

First minister leaves co-operating parish after eventful five years

district news

The dog which goes to church every month at Ngamatapouri, in the Waitotara Valley, probably won't be allowed in church at her new parish.

Six-year-old Shushanik, a

lady of uncertain ancestry but decided character, is going with her family, the Rev. David Clark and his wife Jenny, to the Presbyterian parish of St Albans, Christchurch, in mid-January.

Shushi is reputed to go to church more often than some of the other Waverley-Waitotara parishioners. Certainly she has attended a Presbyterian Assembly in Wellington, and has been a perfectly acceptable member of the congregation at the once-a-month services at St Hilda in the Wood, Ngamatapouri.

The Anglican- Presbyterian co-operating parish of Waverley-Waitotara was the first of its kind formed in the Wellington Diocese, and David Clark was appointed its first minister in October 1976. It covers the area from the Whenuakura River south to Maxwell, and inland to the head of the Waitotara Valley.

The Rev. Alan Everitt, vicar of Martinborough, arrives at Waverley at the end of January to take over from the Clarks. He was vicar of St George's, Patea, from 1971 to 1975.

Appointments to co-operating parishes are normally for five years only, followed by a five-year appointment from the other denomination of the parish.

Agonising

The move has been a fairly agonising decision for the Clarks. While they are looking forward to the stimulation of life in a city, David Clark feels it will not be easy to fit back into wholly Presbyterian ways. But he thinks it is the responsibility of those with co-operating parish experience to share their vision of the church as it can and should be.

He studied at Victoria University and theological hall, Knox College, Dunedin. His first appointment was to the Presbyterian Parish at Dannevirke, where he served three years before coming to Waverley in 1976.

It had been an eventful five years in Waverley, he said this week. His job had been to bring the two parishes together into one. Now the co-operating venture was working well, and it was up to someone else to bring different ideas and talents to work on from what he had helped to start, he said.

Proportion

"I have had to be an agent of change. It hasn't been easy, but I think they have moulded me nicely," he said. He feels he has gained a sense of proportion about his place as a link in the chain of history. "I was fortunate to be around at a time of change, but I was not the cause of it."

He had thought coming to a conservative rural area might be very difficult, but he found the spirit of independence which marks

the rural person, where practical necessities override innate conservatism.

He found people who were prepared to take from the old what was good, and add to it what was good in the new. Many had remarked on the excitement and challenge of the last five years, and the broadening of their understanding of the church as a whole entity, rather than a denomination. "That's what real worship is all about," he said.

He has been very impressed by this pragmatism, and thinks that it led to the co-operative building of the new church sooner than expected, despite the nostalgic pull of the two century-old buildings which have been superseded.

Used best

The people had used the best of the past in the new concept, he said. The land on which it stands belonged to the former St Andrew's Presbyterian Parish, and from the former St Stephen's Anglican Church across the road, have come some of the lovely old furnishings.

The carved wood altar, pulpit, a carved wooden eagle lectern, the organ, pews, and a beautiful stained-glass window are all being installed in the new Church of the Good Shepherd, dedicated last Saturday by the moderator of the General Assembly, the Rt Rev. L. R. Hampton, and the Bishop of Wellington, the Rt Rev. E. K. Norman.

The name for the new church came partly from that window, installed in St Stephen's in 1954, for it depicts Christ the Good Shepherd holding what David Clark is assured is a Romney lamb. It is now the focal point behind the baptistry of the new church.

But the thinking behind the choice of name was theological, as well as having the rural overtones so apt in a parish where the land predominantly is farmed for sheep.

Driving force

David Clark believes that while he may have provided some impetus, the driving force for the new church came from the people of the parish. They knew the time would come for a new building, and that they would have to raise the money for it. So the 1979 annual meeting of the parish set up a committee to study the rationalisation of the buildings owned by both denominations.

After six months it was decided to consolidate on one site, and plans were studied. Building started in August this year and final finishing will be done in the new year.

"Not bad progress for less than three years," said Mr Clark.

A fine musician, talented photographer and writer, Jenny Clark has been fully involved in the parish and

the life of the district during their five-year stay in Waverley.

For most of their time there, she has played for services in both churches and has trained the choir. And it was a golden period for Daily News coverage of the district, when she was persuaded to act as its correspondent for a couple of years.

Examinations

Although she had played the piano and guitar since childhood, she had never done any examination work. A need in Waverley led her to take a couple of pupils, and she realised she needed at least a theory qualification. Not daunted, she started study and passed grades 5, 6, 7 and 8 of Royal School's Theory of Music examinations within the space of a year.

Her pupils rose to number 17, and she is said to be leaving many of them without replacement teaching. Not blessed with children, the Clarks feel that when one door closes, another always opens. Music has been Jenny's door, specifically church music.

She grew up in Hunterville, the daughter of Dr D. Feltham, who was director of student health for Massey University and Palmerston North Teachers' Training College from 1972 until his death at Christmas 1977.

She gained a Bachelor of Arts degree at Otago University, and she and David Clark were married on Election Day 1972 — and were caught by a television camera as they voted between the service and the reception.

At one time she was a pupil of Johannes Giesen, and asked him about learning to play the organ. He was discouraging, for he had an organist uncle who used to come home from Africa and make him play. The uncle was Albert Schweitzer.

UK course

While at Waverley, Jenny Clark has been studying organ with a Wanganui teacher, and earlier this year was able to attend a six-week Royal School of Church Music course for overseas church musicians in Britain, at

which she specialised in organ and choral work. And to help raise the necessary funds, she hand-knitted garments on a commercial basis for more than a year.

At the beginning of their three-month trip the Clarks both went to the protestant monastic community at Faize, in France, for a week, then to Rome for a 12-day ecumenical course. While Jenny was at the church music school, David visited ecumenical parishes throughout Britain. In Christchurch Jenny intends to return to university and study for a Bachelor of Music degree.

The Waverley-Waitotara session clerk, Mr T. M. H. Wall, said the Clarks had both made great contributions to the district and the parish. They had been able to fit comfortably into both the church disciplines of the parish, and had brought in a lively group of younger people.

David Clark had got a good team of lay people working together on pastoral matters, and Jenny's musical ability and enthusiasm had produced some memorable services, he said.



David and Jenny Clark and their church-going dog Shushanik in front of the new co-operating church at Waverley.

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enjoyed wine.