

KNOX CHURCH, WAITARA

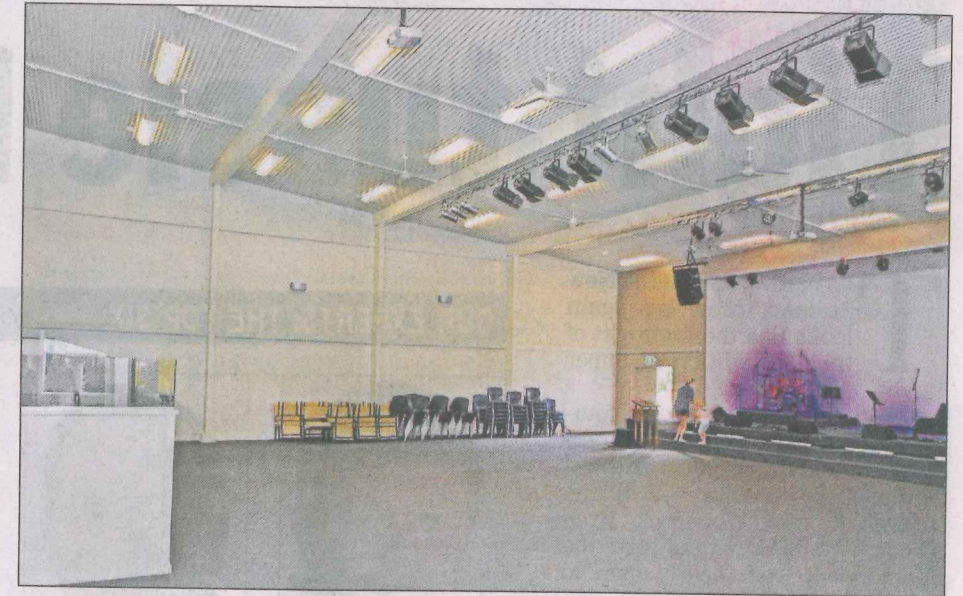
A Taranaki Daily News advertising feature



Finished: Spacious new building for Waitara church.



Photos: PIP GUTHRIE **Welcome:** Reception foyer area is the hub of the new building.

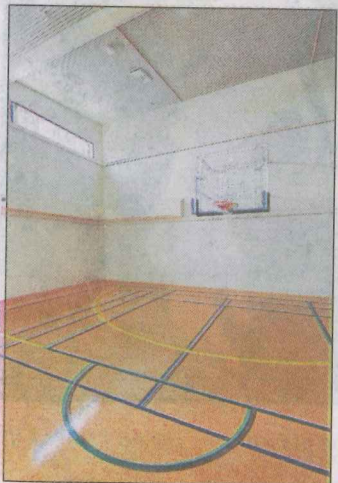


Multi-purpose: Main auditorium can be used for more than church services.

New church has room to grow



Faith in the future: Above left, fundraising chairman Graham Armstrong in front of the new church building; above - completing a boundary fence are church members Graham Dickson, at left, and Ian Finer.



Fit for all: Gymnasium space is an asset that the Waitara community can also use.



Tasteful touch: Jenny Flett puts a polish to the kitchen counter in the cafe area.

Mike Shaw

Faith and the future are the focus of the just-completed Knox Presbyterian Church in Waitara.

The church held its first service in the finished Grey St facility on Sunday and the official opening will take place tomorrow afternoon, followed by a celebration dinner function.

The new church replaces a century-old building that had become too small for the congregation, explains church fundraising campaign chairman Graham Armstrong. "We started planning in 2007 and set up a team to investigate the possibilities of enlarging the premises, buying an existing building somewhere else or land on which to build."

The church building had been too small for as much as 15 years, he notes, but efforts had been made to live with its constraints.

"We bought smaller chairs to fit everyone in, and some that we had made ourselves 30 years before, we took apart, cut off one-and-a-half inches off each one and put back together to save space. We also tried running two services."

The decision was finally made to demolish the original building and build on the existing site. As well as being too small, the age of the building involved ongoing maintenance and the concrete structure was not earthquake-proof, Graham adds.

"It was going to be expensive to strengthen the building and add on at the same time. We had an engineer look at it, but the best option was to demolish it and start afresh."

That choice was backed up by the years that the church had occupied the site. "Partly, it was also because we belong here. We've been here for 100 years and it feels like home. It's also a good central location in Waitara and a lot of the kids can walk or bike here from their homes."

Plans for the new building came

wealthy congregation, just average."

Fundraising in earnest for the budgeted \$2.35 million began in September 2010 and the congregation quickly demonstrated its commitment to and enthusiasm for the rebuilding project with pledges totalling \$1 million.

"Once we got that confirmed, the community could see that we were really committed and got in behind us. We had some amazing and generous contributions from trusts and other charities."

Those contributions included \$500,000 from the national Presbyterian Church, \$300,000 from St John's Presbyterian Church in Wellington and other grants from the TSB Community Trust, TET (Taranaki Electricity Trust) and the Southern Trust.

Past church members also added to the funds. "As soon as people heard about the project they started sending in cheques - that was very encouraging and confirmed we were doing the right thing."

Raising the final \$2.7m funding needed for the project completion is a testimony not only to the commitment of church and community, according to Graham Armstrong. "God also helped us to reach this target as well."

foyer - a welcoming space that is the hub of the facility, linking through to the main auditorium, church offices, cafe/kitchen, function rooms, and gymnasium.

The reception desk ahead is eye-catching with its feature detail of galvanised gabion baskets containing smooth river stones. "It adds a Taranaki flavour," Graham says.

The ceiling above is lined with perforated corrugated iron - a sound-control detail that is appreciated in spaces where there will be many people gathered. "We have lots of youth programmes and it can get quite noisy at times," Graham admits. "It's also quite robust, so it should handle balls hitting the ceiling."

Glowing squares in the ceilings are the outlets for the large light tubes that let natural light into the interior spaces.

To the left of the foyer is the well-equipped kitchen area that serves both foyer and the cafe room behind the kitchen. French doors open from the cafe space to a patio area outside. "We designed the kitchen area for the catering we need. We will have 250-plus at the opening dinner celebration and we serve coffee and tea after church... we've

also, especially since they won't have to hire sound and lighting equipment separately."

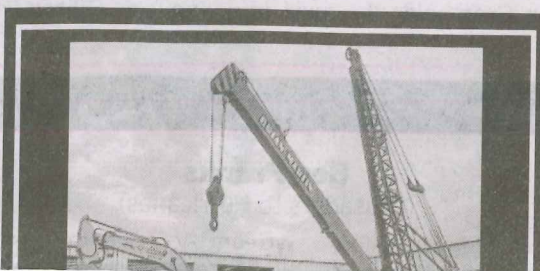
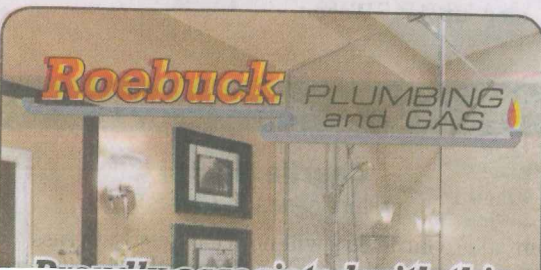
A gymnasium has been created adjacent with a two-thirds-size basketball court laid out. Adjustable basketball hoops allow for different age groups. Volleyball, netball, badminton and indoor soccer are other sports likely to be played in here, according to Graham.

"The gym is not really designed as a sports facility, but for our own programmes. Sometimes, we have 80 to 90 kids here on a midweek night. That requires a lot of space to handle the numbers and the noise... it was very difficult to run the programme when we were squashed for room."

Two large meeting rooms can become four smaller areas with the use of folding doors that split each. "These rooms are mainly for our young people, but they can be useful for conferences with space for breakout sessions."

One of the smaller portions has vinyl flooring that is able to handle the potential upsets during playgroup and preschool craft mornings. It also opens out to the large side deck that has a sand pit adjacent.

Each of the meeting spaces has its




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the site. "Partly, it was because we belong here. We've been here for 100 years and it feels like home. It's also a good central location in Waitara and a lot of the kids can walk or bike here from their homes."

Plans for the new building came together quickly with the help of architectural designer Tony Biesiek. They encompassed everything the church needed now in terms of space and facilities and allowed for growth and flexibility in the future.

"We were looking for a home for the next 50 years without having to add any more on (in that time). It's hard to predict what the future holds, but we tried to future-proof the building and built it larger than what we need at the moment."

The congregation viewed, commented on and approved the plans. "Then we had to get the money... that was the hardest part," recalls Graham. "We are not a

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More than \$200,000 in extra funding had to be found when the ground beneath the church was discovered to be prone to liquefaction. Foundation designs had to be changed to allow for deeper piles to resolve the issue.

That's all behind the church now and the first service on Sunday was the initial thanksgiving for the striking monopitch-roof structure that is now a feature of Grey St.

The building comprises 1326sqm at ground level with another 139sqm of storage room upstairs. It all sits on grounds of about 2500sqm.

A tour through the church building begins with the central

both foyer and the cafe room behind the kitchen. French doors open from the cafe space to a patio area outside. "We designed the kitchen area for the catering we need. We will have 250-plus at the opening dinner celebration and we serve coffee and tea after church... we've never been able to fit everyone in before; now we'll be able to do that."

Doors open wide into the main auditorium that will be able to seat 280. They will be kept comfortable throughout the seasons with nine fans arranged across the ceiling and a gas-furnace-heated central heating system.

Graham indicates the comprehensive lighting and sound systems also set up across the ceiling. "That will be good for things like concerts and church productions, but can also be used by the community."

"Schools are keen to use the auditorium for their productions

One of the smaller portions has vinyl flooring that is able to handle the potential upsets during playgroup and preschool craft mornings. It also opens out to the large side deck that has a sand pit adjacent.

Each of the meeting spaces has its own kitchenette facility.

The church building has become a valuable asset for the community - without trying to duplicate the town's War Memorial Hall, Graham notes. "As we've gone through the process, we have seen the community looking forward to it as well. There's nothing quite like it in Waitara."

The official opening tomorrow is at 2pm, with the celebration dinner being held in the evening. A special celebration service will be held at 10 am on Sunday where the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand will be speaking.



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