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**HISTORIC DAY:** Visitors stream out of the tiny Moturoa Mission Church, in New Plymouth, after a service to celebrate the restoration project, which has been carried out over several months. Photo: ADRIAN MALLOCH

## On a mission to revamp historic church

By MARK BIRCH

THE restoration of a tiny New Plymouth building described as a sanctuary and a beacon of justice, hope and love was celebrated yesterday.

During a service in the Moturoa Mission Church, St Aubyn St, the Rev Doris Elphick said that over the years those worshipping in the church had included people — both Maori and pakeha — who had helped establish the Methodist Church and the nation.

The building had been a beacon of hope, justice and love to the people of the New Plymouth district, said Mrs Elphick.

It was a place of sanctuary and quietness,

and a place of refreshment of one's strength, where one's spirits could be renewed.

"We, too, must proclaim the Gospel to our people, a Gospel relevant to what is happening around us," she said. There were still many marginalised and displaced people, young people with no sense of belonging, and people forgotten through no fault of their own.

"We can't stand still basking in the glory of the past; there is still much to be done."

Challenges ahead included bridging the differences between Maori and pakeha, said Mrs Elphick.

She is chairperson of the Grey Institute Trust, which has financed the restoration work for Te Taha Maori of the Methodist Church.

The restoration of the church and the nearby

Mission House has been taking place for several months, with the painted walls of the church and its vestry stripped back to the original wood and varnished, new carpets laid, and a new stained-glass window installed. Refurbishment of the Mission House is not yet complete.

The church was erected in Lower Mangorei Rd by early settler Zaccheus William Wells as a family church, with the first service conducted by the Rev H. H. Brown on October 10, 1869. In 1940 the building was given to the Methodist Home Mission Department for the use of the Maori people, and moved to its present site.

The Mission House, built about 1854, was the Grey Institute girls' school. Later, it served as the Rangiatea girls' hostel until the present Rangiatea campus was set up at Spotswood.