned from the position of Session Clerk in March, 1961 after over twelve years in office. We owe him a great debt for his long and faithful service. The Session has recorded its agreement with this. Mr. J. McDonald has taken over from Mr. Goodenough and we wish him well in his new task.

Church Music

The story of an organ - In 1898 when services were held in the school, the Presbyterians apparently owned the organ which was used. The Wesleyans built a Church and requested permission for the organ to be transferred there. This was granted as Presbyterians were to use the new Church for services. In 1901 a new organ was purchased by combined Wesleyan and Presbyterian Trustees. There seems to have been some argument as to who owned the old organ because we have a record stating that three Presbyterians were authorised to proceed at once to remove the organ and consign it to the Rev. A. MacLean at Avondale. We further hear that the minister had the organ cleaned and repaired. Its value then was £6 and a buyer had been found for it. We don't hear what was done with this recompense for all the trouble.

The first reference to a Choir is contained in a record of "Sunday the 9th 05" (sic) when the matter of holding a Choral Service was referred to Mr. Yearbury. In November 1907, great appreciation was expressed of the organist, Miss Duncan, when she retired after nine years service. Mr. Holt was appointed in her place. When the Church was built in 1911, a Dougherty organ was purchased from Whangarei Presbyterians for £60. Mr. Holt was still the organist. In 1912 Mrs. Yearbury took his place and Mr. Yearbury was asked to organise a Choir. He did this but the practices were poorly attended and there was a question as to whether it would be possible to have special music for Christmas.

In Mr. Usher's time, 1925, there are references to Choir and an assistant organist being required. Mr. Yearbury was congratulated on the growth of the Choir. Miss McKay at the end of 1926 was thanked for her long service as organist when she resigned on getting married. Miss McKay was followed as organist by Miss Elsie Fenney, who also relinquished the task on her marriage. The organist then for a number of years was Mr. L.B. Fordyce, who at one time combined in one person the offices of organist, Sunday School Superintendent and Session Clerk. Mr. Fordyce is still organist for evening services. Mr. Yearbury resigned in October 1927 after there had been some difficulty with the Choir. Mr. W. Haythornthwaite took his place but soon resigned too. After that there is a long silence. In April 1950, Mrs. Dollar offered to train a Junior Choir and as we would expect this was a success and her Choir entered competitions and won prizes. Mrs. Burrows and Mrs. Dollar were sharing the playing of the organ at a later stage. Mr. L. Fordyce also came into the picture from time to time. The records do not show when the Choir under Mrs. Dollar came into being but other sources indicate that it has been functioning for 8 years. We owe a great deal to Mrs. Dollar for all the entertainments she has organised to raise funds for the Church and for her help in other ways. Having a Choir is certainly a great help to the service of praise in spite of the story of the preacher down on the West Coast who advertised his subject "What is Hell" and followed it with "Come and Hear our Choir".

The Ladies Guild

This organisation began in 1911 and continued until the Stewardship Campaign caused a revision of money-raising methods. In the middle of 1958, it was decided to go into recess. For 47 years this band of women continued their endeavours to assist the managers and congregation with perseverance and success. In all they raised more than £2375 an average of over £50 a year. They organised Fairs, Bazaars, Bring & Buys, Flower Shows, Concerts and other efforts to raise money. They helped with Sunday School picnics, attended to flowers in the Church, at times cleaned the buildings, entertained visiting preachers week by week, looked after the lamps (before electric lighting), helped to entertain a Band from the city on Coronation Sunday 1953. In addition they visited the sick, sent letters to the bereaved, invited newcomers to Church and in times of war helped with the war effort. Truly a very notable contribution to the congregations life. Foremost in all the work in the greater part of the story was Miss M. Laurie who as Treasurer was responsible for the regular collection of contributions to swell the funds.