

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD, CHRISTCHURCH 20th ANNIVERSARY INFORMATION PAMPHLET

INTRODUCTION

The decision to celebrate our 20th anniversary on November 19 1994 was based on information received from the Australian Office in Burleigh Heads.

CHRONOLOGY

This is a brief chronological overview of the Christchurch Church's activities in its first 20 years. Some information has been obtained from letters written by Christchurch brethren and staff in the Auckland and Burleigh Heads Offices. There is also information obtained from the publication "Building The House."

From Building The House: "...God's work celebrates 25 years in New Zealand 10th November 1987...."

THE EARLY YEARS

The earliest activity by the Church were the Baptizing Tours of New Zealand during the early 1960s.

The first Baptizing Tour was conducted by Messrs. Wayne Cole and Clarence Huse from April 8 to April 12 1962. They flew into Auckland from Sydney, there they baptized 6 people. They were to baptize a total of 18 people including 3 in Christchurch, on April 11. Those baptized in Christchurch were Deidre Carter (now Hooper, mother of Ann and stepmother of Avril) the first person in the Christchurch area, plus Alan and Ruby Emmerson, from the West Coast.

In 1963 Laurie (deceased) and Sylvia Nathan attended the Feast Of Unleavened Bread in Sydney and were baptized at that time. Also in that year Mr Lyall Johnston of Bluff and Mr Robert Morton of Auckland (et al.) were accepted for Ambassador College, Bricketwood, England.

A second Baptizing Tour was conducted by Messrs. Frank Simpkins and Dexter Faulkner from March 2 to March 19 1964. They made a total of 82 visits resulting in 21 baptisms. In Christchurch they met 12 people and 7 were baptized. Of those 7, 5 remain members with 2 in Auckland, 1 in Westport and 2 in Christchurch. [I wonder did Mr Gerald Waterhouse take note of the numbers 7, 12 & 21.]

A third Baptizing Tour was conducted by Messrs. Le Roy Cole and Frank Simpkins during February 1966. Mr Syd Richards attended one meeting before moving to Australia. On that particular tour two Christchurch people were baptized; Mrs Joan Gee and Mr Hughes(deceased) of Rolleston. Mr Maurice Gee was baptized in September, Blackheath Australia.

Details are sketchy about exactly how many Baptizing Tours were conducted prior to Mr Marshall's arrival in Auckland (1967) as New Zealand's first resident minister. The early brethren can be considered to be true pioneers. Having little or no personal contact with other brethren and relying upon Plain Truth, Good News, booklets and other information as their only source of contact. This was because prior to the opening of the Auckland office in 1967 all such information came from the Australian office in North Sydney. In those early years a number of people left their home towns to go to either Auckland or Australia. At least 3-4 people left Christchurch. These people left so that they could be in closer contact with other brethren.

For those hardy souls that remained Radio 2KY in Sydney, and another station in Melbourne aired the World Tomorrow program late at night. It was an exercise in perseverance, late nights and poor reception. Some New Zealanders went to extraordinary lengths to hear it. An example being the man who ran a telescopic aerial up his chimney and got excellent reception on his radiogram. (1965).

THE MIDDLE YEARS

In a letter written to Mr Maurice Gee on 27th February 1985, Mr Rex Morgan, writing from Auckland said. "I've looked back on the Christchurch records, and from what is available it seems that the first meeting there was held on December 2nd 1970. Thereafter, meetings were held approximately 3 per year until March 2nd 1974, at which time Monthly meetings continued until April 19th 1975, at which time Mr John Larkin began conducting weekly Sabbath Services in Christchurch."

Mr Larkin was to remain in Christchurch until about March 1976 as the first resident minister.

Mr Jack Croucher was the next resident minister, however his tenure was short, being only about 6 months until the soon arrival of Mr Colin Kelly. Mr Kelly was to remain as the resident minister in Christchurch until 1980. Mr Karl Karlov was Christchurch's next resident minister staying until early 1983. The next 7 and a half years were under Mr Sutcliffe. His replacement in May 1990, Mr Lyall Johnston who has been resident minister for over 4 and a half years. Mr Johnston is leaving for Tauranga at the end of 1994 and the new resident minister is Mr Neville Fraser.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Over the years the Christchurch congregation has changed. Of the fledgling congregation of the early and mid 1970s a number sad to say are no longer with us. Some have died in the faith, while others have moved to other locations. These include the children of brethren who have grown into adulthood and attended Ambassador College in the USA. Of particular note is Peter Nathan who went to Ambassador College in 1969, graduated in 1972 and was ordained as a minister in 1973. He was the first Christchurch member to do so. Another being John Curry who went to college in 1977 and now works in the Australian Office. Gerard Landreth from Ashburton who went to college now lives in the USA with his family. Two other graduates have returned to Christchurch, one has married. There are yet another two currently studying at Big Sandy, Texas.

BRETHREN WHO HAVE MOVED ON

The Nathan family: First to the Marlborough Sounds then onto Tauranga.

Ian Dark: Perth, Australia, now married with a family.

Andrew Gee: Perth, Australia, now married with a daughter.

Mike Ellis: Melbourne, Australia, now married with a young family.

Norman and Lynette Wooding: Moved to Auckland in the 1960s.

Art Vershoor & family: Moved to Wellington in the early 1980s, then onto Napier.

Karen Vershoor (Arts daughter): Now lives in Australia and is married with a family.

Hriar(Harry) and Danielle Yorventian: Moved to Australia in 1977

The Best family: Moved to the Hawkes Bay area in the late 1980s.

Mrs Yvonne Wayne: Baptized in 1964, now lives in Westport.

Peter and John Best; Calvin Alsford & Whalen Day have moved to Wellington in the past ten years.

Grahame Gee who has recently returned to Wellington from Christchurch earlier this year.

Gloria Bent(now Murray): Moved to the Gold Coast, Australia.

Shirley and Derrick Knight: Moved to the North Island.

CONCLUSION

The Christchurch congregation has shown stability over its first twenty years despite some problems.

It has shown a tenacity for survival which should see it through at least the next ten years.

Researched and Compiled by Syd Richards. Computer Presentation: Les Gee.

November 5 1994.