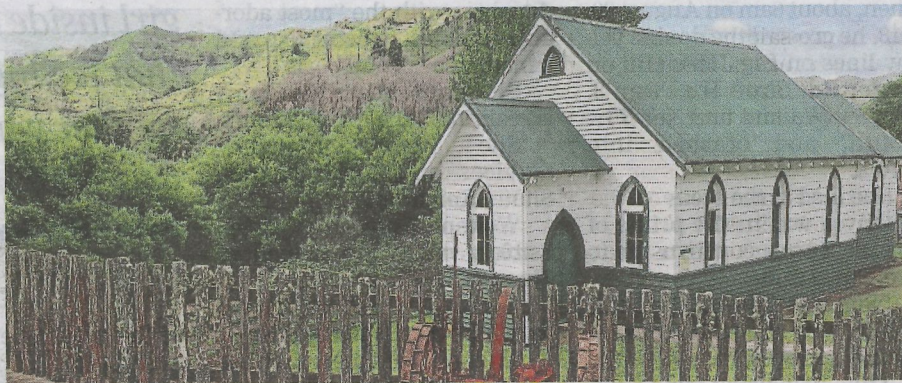


Republic church closes after 100 years



The Sacred Heart Whangamomona Church has closed its doors for good after exactly 100 years. SUPPLIED

Jane Matthews

A small church in a town with a population of 10 people was packed to the rafters as it celebrated its 100th year and also held its last ever service.

Sacred Heart Whangamomona Church, which sits at the heart of the country's only self-proclaimed republic, reached its centenary on Saturday while holding its final mass.

Father Adonis Rancho, who ran the celebrations, believed the church stopped regular mass a couple of years ago due to poor attendance.

"It is sad to let go but I think that is just the reality of it."

Rancho said most people who attended the final mass had been baptised or married at the church but no longer lived in Whangamomona.

"The church was packed."

Following the celebration the church was deconsecrated.

Rancho said it could now be used for whatever the owner wished but there were no plans to demolish the wood and corrugated iron building.