

HISTORICAL RECORD  
of the NEW PLYMOUTH BAPTIST CHURCH 1860-1977

In the turbulent days of the 1860's when the early settlers had to contend with the Maori War in the area, the New Plymouth Baptist Church had its beginnings.

Those intrepid pioneers had the strong desire to continue their special beliefs in the worship of God, so in 1860 land was purchased at the corner of Gill and Liardet Streets in preparation for establishing the Church there. Letters which are in the possession of the present church office establish the fact that the previous owner, Mr T. Kelly, was unable to remove the existing house thereon, again because of the hostility of the Maoris in the surrounding area. Therefore the Church Building was necessarily delayed.

However, on March 11th 1868 the foundation stone was laid by the Rev. John Whiteley (later massacred at White Cliffs).

The subsequent wooden building to seat 200 persons was erected and held in Trust by Josiah Flight (Local Magistrate) and Trustees W. Bailey, T. Billing, R. Hart and G. Hoby. (It is of note that this building still stands although it now fronts Liardet Street instead of Gill Street.)

Due to circumstances of which we have no knowledge, services are unrecorded although letters recently in our possession give record of many official letters to and from a local Solicitor of that day - Mr R.C. Hughes.

On October 23rd 1893 those attending Services formally constituted themselves as members of the Church. The following names constituted the first Membership Roll:-

Rev. W. Drew (Minister)	Mr A. Kennedy
Mrs A. Drew	Mrs H. Carthew
Miss G.A. Drew	Mr M. Runciman
Mr A. Ambury	Mrs M. Runciman
Mrs E. Ambury	Mr Michael Travers
Miss Ambury	Mrs Marion Travers
Mr Hal Goodacre	Mr Thomas Drewett
Mrs A. Goodacre	Mr Harold E. Drew
Mr A.R. Ladd	Mrs Beatrice Drew
Mr Fred Goodacre	P.R. Carthew
Mrs M.A. Goodacre	Mr Ernest H. Drew
Miss Ada Goodacre	H.T. Knight
Mr A.R. Goodacre	C.A. Knight
Mr W.T. Coad	Emily Remnant

The meeting was chaired by the Minister Rev. W. Drew and at the same date the newly constituted Church became affiliated with the Baptist Union of Churches of New Zealand.

Steady progress was maintained and in 1909 the minutes mention that the members be recommended to build a larger building on another site. The decision was made and on 5th October 1913 this building was opened in Liardet Street and called the 'Baptist Tabernacle'. It was of Grecian architecture, ferro concrete construction and built by a local builder, Mr Robert Coleman.

The period of the Great War of 1914-1918 saw many of the young men of the congregation in the prime of life and of great influence and usefulness to the Church leave to serve their country. This depleted numbers somewhat and the subsequent depressed world conditions made for a difficult period. Nevertheless the recovery came and further extensions became necessary and still later a much larger hall and classrooms was built in 1970. This enabled extended Church activities and some of a community nature. One of note was a Friendship Club to which up to 200 elderly and lonely folk come monthly to enjoy hospitality and friendship.

Still the number of worshippers increased and it was decided to demolish the Tabernacle to be able to build on the same site. This fine Baptist Church Centre to seat more than 400 with a number of additional facilities designed to suit the requirements of a growing congregation was opened for worship on 2nd April 1977.

The following are the names of Ministers who have served the Baptists of New Plymouth:-

1893-1899	Rev. Wm. Drew	1926-1933	Rev. F.A. Parry
1899-1900	Rev. W. Hinton	1934-1944	Rev. S. Jenkin
1902-1906	Rev. W.R. Wooley	1944-1954	Rev. J.P. Miller
1908-1911	Rev. J. Laird	1955-1963	Rev. D.W. Rushbrook
1912-1916	Rev. F. Hales	1964-1972	Rev. H. Coutts
1916-1919	Rev. A. Stevewright	1973-1977	Rev. J. Wilton
1920-1926	Rev. A.H. Collins		

Forwarded to J. Tullet,  
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and supplied by Mr S. Ogle,  
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