

# St Luke's closes doors after 87 years

St Luke's Methodist Church (Okato) closed its doors after a final service last Sunday.

St Luke's Methodist Church was built in 1898, but coastal mission work really began in 1846 with the arrival of German missionary J. F. Riemenschneider. He set up a base in Warea and later built a church in the same area.

The Whiti took scripture lessons from Mr Riemenschneider, but when the Maori-Pakeha disturbances began Mr Riemenschneider withdrew his labours and settled in Nelson.

Missionary work was continued sporadically between 1860 and 1885, with an occasional visit to the coast by Rev John Whiteley from New Plymouth.

In 1885, Rev John Nixon extended his New Plymouth parish to include the coastal area by visiting locals and conducting services in the Okato School.

However, the quarterly meeting objected to the time Rev Nixon spent on the coast and his services were withdrawn.

At this time T. P. Hughson and his wife had begun conducting Sunday School for Okato children. Together with Mr William Andrews, the Hughsons conducted worship in the area until 1895.

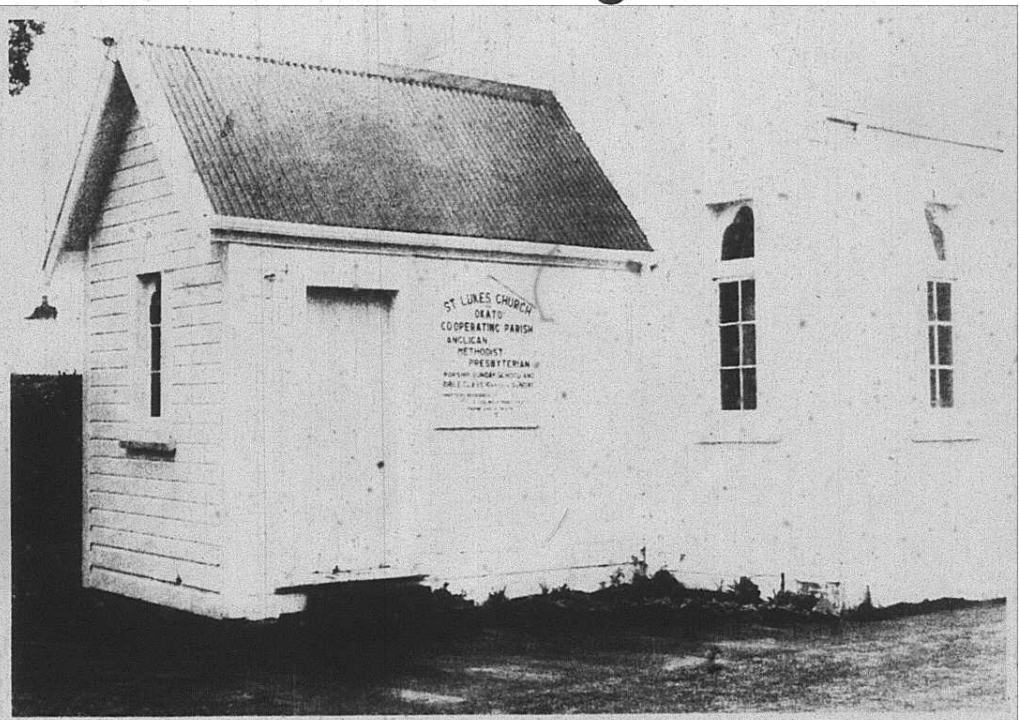
In 1895, coastal people urged the New Plymouth diocese to appoint a minister for the coast and the Rev John White was appointed to an area from Taramaika to Rahotu. His appointment was made contrary to conference regulations, but at last Okato had their own official minister.

Mr White had his residence in Rahotu and carried out his parish work on horseback. During his ministry four churches were built in the parish.

St Luke's Church cost £250 to build. The land was bought from Mr J. McCullam for £35. Nineteen people were present at the original building meeting.

In 1889, Mr White's daughter Mary (Mrs Arnold Wells) was received as the first fully accredited woman Methodist Lay preacher in New Zealand. Mr White continued his ministry on the coast until 1903 when the Rev J. Turnbull also from the New Plymouth circuit, succeeded him.

The original trustees of the parish were: T. P. Hughson, J. F. Eustace, W.



H. Andrews, F. Ashley, G. Corbett, R. F. Roebuck, G. Barr, J. McCullam and C. Wells.

The first baptism in the Church was of Francis A. C. Ashley in May 1899 and the first marriage was between Mr W. Clarke and Miss Eva M. Roebuck.

Parish work was under the direction of the New Plymouth circuit until 1907, when the Cape Egmont Circuit came into being.

The first minister to be resident in Okato was the Rev E. King in 1917, and in 1925 the Rev J. Nixon became the first minister to preach in Okato from the Opunake circuit.

In 1936, a hall was added to the church under the direction of the Rev G. Hall and in 1961 a new parsonage was provided for the Rev A. Reid. The Okato circuit welcomed the Rev J. Wright in 1970 and in the

same year the new hall was built.

In 1978, the co-operating parish, between the Methodist and Anglican churches, was established and Sunday, July 28, saw the last service held in the church.

The St Luke's congregation will now meet in St Paul's Church, Okato, where the communion elements and symbols from St Luke's Church have been taken.

## Answer office awaits

A proposal to have some Government departments open part-time offices in Opunake is on hold, awaiting ministerial reply.

A group of Rahotu people is trying to get a coastal office set up for the departments of Labour, Maori Affairs, Social Welfare and the Housing Corporation.

A member of the group

## Winning grin



## Smooth switch to STD

STD has arrived in Opunake.

The cut-over to subscriber-toll dialling for Opunake telephone subscribers went smoothly on Friday according to the Opunake postmaster, Mr Murray Ealem.