

A HISTORY OF NORTHCOTE BAPTIST CHURCH 1949 - 1993.

Forty four years ago (in 1949) the embryo of a new Church started to grow. Retired Chinese Inland Missionaries, **Joe and Sarah Thompson**, built their first home at 7 Hillcrest Avenue, Northcote. They then invited children from the few houses in the street to come down the shingle pathway across their narrow footbridge and attend the Sunday School which they were starting.

Hillcrest Avenue led nowhere - it reached northward from Ocean View Road, then known as 'the Clay Hill' (which was a perfect description) and stopped on the edge of the patch of bush which covered the land around where Holland Road now is and which, during the World War II years, had housed a military camp. Few houses existed in the Hillcrest area but the cheapness of the sections was an attraction as was the native bush which still grows there.. The Thompsons were evangelists and no home remained unvisited, and it is probable that no child in the area would willingly stay away on a Sunday because 'everybody seemed to want to go'. Very soon the Thompsons recruited **Mr. & Mrs. Eban and Mr. Edwards** to assist in the work. They lived in Ocean View Road and owned a fairly large area of land which they farmed and later subdivided giving Eban Avenue their name and their son's name **Alton** to another of the streets. Their daughter, **Mrs. Randall**, also a resident, helped as did **Greg and Roma Scampton**.

The need for more teachers became vital and Milford Baptist was asked to help (the Thompsons being in membership there). **Grahame Turner** was quickly associated with the work and **Fred Mills** as Superintendent of Milford Sunday School was involved in seeking to provide staff for both Milford and Hillcrest Sunday Schools. **Dave Henderson and Norm Peters** (both still at Milford) were teachers in the "house" Sunday School and Dave became the first outside Superintendent of Hillcrest Sunday School. In 1958 **Greg Scampton** took over this position for the next six years.

The size of the growing Sunday School made it imperative that better accommodation be arranged and the Auckland Baptist Association sought to buy a section in Ocean View Road. This could not proceed because of town planning objections and a site almost adjacent to the Thompsons in Hillcrest Avenue was purchased and a small hall measuring 40ft x 30ft was erected. Some seeding finance was given by the Association but the work was only able to proceed because the new cause borrowed money to enable the building to go ahead. This happened in 1958.

In 1959 **Fred and Jean Mills**, newly married, had been enticed by **Grahame and Pat Turner** to build next door to them and join the work, and about the same time the holding of services had commenced in the hall.

Others, (still in the Church), such as **Ken and Isobel Fegan, Ron and Marion Attwood, Wes and Raewyn Jones, Rex and Dawn Falkner, Harold and Ethel Boswell, David and Diane Griffiths, Hedley and Audrey Budd** (recently deceased) joined in the fellowship.

Up to 1963 the Church (or Fellowship) was known as the Hillcrest Baptist Church but it is interesting to record that the early workers in the fellowship included Baptist, Brethren, Church of Christ and Salvation Army. An early sharing of responsibilities and leadership resulted in the secretary of Hillcrest Baptist also becoming secretary of Birkdale Church and other deacons participated in a joint diaconate. **Grahame Turner** was treasurer at Hillcrest at this time. For a few years the title of Birkdale-Hillcrest Baptist Church was used, but each Church retained its own clear cut identity and elected their own office bearers. The secretary's joint role was to assist in the equitable sharing of a pastor and also to help resolve some difficulties which had arisen at Birkdale. **Rev. Peter Carter** became minister of the joint Churches and participated in sharing his time between the two Churches. On his resignation to move into the Presbyterian ministry, Hillcrest leadership decided it was time to move into a separate Church structure which was formally accepted into the Baptist Union as the Northcote Baptist Church during 1963 and proceeded to call their own minister. A call extended to the **Rev. Doug Rushbrook**, then minister at New Plymouth, was accepted by him and he became the first minister to be called to the renamed Northcote Baptist Church commencing in 1964. He, with his family, was the first occupant in our new manse (built by **Ron Attwood**) at 4 Eban Avenue on a section gifted by **Mr. & Mrs. Eban**. The manse and the new Church site on the corner of Sylvia Road and the designated 'No 2 Road' now named Eban Avenue, are all on the **Eban's** original farm.

In the years 1962 and 1963 it became increasingly evident that the Hillcrest Avenue site was going to be totally inadequate to cope with the growth that was happening and with a generous donation from **Mr. & Mrs. Eban**, plus cash and other trust gifts and the sale of the Hillcrest Avenue property to the Borough Council (for pensioner housing), 5 sections were acquired in Sylvia Road. In 1965 a further full-sized section was acquired (at a cost of \$1.00 but valued at \$2,000) to square up the area already owned and the present block was completed by the purchase of the house and parking area at the north eastern end of the property. During 1964 the original hall was moved to the new site in Sylvia Road and extensions more than doubling the original hall were completed.

Almost immediately the necessity for additional youth activity space became evident and a temporary building was moved onto the empty but swampy land far enough away from the enlarged hall to enable planning for the Youth block (now the Childcare and 'budgie' lounge area) to be commenced. This block was completed in 1967. (The strawberry gardens above the Church site in Eban Avenue were a temptation to Sunday Church goers of the day). While this activity and growth was happening Northcote continued its association with Birkdale by sharing its minister Doug Rushbrook with them in an oversight role.

By 1964 the Sunday School roll had increased to 189 and with **Ken Fegan** taking over from Greg Scampton the roll continued to grow so that by April 1965 it stood at 228. The Bible Class roll doubled during the 1964/65 year so that Wes Jones in the Annual Report for 1965 was able to report "there were 62 (including leaders) on the roll with an average of approximately 48 teenagers and leaders trying to fit into a room designed to take about 20 people. During the year 18 Bible Class members have made decisions for Christ and 14 have been baptised"

At the time of calling our first minister the Church roll stood at 54 and by the time of the Annual Report in May 1965 the roll had grown to 89. A significant item was reported by **David Griffiths**, the treasurer, in the 1967 Annual Report "during the last three years the Church has received \$1800 from a trust. This amount was promised to enable the Church to call its first full time Minister" By this date the membership roll had increased to 153 with the Sunday School roll at almost 300 (staff totalled 41) with approximately 100 on the Bible Class roll.

In 1965, Northcote's Annual Report recorded that Birkdale had assisted our finances by contributing \$300 towards the salary of Rev. Rushbrook but were now in the process of calling their minister. The following sentence from the report reflected the independence and leadership roll which Northcote was to have in the Baptist work on the North Shore: 'We are glad to have been able to take the lead amongst the other three North Shore Baptist Churches in suggesting that together we contribute up to \$100 each per annum to Birkdale towards the ongoing cost of calling their own minister and we join with our brethren at Birkdale in giving thanks to God that the Rev. Clyde Smith has accepted their call'.

In 1966 the deacons minutes record an interest in the work starting at Glenfield and a gift of \$20 towards expenses was paid in September. During the following month reports on Glenfield's progress are recorded and in October 1967 Northcote was asked by the Auckland Association and accepted pastoral and administrative responsibility for the work. This continued until 1970 when Glenfield was fully able to look after itself.

February 1967 saw the Church receive and accept the unexpected resignation of Rev. Doug Rushbrook whose ministry had been so acceptable and whose leadership outstanding in a period of rapid growth and development. This coincided but was in no way connected with the completion of the new youth block which was officially opened on 10 September 1967.

Following Rev. Rushbrook's resignation enquiries for a new pastor were commenced leading to a call being made and accepted by the **Rev. Roland Hart** who had until recently been Dominion Evangelist. The secretary was asked to contact and negotiate with the Rev. Hart. By 4th April the deacons minutes record that arrangements for his induction and welcome services were made for June 8th. This commenced a period of 9 years of fruitful ministry and firmly establishing the work with vision and solid biblical teaching and leadership. Rev. Roland Hart's first report in 1968 recorded the following observations of the early Northcote Church.

He stated "We have been impressed by the leadership of the Church. The vision, faith and courage of the deacons and the dedication of the teaching staff are a joy"

He continued by saying that we needed three things for the bright future he envisaged for the Church:

- 1] The active missionary activity of all members. As the Church grows, a diminishing amount of the minister's time is available for making new contacts. Consequently we need every member to be a missionary
- 2] More adequate prayer support from our members. A Church, like a machine can be under powered. We need every home represented at the prayer meeting.
- 3] More adequate premises. Some major matters cannot be even suggested until we have the facilities in sight to carry the projects through."

By 1968 Wes Jones had taken up leadership as Bible Class leader, Grahame Turner resigned as Treasurer and **David Griffiths** took up the position, Fred Mills continuing as Secretary, and they together with a strong and vigorous diaconate worked as part of the team with Roland and succeeding members of the ministerial team for the next two decades or more.

Planning for a new Church complex saw activity in increasing our building fund so that in 1969 our treasurer reported that if we wanted to start building within 2 years we need to raise \$10,000 pa in cash each year. The members accepted the challenge and planning commenced in earnest. More importantly though, was that in 1967 the members had agreed to tithe their general offerings and this money (10% of general giving) was placed in the allocation fund and at the Annual Meeting each year the members gave the accumulated fund away to various missionary or Christian causes deemed worthy. This tithing continued (and was increased to 12.5% in 1990) through the whole of the period of building and reflected the attitude of the membership in meeting spiritual values as a priority. In 1967 the **Opportunity Shop** was commenced and to this day is still functioning, providing a social service to the less fortunate in our district while at the same time contributing year by year a substantial sum which is allocated towards the Church funds and other outside causes including local community needs.

The annual reports of the Church (which each year seems to have increased in size!) record continuing growth in all areas - conversions, baptisms, new extensions of the work, growing youth activities including **Fingals Cave** (an after Sunday evening Young Peoples' Coffee bar activity forming a real outreach to the youth in the district) and a keenness to share our faith and our Church with the people of the district.

In 1970 the Church resolved to call a second minister to the pastoral team and the **Rev. Barry Denholm** joined Roland Hart in a team ministry that was to last three exciting years of growth and development and experimentation. The team ministry was a new concept among our New Zealand Baptist Churches.

During 1972 the planning of the new complex was completed, tenders were called and accepted and Roland Hart records in his report that while he was writing it the first concrete of the new building was being poured. Roland's report and that of the secretary record the success of the team ministry concept as it was working out in the life of the Church at Northcote. The vision of Roland Hart and his spiritual dimensions were immense. Those of us who were members at Northcote during his ministry have much to praise God for. His legacy is still evident in the life of our Church. Today the chairman of the deacons committee is his son, Murray. The legacy is not buildings but lives strengthened and committed to God and faith built upon which has lasted

1973 saw the culmination of years of planning, fund raising and concentrated working bees resulting in the opening of the new Church complex. The building was opened on 5 August with special services and overflowing numbers attending. The night before we also had other 'overflowing' problems with flood water and other unwanted contaminants in the toilet and lounge areas. Much work was done by an emergency late night working bee! Edwin Duxfield appeared briefly clothed disappearing under the stage in the Church. His underpants were gloriously decorated with large red ants. Next day Grahame and Pat Turner opened the Church door. The **Rev. Ayson Clifford** was guest speaker. A significant climax to years of planning. Even more significant was the ongoing vigour of the church's life. Deacons minutes of 3 July resolved that we move towards the establishment of a **Child Care Centre**. Support for Glenfield was shown by approval of our members "...that a grant of \$500 pa be available to them when a full time ministry is established". During this year a Spiritual Guidance Committee had been functioning and reporting to the diaconate. Plans were in process for a convention and also Evangelistic Services for the next year. The Treasurer reported that in this year total giving almost doubled from \$26,000 to \$51,000. He reported a weekly budget of \$668 per week and commented 'the treasurer is pleased to be holding office at Northcote as in other Churches he would have been thrown out for presenting a budget totalling anything like this figure..' (David Griffiths). There were 32 baptisms this year! Girls and Boys Brigades both continued functioning successfully.

1974 saw Barry and Annette Denholm accepting Oxford Terrace's call to be their pastor and the Church farewelled them with great regret. The experiment of a team ministry had proved successful and the Church was to continue into the future with this type of ministry. Home Groups established over the past two years were growing in numbers but trained leaders were still in short supply. **Rev. Trevor Keam** assisted short term in 1975 until **Rev. Ernie Stevenson and his wife Margaret** accepted the call of the Church to the pastoral team. First students from the Church were now in training (**Rob Collins**) or accepted by Baptist College for training (**Lindsay Jones**). The commencement of a paid office worker was established by the appointment of **Noleen Alsop** to start work beginning February 1975. **Miss Ainslie Wood** accepted by O.M.F. for mission service in the Philippines in a two year teaching position. Support was given from the Allocation Fund. The present Rogers organ was purchased during the year. We accepted responsibility for a Chilean refugee family giving care and support as they sought to establish a new life in New Zealand..

February 1976 saw 196 attending our Church camp at Ngaruawahia. **Grant Wyatt** was the first of our young people to be commissioned at a Church service for short term work with Youth for Christ. Home Groups increased in numbers with diversity of purpose becoming evident. **Anna Norrish**, a student of Baptist College, did practical training at Northcote for her deaconess course, The George Curle Crusade was an evangelical thrust during the year. Four couples undertook to visit, on behalf of the Church, 200 homes in Onewa Road inviting the residents to attend a Bible study in Dave and Jackie William's home. Rev. Roland Hart announced his resignation and informed the Church that he and Claire felt constrained under God's guidance to accept the call from the Auckland Baptist Tabernacle. The Church reluctantly farewelled them after their fruitful and exciting years of leadership amongst us. By December of 1976 the members had accepted the recommendation of the Pastoral Search Committee and deacons and a call had been extended to the **Rev. Gordon Coombs and his wife Lois** who had been pastoring the Opawa Church in Christchurch and the induction service was held February 1977. **Rob Collins** commenced working with the young people as Youth worker for one year setting the stage for the future ministerial pattern of the team ministry. Property and house for a manse in Stanaway Street was acquired and the Tilden Avenue house which had been provided at no cost to the Church was released to the owners. A gift of \$28,000 made the purchase possible and the Stevensons were able to stretch their legs in the new and more spacious home. Dr. Dale Cowling from the United States conducted a successful mission during March.

1978 saw the work continuing to evolve and adapt. New ways of sharing and reaching out were part of the willingness of Northcote people to experiment and develop. The formation of the **Church Missionary Council** saw the start of a stronger support system for our missionary interests and the commencement of **Craft morning**, an outreach into the community. Music groups contributed to the life and outreach of the Church in both the older and younger groupings of our Church family. Gateway group made effective contacts with young people particularly amongst the more needy of our society.

The first suggestion of a full time Youth Pastor appear in minutes of a deacon's meeting based on a report brought by Wes Jones. **Ken Patterson**, a Christian for 10 years and a deacon at Northcote for eight of those years, became the first Northcote deacon to pass into his Father's presence. He did so while sitting at his desk with his well used Bible open in front of him. Ernie Stevenson who had visited USA and Canada the previous year and developed strong interest in the Canadian scene received a call from Kitemat Church in Canada, and he and Margaret felt that after three years of team ministry it was God's call to respond and so the Church farewelled another well liked pastor.

The lesson we were learning is that team ministry develops the talents and desires of good pastors to want to have their own Church to lead and also to have greater preaching opportunities than a shared pulpit can allow. Ernie left Northcote in February 1979.

In the same month **Anna Norrish** commenced with us a probationary deaconess. Following a recommendation from the diaconate, the members voted wholeheartedly to invite **Rev. Arthur Gibbs** to become a member of the pastoral team with special emphasis on pastoral care. Arthur and Dorothy responded with warmth and officially commenced their ministry on 1 April 1979. The existing tape ministry of the Church was assisted by the purchase of a tape copying machine which enabled **Eric Alsop** (our first and to date only controller, operator and installer of our sound and other electronic gear) to produce for distribution, copies of the services within a few minutes of the end of each service. This ministry has been used by many over the years and is still readily available to all who want to hear (or enable others to hear) the message of the day. Bible Class presented '**Running on Empty**' to our Church and to other Churches further afield, - an evangelistic programme which was very well received. During the year a **Marriage Enrichment** course was organised for the first time and 27 couples attended. Lessons were learned and further courses were planned. Our Christmas carol service in Willow Park school grounds was a big success drawing some 500 people. Two important decisions made by the members were:

- 1] to appoint a full time Deaconess and **Miss Anna Norrish** was called and accepted, commencing in this position early 1980, and
- 2] to appoint a full time Youth Pastor to our team. An invitation was extended to **Mr. Bill Toohill and his wife Jean**.

Both Anna and Bill were inducted to the ministry in February 1980 which was to prove to be an exciting year for the Church. **Murray and Jennie Calder** went to Tekin as NZBMS missionaries for a three year term, taking with them their daughters **Trish and Pam**. **Des and Jeanette Calder** went with World Vision on a short term basis enabling Des to help in a hospital rebuilding programme. **Geoff and Julie Renner** left for Costa Rica for a 5 year term as South American World Vision Directors and **Peter and Elizabeth McNee** spent 5 months in Thailand with World Vision co-ordinating relief activities in Kampuchean refugees camps. The Church at Northcote purchased on a shared basis with the Toohills a home in Lynden Avenue and bought a bus for work with the young people and for Sunday mornings pick up of Sunday School scholars. Northcote was asked by the Auckland Association and accepted oversight of the newly formed Hobsonville fellowship. The Roll strength increased by 44 to 368 resident members plus 30 non resident, and total Baptisms during the year were 25. Morning and evening services showed larger increases in attendance over previous years. The work with the intellectually handicapped folk resulted in the formation of the G.I.F.T. group.

All the 1980 reports were good. Even the treasurer must have had a smile on his face when he presented his 'balanced' set of accounts with a comfortable surplus and adequate reserves in hand!

1981 saw the ministerial team at full strength led by Rev. Gordon Coombs with Rev. Arthur Gibbs and Rev. Anna Norrish (note the change from deaconess to Reverend) and Mr. Bill Toohill working together as team leaders with support coming from all section of the membership. The Church report started with this sentence: "In a year of economic difficulties, of technological change, of jobless people and of civil distress and strife and of deep questioning of motives and ideals evident throughout all stratas of our community how did the Church fare?" The question was answered by the next sentence. "They, their family or their friends have been blessed by God in some way through the ministry of the Word at Northcote." The various reports show a Church functioning well - "a sense of unity amongst us - we have known blessing as folk have come to know the Saviour - worship services were encouraging but a tendency to fit in worship once only on a Sunday was becoming evident. A need was seen for individuals to use their gifts in the life of the Church". A busy year with the life of the Church throbbing and alive. Outreach amongst young folk was evident in large numbers of 'outsiders' attending Saturday night Youth Group. Anna Norrish consolidated her identity and role in many areas of the Church and community life.

1982 through 1985 saw the ministry of the Church and its many activities continue at high levels of activity. At times the pace slowed as leadership changes occurred. At the end of 1982 Gordon and Lois announced that Gordon had been accepted as New Zealand Director of the Leprosy Mission. This was a big move for them but it emphasised their missionary interest and concerns which had been very evident in their leadership of the Church. Fortunately, the Mission housed them in Northcote and they were able to continue their association with the Church. Arthur tried valiantly to retire but always seemed to land back with the pastoral team under some slightly different tag: 'Extended', 'Retired', 'Honorary Visiting Pastor'. Dorothy and Uncle Arthur were loved 'senior pastors' 1983 saw the arrival of **David and Margaret Kimpton** from Australia. David arrived in August expecting to use his skills in the administration field. As no senior pastor had been appointed his task was not easy and the Church was grateful for the ability with which he temporarily filled the position vacated by Gordon. Bill and Jean Toohill completed their three year call and moved to Peter Snell Village as manager of the Camp site and Youth activities. The position vacated by Gordon Coombs remained vacant until July 1984 when **Rev. Kevin Yelverton and wife Cherry** and young children joined us, coming from the Hamilton South Church. Rev. Anna Norrish was farewelled during the year with a great deal of sadness. She had made her mark upon the lives of many people and her ministry and counselling skills endeared her to many who still remain her friends.

Sister Claire Hart was active in the life of the Church in official Church visiting and counselling and in 1985 she was appointed by the Church as a short term full time staff worker, her main emphasis being in pastoral visitation. Also this year David's role was redefined and he took up the role of Pastor to Youth.,

On David taking up this position **Wes and Raewyn Jones**, as Bible Class leader in charge, concluded 23 years of service to God expressed in outstanding love and sharing of their lives and home with literally hundreds of young people. Their contribution to the life and vigour of Northcote Baptist Church is impossible to measure but it has been inspired and blessed. Many who attend this Anniversary will be victories from those years. Kevin's ministry quickly revealed his ability and his eagerness to build on the strong foundations established and flourishing at Northcote. Missionary interest was sustained - Jill Tremain left for service with S.I.M. in Nigeria and **Ron Attwood** and **Geoff Williams** were involved in a clinic building project in Papua New Guinea. Missionary giving was well maintained and targets set for future growth. The Church reports for 1985 and 1986 both mention the disappointment of the Church members that the position of Director of Christian Care had not been filled. As a Church we felt that such a person with the right abilities could fulfil a need far beyond the walls of the Church. However, the person with the right skills was not brought to us and the changing life of the Church left that dream unfulfilled. At the conclusion of 22 years of continuous service as treasurer **David Griffiths** relinquished his steady hand on the financial affairs of the Church and with regret the Church accepted his resignation. David was at the financial centre of the Church through many years when faith was the measure of any budget and his sense of humour and timing of witticisms proved a very positive means of leading the Church to adventurous decisions. Behind the scenes lay hours of time (most Sunday afternoons) in keeping the records straight.

During the latter months of 1986 the Church extended a call to **Rev. Peter Pritchard and his wife Gwenyth**. Theirs was to be a pastoral care role and their expectation was that they would be working with Kevin and David. This was not to be for the Church faced its most difficult time in the early months of 1987 which finally culminated in Kevin's resignation. This was a period of testing for the whole Church and we can only be grateful that many in the Church had received extra training in counselling pre the Louis Palau mission and for the scheduled mission conducted by **Dr. Earl Lee** who brought messages on a series entitled 'Victorious Living'. In this provision for the Church, God provided **Rev. Bob Alcorn** as moderator to work alongside Pastors Peter and David as they pastored many who were puzzled by the events which the Church was experiencing.

By the end of the Church's year it was with grateful hearts that we as a Church were united to extend a call to Rev. **Bill McGregor and Catherine** from Mt. Albert Church to the role of Senior Pastor and for his positive response even though his coming was delayed until September 1988.

After 27 years of service as Church secretary, **Fred Mills** let it be known that he would not be standing as secretary at the Annual Meeting. A tribute by the Deacons was included in the Annual Report for that year. Jean had stood with Fred over those years and taken a very active part in the life of the Church. They continued in their active roles in the Church and denomination. **Mark Fegan** became secretary at the November Annual Meeting and very ably stepped into the role exercising a wise and understanding leadership in a period very adequately covered by Interim Moderators, Revs. **Bob Alcorn and Foster Sherburd**, ably backed by Pastors David Kimpton and Peter Pritchard. The work of the Church was sustained and enriched during this period and the 1988 reports show continued encouragement and blessing as people realised the importance of God working amongst his people. Mark's first report at 31 August 1988 set out well the significant activities of the year and was backed up by the many individual reports covering the life of the Church. For some years Northcote had had an interest in the work at Paihia and the contact and oversight was stepped up to give a much more active role. Northcote provided advice and regular visits were made as well as ongoing financial assistance. Resident roll strength remained constant at 370 with 26 baptisms during the year. Appropriate Pastoral offices were considered urgent and extension of Child Care into full Day Care became a major target to aim for. Peter Pritchard reported on his first year at Northcote that he and his family appreciated living in the manse provided for them in Speedy Crescent. Not a normal year but nevertheless a good year - deaconesses were continuing to share pastoral visitations and a 'Men's Visitors' team established to cover contact with men in the Church. David Kimpton reported on a full and very encouraging year of activities in the Youth work area. Over 50 folk were involved in areas of the youth ministry. Missionary convention speaker J. Oswald Sanders and Dr. John McArthur provided a time of challenge and blessing. Financial report showed a sound position with surplus at end of year. Part of this and the 'Missionary Trust Fund' were amalgamated to form a **Tipperah Development Fund** which would be used in Tipperah to seed loans and encourage savings in Bangladesh for the Tipperah people.

The excitement and anticipation of the arrival of **Bill and Catherine McGregor** in September 1989 was recorded in Mark's 1989 report. He reported on the family quickly settling into the life and fellowship of the Church.

Bill recorded the change and adjustments necessary to move into a large congregation. He took firm grasp of the reins, quickly assessing the life of the Church and initiating change only where the need was evident. Bill found the pastoral team provided good support and assisted him in getting the Church motivated to bring into being targets aimed for in prior years. Positive moves were made towards extending Eban House to provide suitable Day Care facilities and the extension of the Church office area to provide more adequate facilities was commenced.

One of Bill's major targets was the establishment of a **World Wide Missions** partnership (later known as Our Global Partnership in Mission). David and Margaret Kimpton resigned from the pastoral ranks towards the end of the year. They continued to worship at Northcote but sensed that their time of ministry amongst the Young People should cease. They were missed by many with whom they had closely worked. Under the heading Community Caring, **Brian Alley** (soon to become, with his wife and family, Support Missionaries with O.M.F. in Manila) reported on progress in the Child Care and the anticipation of the extended work in new facilities, - and then continued reporting on "English as a Second Language". **Hilary Sussex** lead and co-ordinated this new ministry directed towards assisting Asian people who are starting to appear in numbers in the community. He also reported 'it is a real joy to me to see the number of Asian people worshipping with us on Sunday morning'. Adult and teenage Bible classes commenced on Sunday mornings for Asian folk wishing to learn about Christianity.

Refer back to the first paragraph of this history and marvel how God works!. Sunday School started by retired China Inland missionaries in 1949. Chinese classes started at Northcote 40 years later to reach out to Asian brothers and sisters in our land!!

Noeline Staveley reported a challenging year in Religious Instruction in school (was **Bible in Schools**). Many changes have taken place in restructuring the primary school curriculum and Noeline had been very active in ensuring the 'R.I.' was in place in as many local schools as she could. The Opportunity Shop had now been operating for 23 years and the Church treasurer, **Dermot Brady**, reflected that basically the same ladies who started the shop had given dedicated service since then in running the shop and he estimated that something over \$100,000 would have been earned and invested in the Church facilities over that period of time. In addition, many other areas of ministry had benefited including Bay of Islands Church.

1990 was, in the life of the country, a year when the economic restructuring really hit home. All areas of life were affected and many of our members felt the impact in reduced incomes, job losses and unemployment. But God did not abandon us and while the needs of people were great and counselling and other skills of caring were much sought after, it is interesting to read the positive and affirming nature of the reports given.

A team headed by Bill and Catherine McGregor went on a short term visit to the **Mission field in Bangladesh**. **Brian and Nikki Alley** departed for **Manila** for their house parenting O.M.F. missionary kids. Support for them was largely raised from Northcote Missionary Funds and faith promises from individuals in the Church. Our beloved **Uncle Arthur (Gibbs)** left us to be with his Master. We all loved him. **Rev. Hugh Coutts with his wife Joan** came out of retirement to assist as a voluntary visitation pastor and was associated with our pastoral team. Bill and Peter continued their ministries in positive and encouraging ministries and the church is grateful to them. The Chinese ministry continued to grow.

A change of location to develop the **Day Care Centre** was necessary as price factors ruled out the original Eban House development. Financing arrangements were being discussed to allow the development of full facilities in the existing child care location. **Jean Aboud, as Supervisor**, has over the years proved a vital person both in leadership and Christian counselling amongst the parents. A response to a call to the role of Youth Pastor issued to **Chris and Helen Dennett** was eagerly awaited at the time of the 1990 Annual Report and their acceptance and welcome to Northcote in February 1991 is conveyed in the 1991 report. Attendances at morning services ran at a level only 21 off the peak in 1981. Return visit of **Dr. Earl and Hazel Lee** was a highlight of the Easter Celebration in that year. Development of one to-one discipling was commenced. This was a new thrust for deepening faith and positive growth. Faith targets set year by year provided a stimulus for growth. The Annual Report for 1991 included a chart listing 23 groups or activities involved in the Community Caring Ministry of the Church. Chris and Helen Dennett commenced their ministry in the early part of the year and quickly became a welcome part of the Ministerial team. Chris brought new ideas and after observing patterns which existed, introduced plans for a changed structure "with the hope that everyone attending our youth ministry would be actively involved in the group". Young people took on the challenge of a major facelift to the old hall, raising funds to equal those provided from the Church budget. A **Prayer Chain** was formed and had functioned for 12 months with up to 77 members contacted through the chain which operated daily (and in emergency situations whenever the need arose). A total of 604 prayer requests were made during the period and many answers were recorded for thanks and praise. **Jim and Georgina Litterick** run Young Disciples (Junior Church) which continued to grow, functioning during the morning service. Its programme included Bible stories enacted by the children and competitive group activities.

Joan Prasad continued her good work as Sunday School Superintendent. The numbers attending were less than in earlier years but we still have one of the largest Sunday School rolls of our N.Z. Baptist Churches. It is interesting that many reports in the 54 page report book have news not only of happenings during the year but of new initiatives being tried out or to be introduced. The only conclusion is that despite economic gloom and changing community attitudes to God and His Church we as a Church are not disheartened. Our God reigns!

And now through into 1992. With the unexpected transfer to Wellington of our secretary, **Mark Fegan**, early in January 1992, Fred Mills was given 5 minutes (by the deacons) to agree to take up the reins until the Church was able to appoint (in August) a new secretary, **Murray Hood**. Murray slipped easily into this leadership position and his first report (29th Annual Report) as secretary reflected his knowledge of the Church and grasp of its activities. He highlighted the rapid development of the Child Care Centre which began operating in its upgraded and enlarged premises.; the utilisation of Eban House as accommodation for **Shui and Satya Narayan** of the Baptist Indian Mission - a low rental was set to assist their finances; the planning and culmination of **Mission Fiji** led by Chris Dennett and Shiu with a group of our Young People; the increasing development of the Chinese Fellowship culminating in the unanimous agreement of the Church to seek and call a Mandarin speaking pastor to lead this group, and the Heap offering which overflowed from a target of \$20,000 to over \$30,000.

1992 was a stable year in the ministry team, each member Bill, Peter and Chris working in their principle areas but all working together with a fine team of leaders giving dimension and enthusiasm to the year's work. The **Global Partnership Mission** expanded with fresh links being established with five other specific people or churches in four countries. Faith targets were upgraded or enlarged. The healing of John Sussex from potentially terminal cancer was seen and acknowledged as a gift from God arising from the prayers of the Church. Nine of our young people were involved in specific ways with 'Missions'. Their participation is an example to all the young people in the Church.

This report is being written before the 30th Annual Report is presented. It is therefore not able to pick up highlights from the report but it can be reported that the Church is in good heart. Some drop off in numbers or rather possibly great fluctuations in numbers attending seems to be evident. This may be a result of the changing structure of our society and the increased secularisation of the whole community is making the Church leaders aware of the need for new strategies and for greater commitment of individual Christians to adopt positive responses to what is happening rather than being reactive after the events and changes have been adopted into the general way of life.

Brian and Nikki Alley returned home on furlough in July this year and were welcomed back into the life of the Church.

In our leadership the team of Bill and Catherine McGregor, Peter and Gwenyth Pritchard and Chris and Helen Dennett as full time pastoral staff supported by other honorary assistants in many different areas of the work continue an effective and enthusiastic ministry. Prayer life is being stressed and is increasing and new group methods of instruction and help have been instituted and are proving effective in opening new understanding of God's love and power in individual ways in peoples lives. In other words giving meaning to the person of Christ in individuals lives.

A great disappointment in the Chinese work was that the excitement and thrill of calling a Chinese Pastor, **Stephen Hsu and his wife Doreen**, at the beginning of the year was sadly cut short when unexpectedly they resigned and returned overseas without giving opportunity for counselling or sharing with our senior pastor. We believe that the call and response was God-given but that in some way Satan managed to intrude in the early days of settling into the church and managed to move Stephen away from the pathway of ministry at Northcote.

To the person who has typed this report and 20 previous annual reports, and who runs the office so efficiently, and to her husband who is the pivot of all the practical work of maintenance and sound and light and who between them are the inspiration and hard workers behind most of the many well catered activities, this report is dedicated. **Noleen and Eric Alsop**, we thank you for your tremendous contribution to our Church and to your Lord and God.

Thank you to the Pastoral Team and to all who work for the Lord in so many different ways in our Church - many unsung servants of the Lord. In everything that we do may we always seek only to please the Lord and to please one another - not just ourselves.

1 Cor. 10:32, Romans 15: 1fg.

August 1993.