

The Long, Painful Birth of Baptist Maori Ministry*

Baptists were 'Johnny come late' in Christian witness among the Maori people. Although Baptist families were active in Nelson and Auckland in the 1840's, Baptist preachers seemed concerned only with the settler population. Samuel Pearce, a contemporary of William Carey, on reading Captain Cook's journals, had a vision to proclaim the Gospel in New Zealand. But the vision did not come to reality until more than 110 years after Cook, and then only very briefly. The first attempt by the Auckland Baptist Tabernacle to establish a distinctively Baptist witness and ministry in Maoridom in 1883 at Te Wairoa, Lake Tarawera, came to an end with the dismissal of the missionary, Alfred Fairbrother, in 1885.¹

Another sixty years were to pass before the awakening of Baptist conscience and the realisation of the denomination's responsibilities in this area of ministry in New Zealand. It was a long struggle and a difficult pilgrimage for a small, but keenly interested group in determining the best way the almost exclusively Pakeha Baptist denomination in New Zealand could enter and be effective in the Maori field. No one in Baptist circles had any experience in Maori ministry. Moreover, there were few indeed Maori church members to consult.

In the 1940's when Baptist involvement in Maori ministry became firstly an interest and then a matter of vital concern there were three movers and shakers:-

Ernest McGregor, a Morrinsville solicitor and a prominent Baptist in the Waikato. He took upon himself the role of trying to

* From a paper given at a meeting of N.Z. Baptist Historical Society, 7 July 1995.

stir the denomination's conscience and to goad it into action.

Ralph Page, a Baptist minister who took the Maori cause to heart, particularly when minister of the church in Rotorua. He was the denomination's primary negotiator.

Arthur Mead was a distinguished water works engineer in Auckland. The development of the dams in the Waitakares was largely due to him. He was also a recognised authority in engineering geology, a member of the Polynesian Society, an amateur historian who published the travels of Richard Taylor of the CMS, and a keen Baptist layman. More than any other he was the driving force who was diligently trying to think his way through all the implications of Baptists being involved in presenting the Gospel to Maori people. His interests were wide and he was a man of action. Moreover, he was decades ahead of his time. His rough notes of 1949 include items such as: 'press for removal of remaining injustices...ratification of the Treaty of Waitangi...opposing growing race prejudice found even in churches....'²

A 1947 paper by McGregor³, and sent to the Baptist Union by the South Auckland Auxiliary (Association) set the direction of thought and discussion for the next six years.

McGregor commented that there is not a Baptist Auxiliary or Baptist Church that includes work among the Maoris as a definite part of its Christian activity. He compared the Baptist failure with the more recent successes of the Ratana Church, the Mormons and the Open Brethren. He wrote:-

We are impressed by the fact that while there is ample opportunity and urgent need for evangelistic work among the Maoris, it is not desirable that there should be a separate Baptist work commenced. The mind of the Maori is already confused by the multiplicity of religions preached to him, and another denomination would be received with perplexity and suspicion. In this connection we quote from a letter received from Mr Norman Perry a convinced Baptist and an enthusiast for Maori Mission work: 'I suggest that the Baptist Church would be unwise to attempt to hoist a

Baptist flag in Maori Mission work, but to be big enough to work with some existing Christian organisation at work among the Maoris.'

McGregor goes on to refer to the moral situation including increasing drinking, gambling and a 'heathenism' that is becoming 'aggressive as if to challenge our indifference.' He then made a suggestion of working with another organisation.

Is it possible for us to make an effective contribution to the work of evangelisation of the Maori without commencing a separate work? We are convinced if it is possible to arrive at a satisfactory working basis with the United Maori Mission our work amongst the Maori can become immediately effective. The outlook of this mission is identical with ours; they practice believers' baptism, and in every way preach the Gospel as we do, and they are accepted by, and have the confidence of the Maoris. Were we to commence an independent work it would be years before we obtain the confidence of the... (Page 2 of the paper is missing)

In Mead's handwriting and undated there is what we believe to be a response to McGregor's paper.⁴

Arising out of a report of the South Auckland Auxiliary discussed at the recent Assembly, a committee has been appointed to investigate methods of discharging our obligations to the Maoris ...

I suggest the following points as a basis of discussion:-

- 1. That it is undesirable at this stage of history, to approach the Maori people on mission lines, as to a foreign and heathen race.*
- 2. That our Union should not set up a Maori department as such, with separate funds and organisation.*
- 3. That a Baptist mission would create further sectarian confusion, which has in the past seriously*

hindered the Christian witness to the Maoris.

4. That no attempt be made to enter the areas of predominately Maori population in which the historic missions are already working.

5. That recognition be given to the fact that recent economic developments have brought many Maoris into the cities and towns, and that many Maoris are living within reach of most of our existing churches.

6. That these Maoris be encouraged to attend our churches and take part in various activities without any distinction of race or colour.

7. That this requires a sympathetic approach, with an understanding of the mental conflict of the Maori uneasily balanced between two cultures.

8. That the initial approach be made by a minister with special training and a sense of vocation towards the Maoris in the course of his regular pastoral duties; The willing help and co-operation of the church workers being also essential.

9. The study of the means of approaching the Maori might have valuable repercussions on our church work generally as our approach to the non church-going white is not particularly successful.

In these nine points Mead makes no reference to McGregor's suggestion of working in co-operation with the U.M.M. In fact it is ignored. Nor had he obviously taken on board Norman Perry's hope that Baptists would 'be big enough to work with some existing Christian organisation at work among the Maoris.' No new avenues or opportunities for service had been opened. The situation remained that any Baptist wishing to minister to the Maori community did not know where or how to start. Neither were any Baptist ministers preparing themselves for Maori contacts. In January 1948, N.R. Wood, the *Baptist* Editor and minister of the Hastings Baptist Church, wrote to Mead indicating that probationary ministers had been required to write theses on the Maori and religion.

*Our aim was that some of the ministers might follow up the question but the result has been disappointing.*⁵

A report written by Mead, presumably to the 1948 June Council of the Baptist Union, referred to the desire of a number of Baptists to work among the Maori people: 'but framing specific recommendations is not easy'. There was also reference to studying methods of reaching city Maoris; Christian literature with a Maori edition; and the training of men in Baptist College. There was an attempt to be, in today's parlance, very 'politically correct'.

*At first sight it might seem that the obvious course would be to establish a Maori Mission branch for Union work, with its usual set up of committee, field workers and funds. But we feel that this is the wrong move at the present historical situation of the Maori race. It carries the subtle implication of a superior people approaching an inferior; it would add to the confusion in his mind of the multiplicity of Christian sects.*⁶

The practical implementation of any work at all was not at this stage spelled out. In June 1948, Mead wrote to Cliff Reay of the Mt Albert Church that his vision was for the rise of indigenous Maori churches in areas of predominately Maori population but contact with Maori people in urban areas and any ministry to them must be through the local church.⁷

The 'evil of segregation' was very much in Mead's mind yet he did shift his emphasis a little on reading Dr Thelma Becroft's medical thesis on Maori people in Auckland⁸ he wrote:-

*She suggests as the most helpful line of approach the formation of groups of Maori youth in our existing churches – a Sunday School Class, or a section in Brigade - working as a Maori group but joining with the whole school or organisation in its general exercises. ... the group method would overcome their shyness and diffidence and at the same time avoid the evil of complete segregation.*⁹

McGregor had not given up on advocating a link with the U.M.M. On 8 August 1948 he responded to Mead's stated policy.

I agree with you in your conviction that drawing in and welcoming of Maoris into our churches would have favourable repercussions on our own church life and work. But I cannot agree with you that this should be our main approach to work for the Maori people ... The great majority of Maoris are living Maori and thinking Maori, and in the Pauline sense 'to the Maoris we must become Maoris in order that we may gain the Maoris.' ...

The coming of large numbers of young Maoris to the city gave a unique opportunity to the Christian Church to preach Christ and live Christ before Maori youth, and the U.M.M. seized that opportunity.¹⁰

He then went on to advocate an approach to the U.M.M. but expressed disappointment that the Mission did not have the same policy as the China Inland Mission where missionaries of the same denomination were assigned a specific area of work. In the correspondence there is no further mention of the U.M.M. for two years.

ENTER THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT - The Maori Section of the N.C.C. -

With the issue of a working relationship with the U.M.M. being allowed to lie on the table there was the opportunity to turn attention to ecumenism. In the 1940's this had become an important ecclesiastical issue, firstly with the establishment of the National Council of Churches in 1941, and secondly the World Council of Churches in 1948. In the spirit of the times, before any new Maori cause was commenced, it was strongly felt that the N.C.C. had to be consulted with a view to its co-operation.

Here Ralph Page was the negotiator. Fortunately we have his notes of an informal chat with Rev A.J. Seamer of the Methodist

Maori Mission, in Hamilton on 8 March, 1949.¹¹ 'Father' Seamer, as he was known, said:-

"The historical position is that there are three "Gospel Canoes", Anglican, Methodist, Roman Catholic. The whole land was portioned out. Maoris are strong on tradition and would ask, "The Baptists, who are they? They are not one of the three canoes.""

'What about the Brethren?' asked T.R. Page.

'They are of a free lance character. By close and constant contact in one locality they may win for themselves a place of sort. But the work lacks permanence. Gospel evangelistic efforts may produce response owing to the excitement or pressure of the moment, but of doubtful quality and durability.'

'Father' Seamer could not see a place for Baptists in Maori ministry. Interestingly, his observations on the Brethren did not fit the experience of the writer. Brethren work certainly was not a fly by night affair except in one or two exceptional cases. Generally it had excellent content biblically and pastorally.

A letter from John Laughton, Presbyterian Maori Superintendent was cautionary.

I think in conversation I explained to you that establishment of Maori work in an area in which any branch of the Christian Church is working would only add confusion to the Maori mind. With this viewpoint the committee concurred and they suggest to you and through you to your Union, first of all that Wellington would be a convenient centre in which your church could establish a Maori work, particularly in view of the fact that work is being done in Auckland City by some of the organised churches and the United Maori Mission.¹²

And yet despite the discouragement from N.C.C. leaders Ralph Page in a report in the "Baptist" in October 1949 remained

most optimistic.

Most cordial conversations have been held with such experts in Maori life and tradition as...(six church leaders are named)...

*...This information was placed before the June meeting of the Union Council of the Baptist Union with a suggestion that a deputation be appointed to hold conversations with the executive of the Maori Section of the N.C.C.*¹³

The meeting was held at Rahui, Methodist Maori Centre, Hamilton on 1 September 1949. We note that Arthur Mead was not included in the deputation appointed by Union Council to meet with the N.C.C.. Apparently he felt this and in his notes regarding developments in 1948-49 he comments about the Maori Committee being more and more controlled by parsons, and the frustrations he was feeling in his relationship with Union Council.

My own feeling, if the Denomination wants to proceed it must override Council and appoint a committee with power to act.

On the other hand, Page was obviously happy with the way negotiations were developing with the Maori Section of the N.C.C.. This is confirmed in a letter from the N.C.C. General Secretary to P.F. Lanyon on April 5 1950 where the Baptist approach to the Maori Section was referred to as a 'friendly and considerate gesture ... much appreciated by the Maori Section'. In this letter is a reference to Baptist work commencing in Auckland about which we have no information.¹⁴

The courtship with the N.C.C. was short lived. On 5 March 1952 Lanyon wrote to Page informing him of a resolution from the Executive of the Maori Section.

Resolved that the Secretary of the Baptist Union be advised that we have appreciated the attendance of Rev T.R. Page as an observer at the Annual Meetings, but lest the precedent be an embarrassment to the Executive with other similar applications, the Executive feels that sufficient opportunity has been given for observations, but

*that further appointment should be left until the Baptist Union has established a Maori Mission cause.*¹⁵

It appears that Page had attended the Maori Section Annual meetings in 1951 and 1952. The question must be asked as to what were the dangers of precedents? The only other members of the N.C.C. not having a Maori work were the Salvation Army, the Society of Friends and the Church of Christ. None of these churches could have been any threat nor were they considering commencing Maori ministry. There was no further contact with the Maori Section of the N.C.C. until February 1968.

NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE UNITED MAORI MISSION

Not only had McGregor of Morrinsville advocated a working arrangement with the U.M.M. but so did Major Harawira (prominent in Maori Affairs and social work in Auckland) in discussion with Rev Bert Whitten, minister of the Avondale Baptist Church, in 1950. Harawira told of his reasons for leaving the Anglicans which included the rigid adherence to canonical law during the war. He also indicated that the Bishop of Auckland believed in Pakeha superiority. Harawira was impressed with the work of the U.M.M. and thought that Baptists could align with it.¹⁶

But it was not until 1953 that the relationship with the U.M.M. came once again on to the agenda. On 4 March of that year, Page & Lanyon had a meeting with the United Maori Mission Council apparently with a view to some sort of co-operation between them and the Baptist Union. Unfortunately we do not have a copy of the letter written by Page to the U.M.M. Council which apparently outlined some of the possibilities of working together. Initially, Keith Liddle, the U.M.M. Council chairman, was very encouraging in his personal letters to Page and seemed to be desiring of some sort of co-operative support from the Baptist Union.

After the 4 March meeting it appears that the U.M.M. Council had considerable discussion in meetings and privately between members. The outcome was that on 24 April the secretary, Gerald Hickman, wrote to Page stating:-

*This initial understanding would be the full acceptance by you of the Mission's Principles and Practice, particularly in regard to its interdenominational implications. ... but it is very obvious to us that the chief factors of the Mission's success are that it functions exclusively for the Maori people, and that the Maoris themselves are more and more confident that we are genuinely maintaining an interdenominational outlook in presenting the Gospel to them.*¹⁷

On file are some notes in Mead's handwriting entitled, 'Discussion of basis of co-operation between Baptist Union and United Maori Mission.' It is not clear whether these were made before or after the 4 March meeting.

*...it is not our intention to alter the interdenominational character of the Mission... It is not proposed that the Mission should be an agency of the Baptist Union, or that the Baptist Union should adopt 'Principles and Practices' [the official statement of the U.M.M.]...Nominees [from the Baptist Union] would be expected to agree to 'Principles and Practices' as the basis of their seat on the U.M.M. Council, but as individuals.... As Baptists we desire to see a more effective nurture of Maori converts....we consider we should have not less than four nominees on the Mission.*¹⁸

The U.M.M. Council gave a very considered response on 8 September 1953. The main issue was made clear:-

...this difficulty is that of your desire to appoint your own representatives to the U.M.M. Council.... though such members may remain loyal to the Mission's Constitution...they could be regarded as no other than official representatives of the Baptist Union....On the face of things, it appears to be very unusual; so unusual that one prominent missionary authority told us that it was altogether unknown....what would be the Mission's attitude if some other evangelical

*denomination desired the same co-operation and method of appointing its representatives?...there is difficulty in changing the Constitution and knowing the reaction of non-Baptists in the Mission....Thus it seems that we are at an impasse ...*¹⁹

It must be noted that after that the U.M.M. Council and its workers remained very helpful and co-operative, offering what assistance and advice they could.

MAORI YOUTH HOSTEL MINISTRY

Negotiations with the U.M.M. and N.C.C. had produced stalemates. But there remained one further possibility – Maori Youth Hostel service. In the 1940's and on into the 1970's well-run hostels were regarded as being crucial in assisting young Maori adjust to city and industrial life. Such institutions were also regarded as an avenue for evangelism.

In 1953 the Maori Committee was very aware of the strategic nature of hostels. This is seen in the report to Assembly 1953:-

*About this time, your Convener was advised that the Department of Labour intended building a Hostel in Rotorua for Maori boy apprentices. A meeting was called by all interested parties, all the Churches were represented. The meeting was chaired by the Director of Labour, Mr. Brocket. He offered to hand over the Hostel fully furnished at a nominal rental to a committee who would be responsible for running the same. The Baptists offered, subject to confirmation by Assembly. This was the only offer made. The Methodist representative moved that the matter be referred to the Maori Section of the N.C.C. (of which we are not a member) with the result that the Maori Section has agreed to run the Hostel with a joint committee.*²⁰

This was the third major frustration following approaches to the Maori Section of the N.C.C. and the United Maori Mission. It was time for a change and the change was about to occur.

A TURNING POINT

Assembly 1953 was a watershed. A clear-cut commitment was signaled in the following recommendations:-

1. *That Assembly reaffirm its conviction that the Baptist Denomination is called of God to undertake work among the Maori people.*
2. *That a Missionary for work among the Maoris be appointed in an area where the work may be related to an established Baptist Church.*
3. *That the sum of 400 pounds be placed on the Union Budget to cover the salary and expenses involved.*
4. *That the board be empowered to:*
 - (a) *Circularise all our Churches asking that a suitable candidate be forthcoming.*
 - (b) *Insert in the "N.Z. Baptist" a notice inviting interested people to offer themselves for this work.*
 - (c) *Make necessary appointment in conjunction with the Union Executive and/or Council and draft the conditions for appointment.*²¹

This was a startling turnaround on previously stated policy. Page and Mead were appointed chairman and secretary respectively of the new Board. What was not known was that already two possible candidates were waiting in the wings. Joan Milner of the Island Bay Church was soon to apply and we pick up on her story a little later. Des Jones, already in Baptist Theological College (later to serve for sixteen years in Maori ministry) had indicated to the College Principal early in 1953 that he was willing to serve in the Maori field.

A BAPTIST COLLEGE STUDENT'S INVOLVEMENT

For the long College vacation 1953-54 I was assigned to the student pastorate of the Temuka Church where there was a good

Sunday School work at Arowhenua Pa. The College Principal commented that this could test my call. Arowhenua was the only Maori community in the South Island to have a Maori School. The Sunday School there had been commenced in 1952 by Horace Grocott, the man who had introduced Boys Brigade to New Zealand when he commenced the first Company in the Caversham Baptist Church in the 1920's

I departed for the assignment unaware of the decision that Assembly was to make. The Temuka - Arowhenua experience was a happy and rewarding one. I was warmly welcomed into the Arowhenua Sunday School then conducted by Mrs Foote. A good number of parents attended the end-of-the year Sunday School service where I was the speaker. During January we had a very successful one week children's mission in the form of a "Happy Hour" on the bank of the river adjacent to the marae. Nevertheless, it was with trepidation that I visited the homes of the Sunday School children. However, I did not have the confidence to go alone to pay my respects at a tangi held on the marae. In chatting with parents and some of the elders one heard nothing but commendation of Mrs Foote's work.

During a visit to Jim (Ngati Porou) and Ranui Brooking I was told that Jim's mother had been baptised on the East Coast through the ministry of the Brethren. Ranui was a teacher at the Maori school and Jim a former Maori All Black. Both Jim and Ranui had been assisting in the Sunday School and had demonstrated more than a passing interest in Christian commitment. The three of us had a most stimulating discussion on baptism in the New Testament. Ranui's query concerned the fact that she 'officially' belonged to the Ratana Church and what would believer's baptism mean in this case. By the end of the evening both agreed that baptism indicated unreserved commitment to Christ and they wished to be baptised. Further instruction followed. When I mentioned this to the minister of the Timaru Church (under whom I was working) he said they should be baptised at once and in the Timaru Church. I strongly felt that their baptism should be local and a witness to Temuka and Arowhenua folk, and said so. This suggestion was not warmly received. They were baptised with one other candidate at a mid-

week service in Timaru, nineteen kilometres away. A good number attended but no one from the Temuka Church or the Arowhenua Sunday School was asked to participate in the service. Much was made of 'the first fruits of Maori work'. To me it was an unforgettable lesson that Maori ministry must be relevant to the local people and situation.

After a number of testing yet positive experiences I returned to College convinced that service in the Maori field was for me in the immediate future.

THE LOWER WAIKATO FIELD OPENS

A new mover and shaker appears. **Ian Christensen**, the minister of the Pukekohe Church, was sufficiently unconventional not to be stifled by the then accepted role of a Baptist pastor. The Indian and Maori communities presented him with a challenge. He visited two marae some distance from Pukekohe, Tauranganui (between Tuakau and Port Waikato) and Tahuna (near Waiuku), and discussed with a number of leaders the possibility of commencing Sunday Schools. Moreover, he was attempting to assess the situation in Pukekohe with Maori families working in the market gardens.

The Maori population of the Franklin District was of mixed tribal affiliation. The tangata whenua belonged to Waikato sub-tribes but a large number of the workers in the market gardens had moved there from Ngapuhi (Northland). There was a much smaller number from other tribal areas. Often there was tension between Waikato and Ngapuhi but in Pukekohe town the greater strain in relationships was between Pakeha and Maori. In fact, Pukekohe at the time was well known for its racial stress and as a place where a colour bar was blatantly operative. It was the policy of the Education Department at that time not to establish further Maori Schools, but because of pressure from the European community a Maori School was opened on Pukekohe Hill in 1952.

The Vincent and Havill families within the Pukekohe Church had already established some excellent contacts with Maori families, especially in nearby Paerata.

The 1951 census gave the following Maori population figures: Pukekohe, 836; Waiuku district, 206; Tuakau district, 698.

Ian Christensen had visited the College Principal in late March 1954 to ask (unofficially) for help in commencing a Maori ministry. I was immediately assigned and arrived by bus the next Sunday morning to find Ian Christensen explaining to some of the deacons how it was they did not know of the very fast developments!

By the end of March of that year I had commenced a small Sunday School in the home of a Mrs Kwan. This was soon to be taken over by some young people from the Pukekohe Church. The maraes at Tahuna and Tauranganui had been visited and permission received to conduct a regular Sunday at Tauranganui. Incidentally, on the first Sunday at Kenelly Block, a Sandra Sleeman was present who was later to become Sandra Joe, the wife of Charles, the Kai-whakahaere 1979 to 1984.

The encounter with Stewart Kaihau of Tahuna Pa is worth noting. He said: 'How long are you going to stay? We have had plenty of others who have come and gone.' I assured him that we were in for the long haul. (In fact, Joan Milner was to minister there until her retirement and today the Waiuku Church continues its contact and ministry.)

At first my modus operandus was to arrive in Pukekohe by the first bus, go immediately to Tahuna Pa for a Sunday School and then to Tauranganui in the afternoon. This was possible only because of the generosity of so many within the Pukekohe Church in making transport available. Often I would go to Pukekohe on a Saturday to do visitation. Towards the end of 1954 the Sowry and Fallows families took over the responsibility of conducting the Tahuna Pa SS on Sunday afternoons which was a far better arrangement.

The minutes of the Maori Committee meeting for 13 April 1954 states:-

A letter was received from the Pukekohe Church dated 2/4/54 asking the Maori Committee to enquire whether a College student could be allocated for Maori work in that area. [Obviously

to confirm action already taken.]

A most important decision was made at this meeting:-
Mr Mead moved and Mr Havill seconded that the Pukekohe district be selected as the field for the commencement of Maori work.

In the meantime a most significant enquiry dated 16 January had been received from Miss Joan Milner who wrote that she had been considering some full-time Christian work within New Zealand:-

However, while praying there suddenly came the remembrance of the challenge that had gone forth at Assembly for prayer for a full-time worker to commence Baptist witness among the Maori people, and whilst feeling very unfitted for the task, the conviction has grown, and has been confirmed by the Word of God, that I must contact the Board regarding application.²²

A.D. Mead responded in a way which today seems a little quaint.

For a lady it may be suggested that the work would be largely in Maori homes, in the form of week-evening gatherings of family groups for Bible study, singing and prayer, combined with house to house visiting in the day time, in which tactful assistance in domestic problems will play its part in winning the confidence of these kindly affectionate people and prepare their hearts to receive the message of the redemption in our Saviour Jesus Christ.... A knowledge of Maori life, custom and way of thought is most essential...a knowledge of the language is helpful but not essential.

The integration of any Maori work into a local church was foremost in Mead's mind:-

It is hoped to centre the work round one of our Baptist Churches in an area of Maori population and by means of a Sunday School class or Brigade for Maori children link them in some way with the

*Christian organisation and in course of time encourage our Maori brothers and sisters to take their place on regular Church activity without any distinction of race or colour.*²³

The 13 April 1954 Board meeting was a very busy one. Anticipating Joan Milner's formal application they determined the status of a female worker as a 'deaconess' who would be paid 5 pounds a week plus a boarding allowance of 2 pounds ten shillings.

The 8 June meeting had before it a formal application from Joan Milner. She already had a notable track record in Bible Class service in the Island Bay Church, the Wellington District and on the Dominion Council, as well as Girls' Brigade experience. It was decided that she should have some experience with the U.M.M. in Auckland but no formal training was prescribed apart from suggesting some learning of the Maori language. She would be stationed in Pukekohe.

The Board hoped that Miss Milner could begin with the U.M.M. on 1 September but this was not possible until after Assembly that year.

The same meeting also agreed that:-

the chairman and secretary interview the Principal of the College regarding recognition of Student D Jones as student-in-training for ministerial work among the Maoris.

The August 1954 vacation for me was spent living in Rev J Jensen's caravan at the maraes of Tauranganui and Tahuna for one week each. Read Peni, a school teacher, gave excellent assistance. He had come from a very protected Wanganui home and had been educated at Te Aute College. Interestingly, he was very shocked by the living conditions of some of the families at Tauranganui. Mind you, many were living in temporary accommodation for the white-baiting season. We ran Bible and games programmes, held a film service and at times had over 70 children, youth and adults present. It was during this week we had our first home meeting at Pitman's, Port Waikato.

The next week at Tahuna was somewhat of a disappointment.

It was not until the end of the week that we had viable numbers.

A SIGNIFICANT ASSEMBLY, 1954

Delegates at the 1953 Assembly had demonstrated a commitment to Maori ministry but at that stage there seemed no clear way ahead. However, within twelve months there was the appointment of the first full time worker, Joan Milner, for Maori service and a definite field of activity. Understandably, there was a decidedly buoyant mood in the Assembly meetings. However, one could detect a less than altruistic spirit as some people very obviously felt, and said, that as a denomination we had now 'become of age' with a Maori field.

After Assembly Joan Milner had experience in U.M.M. hostels and in the field with some of the Auckland workers.

I did another student assignment in the lower Waikato and for two weeks was assisted by my fiancée, Joan Hardy. Later I stayed at Port Waikato for three weeks with only a bicycle for transport. It was during this time that I learned the protocol for attending a tangi but still attended with trepidation. It was about this time I heard criticism from a Maori Christian associated with the U.M.M. of a couple working with the U.M.M. who did not regard attendance at a tangi as a high priority. I felt strongly that we were to do everything to avoid that negative response by the local people.

Joan Milner, the first full time worker in the Maori field, was inducted as a deaconess on 21 January 1955 and I had the privilege of introducing her to some Pukekohe and Tahuna families. Although coming from a middle class Pakeha family and having had minimal contact with Maori people, she nevertheless entered wholeheartedly into the work with an openness that was impressive. She was a quick learner who was very sensitive to needs and situations.

Immediately the financing of a car became a concern as on 2 February only 273 pounds, nine shillings and three pence had been received from 39 churches. Joan Milner who had very little cycling

*experience valiantly struggled around Pukekohe and further afield. However, by 12 February the Union Finance committee had approved the purchase of a Ford Popular car for 535 pounds. Great are the works of a denominational finance committee!*²⁴

The constitution of the newly formed New Zealand Baptist Maori Department was largely framed by Rev L.A. Silcock and presented to the 1954 Assembly. The stated objects of the department are worth noting:-

(a) The evangelisation of Maoris, however opportunity offers, with view to their regeneration and their reception into the membership of Baptist Churches.

(b) The instruction of Maoris in the Holy Scriptures.

(c) The fostering among the Maori people of every kind of activity which will make for Christian character and lead to Christian citizenship.

*(d) The encouragement of unrestricted fellowship between European and Maori Christians.*²⁵

140 years after Samuel Marsden, 70 years after Alfred Fairbrother, nine months after an informal start, official Baptist Maori ministry had begun.

Des Jones

NOTES:

1. *Bulletin of the New Zealand Baptist Historical Society* No.4, December 1956.
2. Unless otherwise stated the documents referred to in these notes are to be found in the records of the Baptist Maori Board. Among these are several pages of notes in A.D. Mead's hand, largely undated. The records of the Board are currently in the possession of the author for sorting, after which they will be lodged in the Archives of the Baptist Historical Society.
3. Report sent to the Baptist Union from South Auckland Auxiliary 1947.
4. A.D. Mead's notes (undated).
5. Letter, N.R. Wood to Mead, 18 January 1948
6. Report to Union Council 1948
7. Letter, Mead to C. Reay, 14 June 1948.
8. Thelma Becroft later became a missionary in P.N.G. & Irian Jaya

9. Mead's notes (undated).
10. Letter, E McGregor to Mead, 8 August 1948.
11. Notes by R.T. Page on interview with A.J. Seamer 8 March 1949.
12. Letter, J. Laughton to Page, 1 April 1949.
13. *N.Z. Baptist*, October 1949
14. Letter, A. Brash to P. F. Lanyon, 5 April 1950.
15. Letter, Lanyon to Page, 5 March 1952
16. Mead's notes (undated).
17. Letter, G. Hickman to Page, 24 April 1953.
18. Mead's notes (undated).
19. Letter, Hickman to Page, 8 September 1953.
20. Report to Assembly 1953 - see the 1953-54 *Year Book*.
21. Resolution of Baptist Assembly see 1953-54 *Year Book*.
22. Letter, J. Milner to Maori Board, 16 January 1954.
23. Letter, Mead to Milner, 19 January 1954.
24. Maori Board minutes, 12 February 1954.
25. Constitution of Baptist Union of New Zealand - see the 1954-55 *Year Book*.