



New Zealand

A Long Way to Go, but Well Worth It!

After having spent most of the previous twenty four hours in the air, it was a relief to walk on the solid ground of Christchurch airport on South Island and begin our three-week visit to the Reformed Baptist Churches of New Zealand. The main purpose of the visit was to share information about the full breadth of GBM's work, so as to encourage long term prayer support and participation in mission from our brethren in that part of the world.

SOUTH ISLAND

CHRISTCHURCH & TIMARU

Our first meetings were with Grace Baptist Church in Christchurch, which began in 1995, and is led by Dafydd Hughes and his fellow elder David Sterne. David has been involved in planting three out of the seven Reformed Baptist Churches that exist in New Zealand today. Grace Baptist Church has twelve members and around thirty-six people meet each Sunday in a local school. Although small and not yet fully self-supporting they have a real desire to reach out with the gospel and to plant other Churches.

A two hour drive further south across the very flat Canterbury plain brings you to the town of Timaru. We met with the Marchwiel Reformed Baptist Church, which is led by John Leever who comes from South Africa.

These two small Churches are the only Reformed Baptist witness on the whole of the South Island. In many ways this makes South Island a mission field itself!

NORTH ISLAND

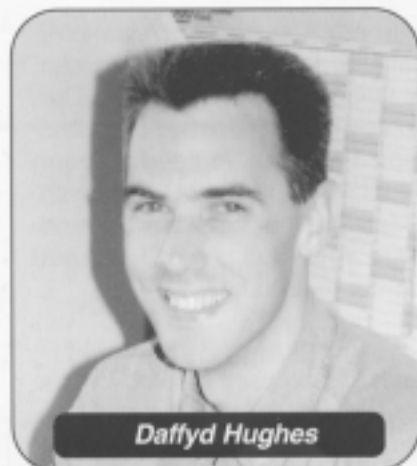
WELLINGTON

The capital city of Wellington has no Reformed Baptist Church. However, since January this year a small group of about eight people have begun meeting with a view to planting such a Church. Their meetings are held in the home of Chris and Robyn Good, formerly of Hamilton. This embryonic Church has a real burden to bring the gospel to their very needy and well-populated city.

HAMILTON & TAURANGA

Our links with Trinity Reformed Baptist Church in Hamilton go back almost five years when they began airing Sound Words as part of a half-hour slot they were given on their local Community Radio Station. John and Heather Bycroft began the Church's radio work, and it was also good to meet Norman and Edna Giles who first came to the Church as a result of hearing the programme. Derek had the opportunity of being live on air the Sunday morning we were in Hamilton. David Marshall is the Church's full time elder and has been in Hamilton for over seven years. The membership is forty with 100 attending the Sunday meetings. They have just begun a door to door visitation programme using a questionnaire.

It was also good to meet a number from the new Church at Tauranga, led by Andrew Kerkham. Andrew has an opening in a local Bible College and is keen to get GBM literature into the library.



Dafydd Hughes



Auckland Waterline



Emmanuel Baptist Church, Auckland

AUCKLAND

■ North Shore

We joined the Church for their weekend camp at Houghton Bush. The work at North Shore began in Feb 1984 with eight people, and the church has steadily grown with a good mix of races with 140 people meeting on a Sunday. Only forty of these are members. Stephen Turner leads this work and a number are seriously thinking about missionary service.

■ Emmanuel, Mount Eden

This church began in June 1974 and has also planted a church in Singapore through their work amongst S.E. Asian students. The church has a large Asian contingent in its international congregation of around 100 people. Pastor David Yan has led this Church from the beginning, after being set apart for the work by the Church in Highbury when Joseph Hewitt was the pastor. One of their members, Nelly van Acker, is doing voluntary work in Cambodia and she has recently been translating 'Biblical Christianity'.

■ Sovereign Grace

Pastor Bala who comes from Sri Lanka leads this work. He and his wife had been to South Wales Bible College when it was in Barry, so Jacki had this link in common with them. This church has an excellent book room and they make reformed literature available throughout New Zealand, including GPT books. Bala is also involved in training men in India. He has translated a number of our books into Tamil, and also produces a magazine that is sent to many Tamil communities around the world.

Throughout our visit I was able to gather some useful recording material for future Sound Words programmes. All the Churches showed a warm appreciation and keen interest in all that the Lord has been pleased to do through GBM. We came away conscious that many would be upholding the work in their prayers, and this commitment was seen in their practical generosity. Thanks to the New Zealand churches and some other friends, the expenses of the visit were all covered. It was a long way to go, but it was well worth it.

Derek and Jacki French

NB. For more information visit their web site at www.rbc.org.nz



John & Heather Bycroft with Norman & Edna Giles



Derek & Heather in the Community Radio studio