

A number of special meetings were held which led to the congregation agreeing to rise in status and to have the Rev. F.J. Usher of Dargaville appointed as the first minister. He was inducted on October 25th, 1924, the Rev. T. Halliday, G. Budd and W. McDonald being present representing the Presbytery. A Manse costing £900 had been bought from a member of the Congregation Mr. Yearbury. In Mr. Usher's first year the membership jumped from 19 to 63 and in the following year to 74. In 1925 Messrs. A. Forson Stewart, J. Collings and W. Bodley were elected Elders. The Sunday School was closed in the early part of the year on account of infantile paralysis. Restrictions were lifted and a Thanksgiving Service was held on April 26th. A Rally month was observed, the parish was mapped out and elders allotted districts. Services were held at Glen Eden and a section was bought. About this time some well-known names appeared on the members roll, the Laurie family (including Mrs. A. Hepburn of a later date), Mr. & later Mrs. D. MacLeod. All this looked promising but the finances began to cause difficulty. The adoption of the envelope system was proposed but action was deferred. By the beginning of 1926 it began to be evident that the congregation was not large enough to support the expense of the Forward move and representations were made to the Presbytery that the charge should revert to a Home Mission Station at the end of Mr. Usher's term. This was agreed to and Mr. Usher ceased to be the Minister on October 25th, 1926 although he continued to occupy the Manse until January 31, 1927. There was an untoward incident in connection with the Presbytery proceedings regarding the above, as the Henderson Presbytery elder, Mr. T. McKay, considered he had been passed over and his resignation followed, but happily wiser counsels prevailed and he agreed to withdraw it.

1927 - 1939 Home Mission Station Again

The Depression (1931-1935)

On the 7th March, 1927 the incoming Home Missionary the Rev. C.E. Perkins took up his appointment, and there began the most fruitful ministry of this period. Under him the membership increased to 94 by 1928 and the finances were in a healthier state. During his ministry there was the sad event of the sudden death of Miss C. Knaggs, the Junior Bible Class Leader. Mr. Blackwood, the Superintendent of the Sunday School also died suddenly. In June, 1928 Mr. and Mrs. A. Dollar were received from St. James, Auckland. Mr. Perkins was not without his troubles. The organ blower had to be operated by hand and there was trouble in getting the one-boy (or man) power. Also trouble with Choir-masters and choir. The minister's car and its repair was also a source of worry. There was argument about who should have the right to elect the managers but the unconstitutional attempt to disfranchise adherent members was promptly squashed. Mr. Perkins' ministry however was a very successful one.

The Rev. W.H. Nicholas followed at the beginning of 1931. His ministry was marked by the building of the Sunday School Hall on the section next to the Church which had been bought earlier. It was opened in Feb. 1932. Mr. Forson Stewart, Elder, died in 1931. Mr. G.E. Soutar of Glen Eden was elected an Elder. It was reported that services at Swanson were well-attended. By this time the economic depression was acute and a commission of Presbytery visited the parish to discuss amalgamation, but there was opposition to this. The 21st Anniversary celebrations were held with visiting preachers, Rev. G. Budd, W.J. Comrie, F.B. Barton and R. Adair. An Old Friends Rally and an Old-Fashioned Tea Meeting were features. At the beginning of 1933 the Rev. J. Bissett, the Assembly Evangelist, conducted a Mission. The Manse was in need of repairs and £100 was borrowed to pay for them.

By this time in the Depression the membership had dropped from 90 (1931) to 48 (1933). In the neighbouring parish of Avondale a stage was reached where only four heads of households were in regular employment. Mr. Nicholas proved himself a good man in social welfare work, and as a pastor. The people were sorry to see him leave for Kaitaia at the end of May, 1933.

The Congregation entered a period of short ministries mostly by students and retired ministers. This was very unsatisfactory because the pastoral work was very inadequately covered, the students having to attend lectures and give time to study and the retired men mostly attending only to the conduct of worship. Mr. F.H. Robertson (student) began work in October, 1933. He used a motor-cycle for his transport. He persuaded the managers to leave the Church doors unlocked but we don't hear how long the practice was kept up. The attendances at Henderson Valley were so small that the service was dropped. The session dealt with a case of discipline and a member was publicly suspended from membership. Mr. G.E. Soutar resigned from the session on leaving Glen Eden and shortly after Glen Eden was transferred by the Presbytery to New Lynn. Mr. Robertson ceased to serve the parish on June 30, 1935 on account of the pressure of his studies.

He was followed by the Rev. J.M. Lochhead, Home Missionary, for a short period until the end of the year. Then a retired minister, the Rev. W. Butterworth took over. During this period the Manse was let to a tenant and Messrs. J.W. Jameson and L.B. Fordyce were elected as elders. Rev. J. Milne supplied for three months. Then another student, Mr. G.M. Yule took over in the middle of 1937. He was taken on probation for three months and gave so much satisfaction that his term was gladly extended. On March 3rd, 1938 Mr. A. Webb was admitted as a member with the Rev. G. Yule senior, officiating.

The Rev. J.D. Smith became moderator in the latter part of 1938 and he carried on in that position until 1955. One of his first duties was to ordain Mr. Duncan MacLeod as an elder. Another student took over from Mr. Yule. He was Mr. W.J. Wallace who was elected an elder in order to provide for representation on the Presbytery. Because of poor attendance, services at Swanson ceased. Mr. Wallace did good work in visiting round the parish during the University vacation. Finances were very straitened at this period and the student offered to take less than the £2.7.6 a week he was receiving but that was not agreed to. Mr. Wallace left for the Lower Hutt at the beginning of 1940.

In March 1940 Mrs. Younger the wife of the Session Clerk died and in the following June Mr. Younger resigned from that office on his removal from the district. He had a long association with the congregation and was Session Clerk from 1921 to 1940. He was also Superintendent of the Sunday School for a considerable period. His is an honoured name. He died on March 22nd, 1952, and left £250 to the Henderson congregation in his will.

1940-1952 Amalgamation with Hobsonville

The War Years : The position of Hobsonville became complicated by the development of the aerodrome there, the Church and the Manse being just on the boundary. As there was increasing difficulty in staffing due to the call up, amalgamation was resorted to to meet the situation. Mr. E.R. Alexander was appointed home missionary to the combined parishes and installed on July 7th 1940. Mr. L.B. Fordyce was appointed Session Clerk in place of Mr. Younger. A combined Committee was appointed and met quarterly. The Henderson Manse was sold, the missionary having taken up residence at Hobsonville. Mr. Alexander and Mr. C.M. Spencer were ordained as elders on August 22, 1940.

A year later Mr. Alexander was ordained as a Home Missionary thus enabling him to celebrate the Sacraments and relieve the moderator. During this period the Methodists took over the services at Oratia.

On the whole the amalgamation worked well but the area to be covered was too large. As the military authorities wished to take over the Hobsonville Manse it was agreed to sell it and buy a Manse in Henderson. This would enable the Minister to be at a more convenient centre for his work. A house in Lincoln Rd. was bought under an arrangement satisfactory to both sides of the amalgamation. Mr. Alexander's last year, 1944, was thus spent in working from Henderson.

Owing to his daughter's health, he left for Hawke's Bay at the end of 1944. His work was much appreciated and the people were sorry to lose him. He had to retire from the work in December 1948 and died suddenly in Christchurch on August 28, 1949.

He was followed by the Rev. D.W. Morgan, a bachelor who had served for a long period in various stations. During his time the war came to an end. It was a time of shortages and rising prices and the financial situation was not good. The Manse required a number of repairs. The undenominational Church at Nihotupu was handed over to the Presbyterian Church but Henderson was unable to promise to supply services. The parish was already depending on laymen from the city for its other stations. At the end of 1946 Mr. Morgan was transferred to Takaka.

1947-1951 The Final Days of Amalgamation:

The Rev. W.A. Anderson was installed at the beginning of 1947. He had been a missionary overseas. The work grew under his ministry and finances were better. Mr. C.M. Spencer who had been away for a time again rejoined the session. Mr. J. Brown, a Waitakere member who had been an elder at Mosgiel, was elected to the Session. Mr. W.B. Gilmour was appointed Bible Class Leader. Mrs. Anderson, the wife of the Minister, died in March 1948 and a memorial service was conducted by the Rev. H.W. Funnell, formerly of the China Inland Mission. Great sympathy was felt with Mr. Anderson and his two daughters in their loss. Mr. Fordyce the Session Clerk became ill and later resigned from the position. Mr. E.L. Goodenough who had come to reside in Henderson was elected an elder and shortly afterwards became Session Clerk. Mr. Anderson served for three years and great appreciation of his work was shown when he left at the beginning of 1950 for Pukemiro in the Waikato.

There was no missionary immediately available to fill the vacancy. Mr. V. Johnstone, a Baptist missionary waiting to go overseas, supplied for some months with acceptance. Finally Mr. R. Harris, a Post Office employee in the district, volunteered as a Home Missionary. He was taken on probation for three months and at the end of that time was recommended to the Presbytery for appointment. Later Mr. Harris became dissatisfied with the conditions of service and resumed work in the Post Office while still carrying on the services.

During this period there were developments at Kumeu where the Baptists erected a Church on a section given with the condition attached that Presbyterians were to have the right to conduct services in the building. An agreement to this effect was drawn up and signed by both parties.

Mr. W.B. Gilmour was elected an elder and ordained on September 16th, 1951. He proved to be a great acquisition and became increasingly depended on as a leader.

The Presbytery became concerned about the unsatisfactory position in regard to the affairs of the parish and included it in the order of reference of a Commission appointed to go into the question of boundaries in the North-Western area. This was carried through in the latter part of 1951 and brought to fruition in the beginning of 1952. The former Hobsonville parish was revived under the name Kumeu and Mr. Harris was appointed to it. Henderson was left with the area out to Waitakere and the Te Atatu peninsula and the Rev. Angus Sutherland was appointed to it.

1952-1955 The Forward Move Again

Mr. Sutherland began taking services from the beginning of May, 1952 and was formally installed on June 24th following. Approval was given to a Presbytery proposal to buy two sections at Te Atatu. These were subsequently disposed of when another property with a house on it was bought for the starting of a Sunday School in that district. The southern boundary of the parish was re-defined so that Nihotupu became the responsibility of New Lynn parish. The financial adjustments with the Kumeu parish were finalised with the exception of the repayment of the £900 which the Hobsonville parish had provided for the purchase of the Lincoln Rd. Manse. In 1953 this property was sold and the debt was repaid and became a nucleus for a Manse Fund for the Kumeu parish.

Mr. Sutherland was responsible for bringing about alterations to the interior of the Henderson Church. This was facilitated by furnishings from St. ~~Peter's~~ ^{Mungah's} Church in the city being available. Carpets, hangings, communion table, font, reading desk and pulpit were all involved, and a rearrangement was made so that the communion table became central. The effect was to make the church have much more of an atmosphere of worship.

In the beginning of 1953 the Very Rev. J.D. Smith was elected an elder on his coming to reside in the district after retiring from the Mt. Eden charge. Mr. Sutherland was ill for a while and Mr. Smith took some of the services.

Under Mr. Sutherland the work expanded rapidly. A section was bought at Waitakere costing over £150. An agreement was made with the Methodists about holding fortnightly services at Swanson. These were kept on for several years but the attendances were never large and in the end were abandoned.

In April 1953 Mr. Goodenough resigned as Superintendent of the Sunday School and Mr. A. Webb was appointed in his place. The revised Church Hymnary was adopted for use at Henderson and the Church Praise books were used at Swanson and Waitakere.

In June 1953 Mr. J. Russell, Swanson, and Mr. A. Webb were ordained as elders, the Very Rev. J.D. Smith conducting the service.

It was decided to use the property with the house on it at Te Atatu both as a Manse and a Sunday School. Mr. Sutherland had bought his own house at Brown's Bay and did not need full-scale accommodation in the parish so this arrangement was satisfactory. After a meeting of residents had given approval, Sunday School was started on February 7th, 1954 with fifteen children.