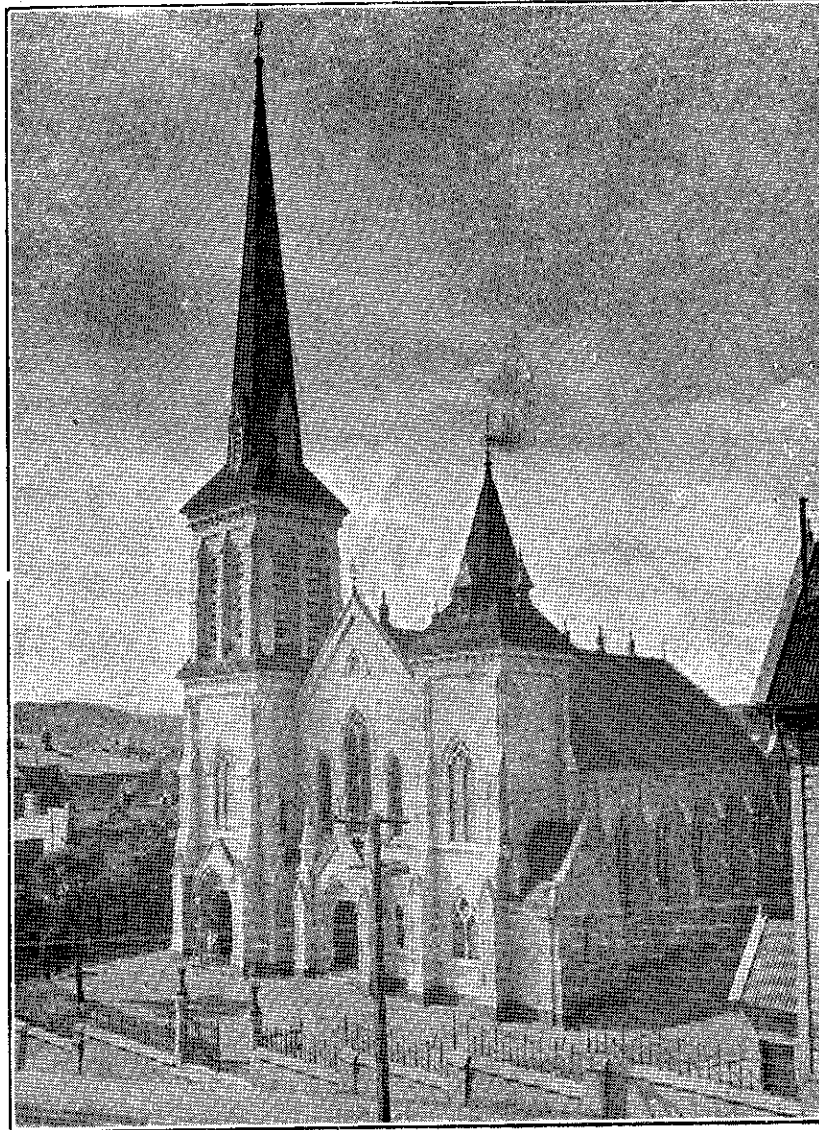


St. John's
Through 100 Years

*A brief account of the first hundred
years of St. John's Presbyterian
Church, Willis Street, Wellington,
New Zealand*

1853 — 1953



FOREWORD

THIS BOOKLET IS NOT A HISTORY. I DOUBT IF ST. JOHN'S history could be written. The fire of 1884 took its toll of much valuable material concerning our beginnings. In the years since many threads have been woven into the story, and many lives, some great in fame, many more only names on Communion Rolls, have been used by God to keep alight the fire on the altar. Let this be their lasting monument. They all belong to that great company, "our fellow-labourers whose names are in the Book of Life".

The Session would place this booklet among the records as an Essay in History—an attempt to trace the course our fathers steered, and to point to some of the landmarks that helped to chart their toiling at the oars. Although, in places, the records may do less than justice to some of our pioneers, nevertheless their works, I believe, will shine out in the following pages. Here is the evidence of God's mighty Hand on this Congregation. Here we experience the sense of His Presence and enabling Grace to men and women who through times often difficult, exposed to the changing fortunes of a Dominion still in-the-making, found strength enough to match their visions, and knew the exhilaration of travelling the hard road with Christ when they could have chosen the smooth one for themselves.

For me one fact glows like a flame in this narrative. St. John's most surely travelled in the Joy of the Lord in days when her people moved out to meet the call of new commitments and the sacrifices that these entailed. The Word that made our Church a beacon and a blessing is this Word: "Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the Gospel's, the same shall find it." To feel the pulse of that Life in them is both inspiration and summons. May the Presence Who supported them make us equal to His task for us today. May the Grace which sent them to win His Kingdom in other lives be our abundant provision, that we too may come home bringing our sheaves with us.

WILLIAM P. TEMPLE

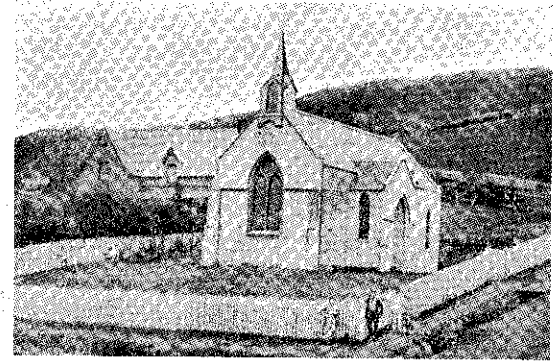
ST. JOHN'S THROUGH 100 YEARS

ORIGIN AND ESTABLISHMENT

THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION TO BE ESTABLISHED in Wellington, which later became St. Andrew's, had been formed as an offshoot of the Church of Scotland in 1840. A measure of division developed in this congregation in 1851. The arrival in Otago in 1848 of members of the Free Church of Scotland (which had disrupted from the Church of Scotland in 1843) and the inevitable movement of some of these people northward to Wellington in the next few years contributed to the division of Presbyterians in Wellington and no doubt influenced one section of them to look to the Free Church of Scotland for a solution of their disharmonies. They decided to form a second congregation to be within the Free Church.

On November 15, 1851, therefore, a group of 69 people in Wellington sent off a petition to the Free Church of Scotland to send them a regularly ordained Minister of that Church and on November 3, 1853, the Rev. John Moir landed in Wellington. He conducted his first services on November 6 and was formally inducted into his office as Minister of the Free Church of Wellington on November 17. This last date, therefore, marks the formal establishment of the congregation later known as the Willis Street Presbyterian Church and later still as St. John's.

The new congregation had secured the use of the Athenaeum on Lambton Quay (then known as the Beach) and here they held that first service on November 6, 1853, and the regular services for the next three years. In the early months of 1854, a Kirk Session was formed consisting of four elders—Messrs. James Mitchell, Michael Quin, James Blyth and Adam McDonald. Two deacons were also appointed—Messrs. William Lyon and James Wallace. With the setting up of a Session the congregation had achieved the final step in its formation. On the first Sunday in June, 1854, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was dispensed to the new congregation for the first time. Sixty-nine people had signed the originating petition and the membership is recorded



The First Church, 1856

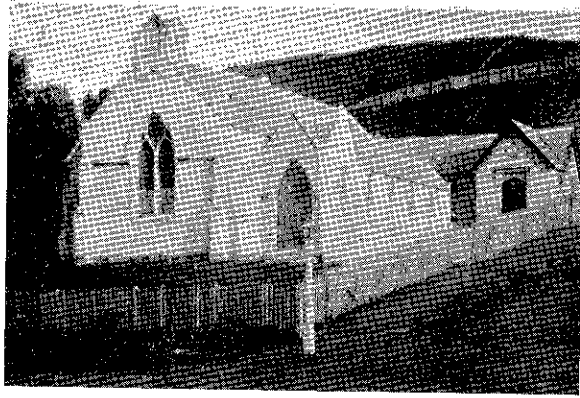
as being 68 in the year or two following Mr. Moir's induction. In 1856 a Church was erected and at the first Communion service in the new building in October, 1856, forty-two persons took Communion.

The congregation, once it moved into its own building, became known as the Willis Street Presbyterian Church. During 1872 the name was changed to St. John's Presbyterian Church, Willis Street, but no record now exists of the circumstances giving rise to this change of name. The roll then stood at 149.

In its first years the congregation grew slowly. As the growth of the city itself accelerated, however, so did the growth of the congregation. In 1878 the Communion Roll stood at 250, which was an increase of 30 on the roll of the preceding year, but before taking up the story of this growth in numbers and activities it will be appropriate to record something of the Church buildings themselves.

THE BUILDINGS

IN 1855 PLANS WERE PREPARED FOR A CHURCH BUILDING WHICH, together with a site, was to cost £1,000. The site was purchased on the corner of Willis Street and Dixon Street where the present Church stands, although the area purchased was less than the area subsequently held on this site. In 1855 the sum of £1,000 meant much more than it does today and was indeed a considerable target for a congregation of sixty to seventy people, but our early Presbyterian congregations had high courage



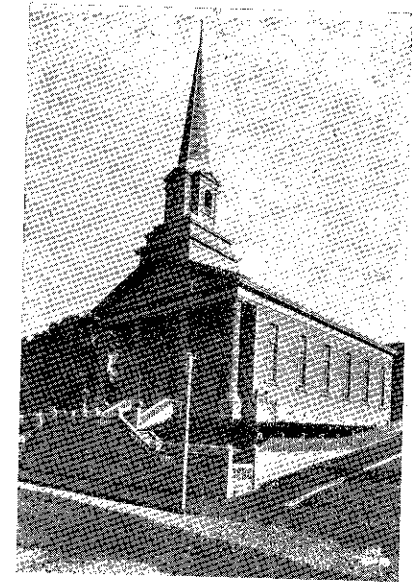
The First Church, with additions, 1866

and a grand capacity for giving both of themselves and of their money. The Church, which would accommodate 200 worshippers (three times the need of the existing congregation), was built in 1856 and the Rev. John Moir preached at the opening service on August 31, 1856. It was a wooden building of neat conventional design with a belfry surmounted by a short steeple. The newspaper of the day described it as "an ornament to the city".

In 1858 the sum of £275 was raised for an addition to the Church building mainly to provide for the growing Sabbath School, but the uncertainties of the Maori Wars and other difficulties delayed the construction until 1866 when an annex was added to the side of the Church. By this time both Sunday School and congregation were growing rapidly and in 1871 a further addition was made.

Even this second addition could not meet the growing requirements of the congregation and by 1874 still more accommodation was necessary. The Church building itself was not twenty years old, but the additions had already detracted from it architecturally and further additions would raise problems of inconvenience as well as further spoiling the appearance of the buildings. In 1874 the congregation of no more than 170 people resolved to pull down the existing buildings and erect a new Church at a cost of some £4,000. Again they planned a Church for a congregation of upwards of three times its existing size,

the new Church being designed to seat 600 people. Of the money required, £2,400 was subscribed immediately (an average of over £12 per church member at a time when £12 was a month's wages for a working man). On June 29, 1875, the foundation stone of the new church was laid by the Marquis of Normanby, then Governor of the Colony, and the church was opened on December 12 in the same year. All agreed that it was a building for St. John's to be proud of. At the same time a new Sunday School was also built beside the Church.



The Second Church, 1875

St. John's had built two churches within twenty years, but it was destined to build three within thirty years. At about 7 a.m. on Friday, May 9, 1884, the new church and adjoining Sunday School hall, both not yet ten years old, were burnt to the ground. It was a devastating blow, but this congregation had no doubts, no backward looks. While the embers were still hot, they began to plan for a new and still larger church and a new and still larger Sunday School hall. The new church, planned to cost £6,800, would require more land and so they bought the adjoining property for £1,500. The house then on it was moved to where it still stands as the Church Officer's house.

In addition to the insurance on the destroyed buildings the congregation had to raise about £5,000. In raising this sum the Church Treasurer, Mr. James Smith (founder of James Smith's Ltd.), proved a tower of strength in rallying the congregation to the effort required. By the time the foundation stone was laid by the Chief Justice, Sir James Prendergast, on May 15, 1885, Mr. James Smith could announce that he had £3,140 in hand or promised. The architect of the new church was Mr.

Thomas Turnbull and the builder was Mr. James Wilson. At the same time the new Sunday School hall (the present Dixon Street Hall) was built.

The new church, with seating for 800, was opened on December 6, 1885. In that year the members of St. John's in full Communion numbered only 360. The records say: "That so small a body of men and women faced and accomplished tasks of such magnitude as the erection of two large churches with halls and Sunday School building in nine years is a circumstance as surprising as it is gratifying." The records appear to have stated it mildly. What courage, what a heart this congregation had!

In 1901 gaslight was installed in the Church and Sunday School and it is interesting to learn that, with the choice of electricity or gas, they chose the latter. Electric lighting and heating was not installed until 1927. In 1902, when the Sunday School buildings were extended, a Social Parlour was provided in the basement below the hall and was referred to as "commodious, handsomely furnished, well lit and warmed. . . ."

Until 1929 the congregation derived a certain amount of revenue from letting the hall and other rooms in the Sunday School building. In that year, however, the unimproved value of the Church property was raised from £1,825 to £4,300, and the consequential increase in rates on the premises, if let, made it inexpedient to continue the practice.

FEATURES OF SPECIAL INTEREST

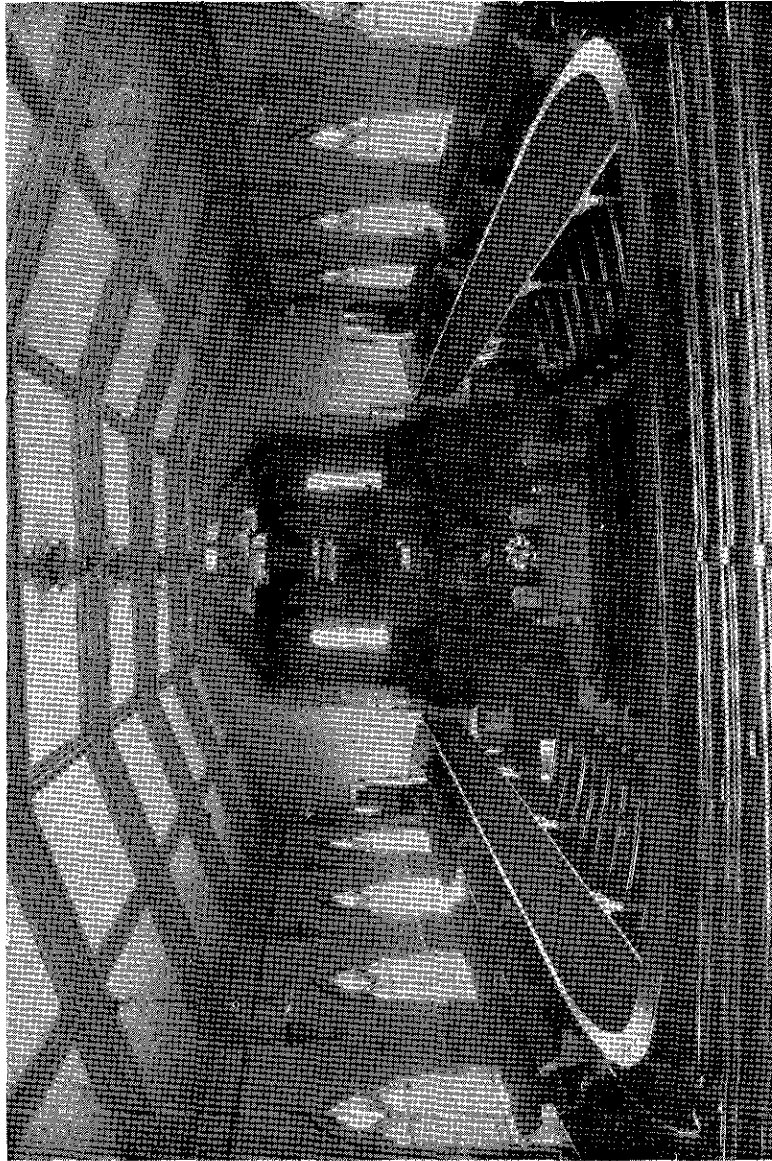
THE CHURCH AS IT STANDS TODAY HAS MUCH OF SPECIAL interest in it—things which have a history behind them, which mark great events and great people.

First for mention should, of course, be the organ. When the new Church was built in 1885 it had room for the installation of an organ in the choir gallery and Mr. James Smith was determined to see an organ, and a fine one, installed. He made it his personal mission to raise the money and to secure a worthy instrument, and in 1886 a particularly fine instrument was secured from Lewis and Co., London, at a cost of £1,600. Mr. James Smith had gone far afield in his efforts to raise this money and by

the time the organ was installed he had a large part of it in hand and a number of members of the congregation lent the balance free of interest until the whole amount was subscribed. The installing of this organ in St. John's was in fact a community as much as a congregational donation. The total cost, including installation, was £1,859, and of this amount £807 came from outside the congregation (including some £200 in donations from London). £537 was raised by concerts and recitals and the balance was contributed directly by members of the congregation. But behind the gifts stands the foresight, the enthusiasm and the energy of one man. The organ, which has won very high praise from overseas visitors to New Zealand, is, in effect if not in fact, the memorial to Mr. James Smith. His son, Mr. A. P. Smith, also an office-bearer of St. John's for many years, continued to have a very special interest in "his father's organ" and on his death in 1948 left the sum of £1,000 for its renovation. In 1910 the family of Mr. James Smith presented the Church with the three Pulpit chairs "in memory of their father who served the Church in many offices and for many years and in whose heart its welfare ever held a foremost place."

When the War Memorial for the 1914-1918 war was unveiled in 1920—the two brass tablets, one on either side of the pulpit, bearing the names of those who served and those who made the supreme sacrifice—a member of the congregation (anonymously at the time) gave the two beautiful stained glass windows, one at each side of the organ, as part of the memorial. It may now be recorded that the gift came from the Hon. J. G. W. Aitken.

The other stained glass window in the Church, the "Good Samaritan" window in the north wall above the gallery, is a most beautiful piece of work. It was dedicated on July 15, 1923, in memory of the Hon. J. G. W. Aitken, the grand old man of St. John's first century, who died in August, 1921. The following brief tribute to him is taken from the 1922 Report of the Session: "Mr. Aitken's labours were abundant; in Parliament, in the municipality, in the sphere of education, and in countless philanthropic enterprises and agencies he strove incessantly to serve his day and generation. His private charities were as numerous as his public service. . . . But Mr. Aitken's devotion was above all to the Church and in her work he found his chief joy. To his own congregation and to the Church in general he



Church Interior

was indeed a tower of strength. In the Church Property Trustees and in Assembly Committees too numerous to name, his unflinching sagacity and singleness of purpose was a priceless asset to the work." He had been ordained an elder in St. John's thirty-seven years earlier in 1884. In 1918 he was called to be Moderator of the General Assembly, the first layman Moderator in the history of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand.

The Communion Table and centre Chair commemorate another great man. The table, designed by Mr. W. Gray Young and made by Mr. Alex. Martin, was dedicated in 1933 in memory of Mr. M. D. Menelaus, who had passed away in 1931. A brass tablet on the west wall of the Church also commemorates him. He was a member of St. John's for 44 years, an elder for 36 years and Session Clerk for 29 years. Of him the 1931 Report records: "Active in every work of the Church, he yet always kept himself in the background. Never self-seeking, he was ever forward when work was to be done; whatever he undertook to do was done promptly, faithfully and well."

Of the two Communion Table chairs on either side of the Minister's chair, one is in memory of Alexander Hopkirk, elder from 1876 to 1907, and was presented by his son, William Hopkirk, and the other is in memory of William Allan, elder from 1884 to 1921, and was presented by his family.

The lectern at the side of the Communion Table stands in memory of yet another great man, Mr. William Hopkirk, who gave sixty-one years of service in the Sunday School and who will be mentioned again when we come to tell the story of the Sunday School. He became a manager in 1876 and an elder in 1888, holding the latter office for 48 years. He was a member of the Board of Queen Margaret and Scots Colleges and a well-known figure in Presbytery and Assembly. His place in the annals of St. John's is also commemorated in a brass tablet on the west wall of the Church and by the Bible on the lectern which was given by Mrs. Mary Hopkirk in 1937.

The beautiful brass lectern which stands in the centre of the Communion Table during Communion services was given by the Rev. and Mrs. Gladstone Hughes in memory of their son, Sub-Lieutenant H. W. Hughes, R.N.Z.N.V.R., who had made the supreme sacrifice in the 1939-45 war.

There are two other tablets on the west wall of the Church.

One of these is in memory of Sir George Troup, whose name occurs so frequently in the last half of St. John's first century. His work for the Bible Class is mentioned elsewhere. He joined St. John's in 1888, was ordained as an elder in 1895 and retained that office for 46 years until his death in 1941. He did great work not only for the Bible Classes and the Bible Class Movement, but also in developing the Wellington Boys' Institute and in many other fields in both Church and civic affairs. He was Mayor of Wellington from 1927 to 1931.

The other tablet on the west wall is in memory of Mr. A. P. Smith, son of Mr. James Smith. Mr. A. P. Smith was associated with St. John's all his life, having been baptised in the Church in 1873. He was an elder from 1913 until his death in 1948, and a Session minute says of him: "He inherited from his father a spirit of intense loyalty to the Church and an eagerness to support all its activities. The Board of Managers never called on him in vain and he never failed to respond readily and generously to every appeal for support; he was particularly interested in the praise service of the Church, and the organ which his father had been instrumental in installing."

A brass tablet in the north wall of the Church commemorates Mr. John Kirkcaldie (who was a member of the Board of Management for 48 years) and members of his family.

To mark its Jubilee celebrations the Young Men's Bible Class presented the Church with the embroidered pulpit fall which was placed on the pulpit on May 26, 1940. Bookmarkers for the pulpit Bible and Hymn Book were presented by the ladies of the congregation in 1928, and in 1938 the Women's Association presented the Church with a cloth of pure Irish linen of proper ecclesiastical design for the Communion Table.

The present pulpit Bible was given to St. John's by Mr. and Mrs. H. W. Kersley as a thank-offering on the occasion of their Golden Wedding Anniversary in 1950. Mr. Kersley served St. John's long and faithfully as manager and elder and in its youth work.

There are other articles about the Church which while not of the same commemorative interest, nevertheless have associations which are well worth recording. In 1936 Mrs. Helen Hall presented the Church with the mallet and the silver and ivory

trowel presented to Sir James Prendergast for the laying of the foundation stone in 1885.

In 1886 Mr. R. Pringle, of London, an uncle of Mr. A. P. Smith, gave the Church a silver Communion service which is still in use.

The offering plates in the Church were the gift of Mr. Alex Martin, who is now the second most senior elder (Mr. Ad. Howitt, ordained in 1913, being senior elder). Mr. Martin was leader of the Young Men's Class from 1916 to 1921, was ordained an elder in 1919, and was Session Clerk from 1945 to 1949. The clock at the front of the gallery was the gift of Mr. Dawson in 1889, when he left for Melbourne after fourteen years' membership of St. John's.

Before we leave the subject of Church furnishings, it is of interest to record that individual Communion glasses were introduced in 1904, and a battery hearing aid in 1933. This was later replaced by an electric amplifier as more deaf folk came to appreciate the benefit of using the earphones. In 1950 the old bell was retired in favour of the more modern chimes amplifier. Both the hearing aid amplifier and the chimes amplifier were gifts to the Church.

THE CONGREGATION

MUCH OF THE STORY OF ST. JOHN'S THROUGH ITS FIRST CENTURY is to be found in the annals of the various organisations which are dealt with separately in other parts of this narrative. The story will, therefore, not be complete until the history of each organisation in turn has been presented; but there is first of all something to be told of the congregation as a whole — its growth, some of the points of interest which can well be brought forward from the past, and some of the achievements of a Church which has marched with high courage through the first hundred years.

We have already spoken of the early congregation and its growth to a Communion Roll of 250 in 1878. The roll increased to 360 in 1885 and to 422 in 1888. This growth continued fairly steadily and in 1903 when the Rev. James Paterson retired the roll had reached 638.

Some interest attaches to roll numbers, although it must always be remembered that these have been influenced from time

to time by the establishment of suburban churches, the spread of the industrial area, and the difficulties left by times of war.

For the first fifteen years of Dr. Gibb's ministry the upward movement continued. In 1913 the number of new members joining the Church during the year reached the record of 163, but large-scale comings and goings were a feature of the congregation, and even this large accession of new members increased the roll numbers by only 71. In 1918 the Communion Roll reached 887, the highest it has ever been, but this figure must be treated with some reserve, as it included some 252 members who were in the Armed Forces. A purging of the roll after demobilisation during 1919 brought it down to 806 in 1920. In 1920 Dr. Gibb was away, and by 1921 the roll had fallen to 698. It rose to 730 again in 1922, but after that it continued to fall away until in 1926, when Dr. Gibb retired, it stood at 572.

By 1929 it had revived to 767 and remained at over 700 throughout the remainder of Mr. Blanchard's ministry, being 713 when he resigned in 1939. For eight months Dr. Inkster occupied the pulpit. A purging of the roll during this time reduced it to 689 when the Rev. Gladstone Hughes took up his St. John's ministry, but by 1942 it had temporarily revived to 728. When Mr. Hughes retired in 1947 it stood at 493 and in 1952 was 454.

Through the years the congregational activities of St. John's have been many and varied. As already mentioned, those embarked upon by particular organisations are dealt with in other parts of this narrative, but there are others which should be credited to the congregation as a whole.

In 1878 the congregation appointed one of its elders, Mr. Robert Hopkirk, to be a city missionary, paying him £120 a year for this office. He continued to do this work for three or four years. The Report for 1879 says: "Mr. Robert Hopkirk, the city missionary employed by the congregation, prosecutes his labours with great zeal and not without tokens of success. He visits in Newtown, Kilbirnie, Mitcheltown and other districts of the city; visits the homes of many who attend no place of worship and speaks to them of Christ and His Salvation. He visits the immigration barracks when the immigrants arrive; also the hospital, and holds a regular service there on Sabbath evenings which is well attended. He has also on several occasions

taken part in the religious services held at Wadestown with those employed there on the railway works." Mr. Robert Hopkirk died in 1900. He had then been an elder of St. John's for some twenty years and before that had been an elder of the Free Church of Scotland. In Wellington he was often called on to supply for pulpits. It was mainly through his labours, sustained by St. John's congregation, that the Church Room of St. James' was built and the Sabbath School established there.

The 1879 Report of the congregation had referred to "the unparalleled depression which had been experienced by all classes of the community during the past twelve months." Reports through the next ten years refer from time to time to the difficult times through which the colony was passing. These 1870's and 1880's were not easy years for church or community, and by 1888 the country was experiencing mass unemployment and the many evils in industrial conditions which accompanied that severe trade depression. The ordinary revenue of the church nevertheless remained steady at round about £1,500 through the worst years of depression, and in most of those years the congregation also managed to put amounts varying from £53 to over £1,000 towards extinguishing its debt. From 1887 to 1894 there was little change in the numbers on the roll, which remained between 416 and 449, and reflected the check to growth experienced by the country as a whole.

The Report for 1889 gives a fairly comprehensive list of the activities of the congregation at that time. Church services were held at 11 a.m. and 6.30 p.m. on Sundays and 7.30 p.m. on Wednesdays. The Christian Fellowship Association met at 10 a.m. on Sundays; there was an 11 a.m. children's service at Mount Cook; Bible Classes and Sunday Schools met at 2.30 p.m.; and on the first Sunday of each month at the close of the evening service there was the Monthly Prayer Meeting. The Ladies' Visiting Society met in the afternoon of the first and third Tuesday of each month; the Literary Society on Tuesday evenings at 7.30; the Choir practised on Wednesdays after the mid-week service and there was also a Children's Music Class from 6.30 to 7.30 p.m. on Wednesdays; the Minister's Bible Class met on Thursdays at 7.30 p.m.; and on Friday evenings there was the Band of Hope meeting from 7 to 8 p.m., followed by the weekly Sunday School Teachers' Meeting. The Report for 1890 makes

reference to a Sunday evening mission for young lads ("The lad's mission") being then conducted in the Mount Cook school-room by Messrs. Aitken and Allen. This mission had already been running for some years and the Report states that the boys "have been trained up in good habits and provided with situations where they have done credit to themselves and to those who take an interest in them. Everything is done to help and encourage the lads to a life of well-doing; the Ladies' Society assists with clothing and an annual treat is given to the lads." This mission was the forerunner of the Wellington Boys' Institute, the story of which is told elsewhere. In the following year the proposal emerged to establish the Institute and to transfer the Lads' Mission to it.

Attendance at the mid-week service at this time averaged about fifty. The 1890 Report comments particularly on the large number of young people, especially young men, who were attending the Sunday evening services. The Report for 1908 states that "as a rule the capacity of the Church is taxed to its utmost at the evening service, a large percentage of the congregation being visitors."

The 1910 Report dwells at some length on this characteristic of the St. John's congregation. It states: "In the last twelve months no fewer than 143 names have been removed from the roll. Of these, 12 are accounted for by death; 15 have left the Church and cannot be traced; leaving the extraordinary number of 116 who have received certificates of disjunction. It is true that this notable loss has been almost made up by the addition to the roll of 116 new names; but it is significant of the change taking place in the personnel of the congregation that an unusually large percentage of the newcomers are young people, not householders. The dearth of families is thrown into clear relief by the swiftly diminishing number of children presented for baptism. It is an impressive fact that from the 13th December, 1909, to the 13th June, 1910, not one child was baptised by the minister and the total of baptisms for the year is only 19."

The 1911 Report again records that "the Church is always well filled in the morning when the weather is good and the evening congregation continues to fill the whole building." In 1916 the same statement still occurs.

In December, 1903, the Church had celebrated the fiftieth

anniversary of its formation. This was the year in which the Rev. James Paterson retired after 35 years as Minister of St. John's, and in which Dr. Gibb embarked upon his 23-year ministry in the Church. In 1904 Dr. Gibb commenced a series of week-night talks following the Wednesday prayer meeting, which in 1903 had taken the place of the mid-week service, but from the Annual Report of the Session we gather that they were not well patronised.

In 1919, for the first time in sixteen years, Dr. Gibb failed to occupy the pulpit because of an illness. This was the year of the severe influenza epidemic and the St. John's Sunday School buildings were used as a temporary hospital and accommodated 80 patients.

In this same year the death is recorded of Mr. James McKerrow, who had been a member of the Church since its early days, and an elder for 38 years. He had been Chairman of the Presbyterian Church Board of Property, as well as serving on other Assembly Committees. It is also the year in which Mr. Harry Glover's name first appears in the Board of Managers and the Church Property Committee. Mr. Glover has just this year (1953) retired from the Property Committee chairmanship, though still a member of the Committee.

For those who are interested in records it might here be mentioned that the greatest number of persons to take Communion in St. John's was 586 at the Jubilee Communion in 1913. The next largest Communion was in June, 1936, when 546 people took communion.

St. John's has played an important part in the development of other churches in the Wellington Presbytery and in the support of Mission and Church extension work generally. Mention has already been made of the establishment of the Church Room of St. James and of the institution of services at Wadestown.

In 1899 the General Assembly established a New Century Fund for Church extension work and during the year St. John's congregation contributed £1,403 to the fund. In 1903, the year of the Church's Jubilee, a St. John's Bursary was subscribed by members of the congregation to assist a student in the Divinity Hall at Dunedin. Two years later members of the congregation, together with members of St. Andrew's, purchased a site for a

Church in Kelburn and were working towards the erection of a Church there.

In 1906 the Report of the Session records that "During the period under review the mission charge at Brooklyn, which had been from its inception under the fostering care of the (St. John's) Session, and especially Mr. John Reith, was formed into a fully sanctioned charge by the Wellington Presbytery, and in due course called to its pastorate the Rev. P. C. Rennie." In 1909, when the Kelburn congregation was formed, St. John's again lost a number of members to a new Church, which it had itself largely sponsored.

In 1913 St. John's decided to provide annually the salary of a missionary in the foreign field (£120 being then set as the target) and to adopt the Rev. George McNeur of the Chinese Mission Field. At first the contributions to this objective lagged somewhat, but by 1917 it is recorded that all arrears had been paid off and that the congregation was raising sufficient annually for this purpose. The Report for 1932-33 records that "the Rev. George McNeur was appointed as the pioneer missionary in China of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand. The last 18 years he has been mainly supported by our congregation. . . ." He retired in 1940, still "St. John's Own Missionary".

In the year 1913 Mr. Ad. Howitt was ordained an elder of St. John's, an office he still holds forty years later. No man could have St. John's more at heart. This present narrative is largely gleaned from his personal collection of documents, annotated in many places with his own corrections and notes. To very many people outside St. John's, as well as within its congregation—and many of them scattered over many parts of the world—he will be remembered as the tall, white-haired man who shook hands and spoke a kindly word of friendship to them as they entered the Church.

In 1917, when new buildings were erected for Scots College, it is recorded that some £4,000 was given by members of St. John's Church out of the £5,000 donated.

The finances of the congregation at various earlier periods in its history are of some interest. In its first seven years its ordinary revenue averaged £419 per year. In 1878 it had reached £1,081, of which £446 was derived from pew rents and £550 from collections which were at that time taken at the door.

We have already seen how, within 30 years, the congregation built three successive churches and successive Sunday School buildings. In 1885 there remained a debt of some £5,000. By 1896 this had been reduced to £1,500. Other items of expenditure were from time to time incurred, however, such as the building of the Bible Class Room and the extensions to the Sunday School buildings), and in 1912 the Church still carried a debt of £1,300. At the Jubilee Service on December 2, 1913, a special collection was taken up to clear this debt. £1,260 was contributed on the day and the total of £1,600 was realised when all donations were included.

For the ten years from 1886 to 1895 the average revenue of the congregation was some £1,630 per year or £3/16/ per member. For the ten years 1908 to 1917 the average revenue was £3,170 or some £4/2/- per member. From 1930 to 1939 the average revenue was about £2,640 per year or some £3/18/- per member. The 1930 Report says: "We have reached the goal of owing no man anything."

In 1878 the Rev. James Paterson's stipend was £600. In 1907 Dr. Gibb's stipend was £700. In 1930 Mr. Blanchard's stipend was £700, plus a car allowance of £100, but was voluntarily reduced by £100 in 1932. The stipend remained at £600 plus £100 car allowance until 1950, when the combined amount of stipend and car allowance was raised to the £800 at which it had stood in 1930.

In 1931 the Annual Report makes first reference to the Endowment Fund in these words: "The matter of the establishment of an Endowment Fund has been under consideration for some time. Hitherto the interest from legacies has been used for the purpose of general Church expenditure. The Managers feel that this is wrong in principle and that it would be more in keeping with the minds of the various legators if the bequests were placed in an Endowment Fund and built up together with the annual increments of interest until a substantial fund is attained. This fund will inevitably be required sooner or later, as the present Church is a wooden structure. An Endowment Fund was accordingly brought into being on the recommendation of the Finance Committee by a resolution passed by the Board of Managers on 12th August, 1931." Two men in particular, Mr. Malcolm Fraser and Mr. Robert Fleming, should be

mentioned for their work in sponsoring and nursing the Fund through to maturity. Mr. Robert Fleming became Treasurer to the Board of Managers in 1928 and was Chairman of its Finance Committee for many years until ill health necessitated his recent relinquishment of that office. The Endowment Fund reached £10,000 in 1952.

Several other points of interest in the history of the congregation deserve mention before we pass on to the story of its various organisations which within themselves, of course, contain much of the story of St. John's as a whole.

In 1892, and for a few years afterwards, a congregational quarterly news bulletin called *The Record* was issued. After this there was no congregational magazine until 1936, when the *Review* began to be issued. It ceased publication in 1939. In 1943 a new printed news-sheet, the *St. John's Messenger*, made its appearance. During the war years special issues of the *Messenger* were prepared for St. John's members serving in the Armed Forces overseas. The *Messenger* continues to appear quarterly.

In 1928 After-Church suppers were re-instituted on every second Sunday evening in the Basement Parlour, members and adherents receiving personal invitations according to districts. During the 1914-1918 War After-Church suppers had been held each Sunday night. In 1943, to meet the needs of servicemen on leave, of American Forces stationed around Wellington, and of personnel from ships in port, an After-Church Social Hour was again arranged at the close of evening service on each Sunday. In 1945, with the passing of the special war-time need, the Social Hour was held once a month, and so continues.

The broadcasting of services in St. John's is first recorded in 1929, together with an interesting anecdote. A letter received from Honolulu said: "On Saturday night, October 5, 1929, we were listening-in to stations over in California when we had a rather severe earthquake. Of course we turned the radio off. . . . In about fifteen minutes I thought I would tune in on another California station, but just as the dial got to No. 740 we heard a prayer just as clearly as if it were in the same room. . . ." It was St. John's service being broadcast by 2YA.

In 1931 the most severe trade depression in its history

gripped New Zealand, and in the following year Session and Managers of St. John's set up a special committee to deal with cases of need within the congregation. In addition the Church accepted responsibility in the Te Aro area for assisting in relief there. The 1935 Report states: "The Minister and three Elders have continued to provide the greater part of the active assistance required by the Mayor's Te Aro Flat Inter-Church Relief Committee in dispensing relief and in assisting the many distressed families in the district where the need is greater than in any other area."

Amongst the elders was Mr. Henry Mainland, who died in 1944. He joined the Church about 1890 and was soon teaching in the Sunday School. He became a manager in 1900 and an elder in 1903, continuing in this office for over forty years. The records refer particularly to his outstanding service in visiting during the years of his eldership. He was a prominent man in the business world and for three years was President of the New Zealand Employers' Federation.

In 1941, as the numbers of St. John's folk serving in the Armed Forces in World War II mounted, the Session set up a special committee to maintain contact with them. The Rev. Gladstone Hughes wrote to every member in the Forces and Mr. W. J. Ferguson wrote letters to absent Bible Class members. Their Communion cards were sent regularly to absent members, and the Women's Association sent parcels to them from a fund provided by the congregation. A photograph of the interior of the Church was also sent to every St. John's man serving overseas.

In 1878 there were ten elders and sixteen managers, plus the treasurer and the secretary. Six elders were inducted in 1887 and six in 1888. The total strength of the Session was 18 in that year. By 1901 the Church office-bearers had been increased further to 20 elders and 21 managers, and in 1902 the number of elders was further increased to 25. In 1923 there were 33 elders, which would appear to be the largest number St. John's has had. In later years the number has remained round about 25. This was the number in 1952 when there were 22 members of the Board of Management. In 1951, for the first time in St. John's, three women were elected to the Board of Managers — Mrs. A. Harvic, Miss Mary Chappell, and Miss Pearl Brodie.



Rev. John Moir



Rev. James Paterson

No story of the St. John's congregation is complete without mention of the Choir. The earliest records of the Choir were, like so much of the other early records of St. John's, lost in the 1884 fire. The first organist and choirmaster we have a record of was Mr. Carver, who was occupying the position in 1872 at a remuneration of £26/1/- a year. He was succeeded by Mr. Raymond in 1876. The first organist and choirmaster to play on the new organ in 1886 was Mr. C. England, who held the position until 1893. Mr. Peterson, his successor, died as a result of an accident within a few months of his appointment. In 1895 Mr. Maugham Barnett was appointed to the position and held it with great distinction for nearly 18 years. Throughout most of these years the Choir membership stood at about forty—sometimes more, sometimes less. In 1906, when it had 48 members, the number included seven tenors and eleven basses. Mr. Maugham Barnett was succeeded by Mr. C. W. Kerry, another distinguished musician, who held the position for 19

years. (We hope that Mr. Kerry will be present at the Centennial functions.) He was followed by Mr. W. L. Haggitt who, with a short break of service in the Armed Forces in 1943, was organist and choirmaster until the end of 1949. Mr. Brian Withers succeeded Mr. Haggitt in 1950 and was followed by Mr. Stuart Canon, who took up the position this year.

Throughout the years the Choir Roll has included many well-known singers and many records of long and loyal service. At all times the standard which St. John's Choir has set itself has been a high one and in 1936 it won the Choir Contest at the Wellington Competitions. It has held together through many difficult times and contributed faithfully and excellently to the service of Praise. It received its present robes in 1945, the gift of a number of members of the congregation.

THE PASTORAL CARE OF ST. JOHN'S
ST. JOHN'S HAS HAD SIX INDUCTED MINISTERS IN A HUNDRED
years, including our present Minister. They are:—

The Rev. John Moir, 1853 to 1867.

The Rev. James Paterson, 1868 to 1903.

The Rev. James Gibb, D.D., 1903 to 1926.

The Rev. J. R. Blanchard, B.A., 1927 to 1939.

The Rev. P. Gladstone Hughes, B.A., 1940 to 1947.

The Rev. William P. Temple, M.A., B.D., 1948-

It has also had four Deaconesses, including our present
Deaconess:—

Miss Lilian Lang (Sister Lilian), 1905 to 1907.

Miss Mabel Cartwright (Sister Mabel), 1909 to 1911.

Miss Nora Dick (Sister Nora), 1912 to 1915.

Miss Nessie Morgan (Sister Nessie), 1945 to 1948 and
1951-

The Rev. John Moir was in his 46th year when he left Menmuir in Scotland to come to Wellington with his wife and family. (It had been John Moir to whom David Livingstone first confided his intention of becoming a missionary and who had recommended Livingstone to the Committee of the London Missionary Society.) Mr. Moir was a good scholar and a most diligent man in his pastoral work. His years as Minister of the Presbyterian Church in Willis Street (it was not re-named St.

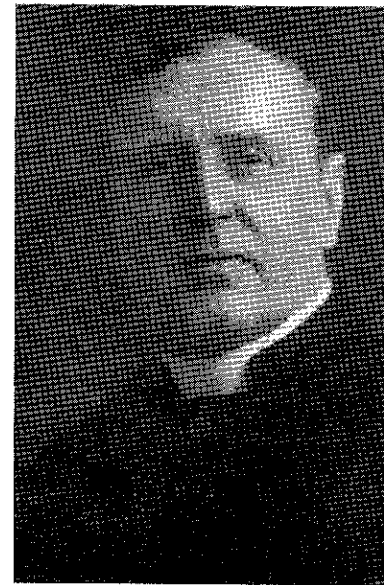
John's until after he had retired) were years of considerable difficulty, but nevertheless fruitful years. Mr. Moir had borne his full share of the work of establishing new charges and the Wellington Presbytery, as well as of building up his own congregation from the sixty-nine who called him to nearly two hundred when he retired in 1867. He died in October, 1895.

On the Rev. John Moir's retirement from the active ministry in 1867, the pulpit was supplied by the Rev. John Hall while a petition was sent through the Wellington Presbytery to the Free Church of Scotland asking it to select and send out a successor. The choice fell on the Rev. James Paterson, then Minister at Everton Valley Church, Liverpool. James Paterson, who was 38 when he received the call to come to Wellington, had studied at the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh. He and his wife arrived in Wellington in August, 1868, and he was inducted on November 27.

This induction is of special interest. Because of the Maori Wars the scattered ministers of the Wellington Presbytery could not leave their houses and families and consequently no meeting of Presbytery could be convened. In November, however, a General Assembly of the Northern Churches (north and south did not unite until 1901) met in Wellington and the induction was therefore performed by the General Assembly.

Mr. Paterson was Minister of St. John's for thirty-five years, serving his parish with outstanding fidelity and piloting the congregation through many momentous events. He saw his congregation grow from some 200 to 638 when he retired in 1902, and the Sunday Schools reach their zenith of 946 children with 76 teachers. For many years he was a member of the Senate of the University of New Zealand, served on Education Board and the Board of Governors of the High Schools, and in 1902 was second Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand. He served in many other capacities. The records say of him: "His long association with the congregation, his kindly ways with the people, his devoted ministrations to the sick, the aged and the sorrow-laden, had earned for him the love of his own people and the respect of the community." He died in 1925 at the age of 96.

When the Rev. James Paterson retired the congregation called Dr. James Gibb, who had been Minister of First Church,



Rev. James Gibb



Rev. J. R. Blanchard

Dunedin, for 17 years. Dr. Gibb was inducted on August 12, 1903. He had received his training at Aberdeen University and then at Edinburgh, but went to Australia for his first charge. He had been a little over three years in Australia when called to First Church at Dunedin. During his seventeen years there he became known for his strong personality and tireless energy. In 1901 the union of the two Presbyterian Churches in New Zealand was achieved largely by his personal leadership in the matter. When he came to St. John's, therefore, his stature was already great. He was a deep thinker with a robust and stimulating outlook on the affairs of both Church and community. His ministry from the pulpit was such as to fill the Church on Sundays and build its Communion Roll up to over 800. But it was in his parish visiting that he was most indefatigable. His two predecessors had both been diligent in their pastoral work, but Dr. Gibb eclipsed them with a record of something like a thousand visits a year for many years. Despite the unremitting fidelity of



Rev. P. Gladstone Hughes

his parish work, Dr. Gibb also maintained the vigour of his work for the Church at large. He became Convener of the General Assembly's Home Mission Committee and re-organised the Home Mission work. He was the prime mover in establishing a Presbyterian Orphanage and Social Service Association in Wellington, and a powerful champion of the Bible in Schools movement. His initiative is also to be seen in the founding of the Church Colleges of Scots and Queen Margaret's. He remained Minister of St. John's for over 22 years, resigning in 1926. He died on October 24, 1935, one of the great men of the Presbyterian Church in New Zealand.

St. John's sent its next call to the Rev. J. R. Blanchard, then occupying a pulpit in Perth. He was inducted on March 17, 1927. Once again St. John's found itself with a minister of robust vigour with a strong and stimulating pulpit message and great diligence in his pastoral visiting. Mr. Blanchard also had a strong leadership in youth activities. Despite the continuing slow encroachment of industry in the neighbourhood of St. John's and the inevitable shift of people to the suburbs, Mr. Blanchard held the congregation at over 700 throughout his ministry. He played a considerable part in the Church as a whole, being Convener of the Assembly's Committee on Church Union and of its Public Questions Committee. He was also President of

the New Zealand Alliance. In 1939 Mr. Blanchard accepted a call to Adelaide after occupying the St. John's pulpit for twelve years. He continues the work of the ministry in Australia, where he has similarly taken a large and vigorous part, and has been called to be Moderator-General of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the Commonwealth.

During the pulpit vacancy following Mr. Blanchard's resignation, Dr. J. G. Inkster, of Toronto, Canada, supplied in the pulpit for some eight months and left a very deep impression on St. John's. The vacancy was filled by a call to the Rev. P. Gladstone Hughes, then at St. Andrew's Church, Auckland, who was inducted on November 21, 1940. It was through Dr. Gibb that Mr. Hughes had originally left Wales for New Zealand. Mr. Hughes came to the pulpit of St. John's in the early stages of the second world war and ministered to the congregation during years of difficulty and sorrow. Mr. and Mrs. Hughes lost their only son on active service before they had been very long in St. John's, but their strong faith shone like a beacon light through their personal grief. Mr. Hughes will be long remembered by those who drew courage and comfort from his personal ministering to them in sad days. He moved easily amongst his congregation, visiting with warm friendliness, taking a personal interest in all their activities, preaching with deep and fearless sincerity. He was Convener of the General Assembly's Public Questions Committee and one of the originators and second Chairman of the Inter-Church Council. He retired in October, 1947, when his health had begun to cause concern; and passed away in January, 1950.

The congregation called the Rev. William P. Temple, of the Barclay Church, Edinburgh, a graduate in Arts and Divinity of Glasgow University, as successor to Mr. Hughes. Mr. Temple was inducted on October 28, 1948. He moves in our midst with personal charm, bringing to his pulpit a strong evangelism and a fine combination of direct simplicity, intense but easy relevance, and winged lightness of touch. His personal gifts as singer and musician are also greatly appreciated.

In speaking of the Ministers of St. John's we should mention two who, although not pastors to the congregation, have had very special associations with it. The Rev. George H. McNeur is spoken of elsewhere in this narrative as "St. John's" own