

## Maori Work - 1968

### First Deaconess for Hawke's Bay: Miss Mere Pou Commissioned at Hastings



After the Induction of Miss Mere Pou as Maori Deaconess, Hastings.

*From the left:* Rev. G. T. Macann (Hastings Church), Miss Mere Pou, Rev. Roy Bullen (Missionary Editor and Maori Board), Rev. C. D. Jones (Field Superintendent, Maori Department).

Recently Miss Mere Pou of Hastings was commissioned as a full-time worker amongst the Maori people of Hawkes Bay. She is working for the Hastings Church and the work is associated with and assisted by the Maori Board. Miss Pou is the first worker to commence this new experiment. She also is the first Maori worker set aside by a Baptist Church and the Maori Board. This was therefore a historic moment in the life of our Denomination.

The Hastings Church was packed for the commissioning of one of its own members. Mr N. Donaldson, in his statement of appointment, mentioned the effective work already done for several years in the district by Miss Pou. He spoke of her application and acceptance for service and read greetings.

Miss Pou declared her faith. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ," she said. She spoke to a large group of her own people who were present in Maori. Miss Pou was converted at the age of twenty and even then felt a call to serve her people. All were moved at her deep sincerity and the charm of Christ evident in her personality.

The Rev. C. D. Jones, Field Supervisor of the Maori Department, gave the charge to Miss Pou from 1 Cor. 16:13 and 14, and Eph. 6:11-18. His text was "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith; quit ye like men". He mentioned that Miss Pou was doing a man's work. She would need the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit and would need to do all things in a love that never fails.

The Rev. Roy Bullen, Missionary Editor and representative of the Maori Board, gave the charge to the Church. He mentioned a visit to the late Bishop Bennett in Hastings many years ago. The Bishop had said: "First things are not first. We have practical and social action, we have cultural and educational amenities, but what we Maori people need is the simple Gospel of Jesus Christ."

Mr Bullen said that not only Miss Pou, but the whole Hastings Church were committed to proclaiming this Gospel to the Maori people. Miss Pou was not their proxy to do their work. The Church would prove the reality of its involvement by prayer and practical support for Miss Pou.

On behalf of the Church, the Rev. G. T. Macann, Pastor of the Church, led the act of commissioning. Mr Macann had been responsible for much of the preparatory work that led to this moment. This was followed by Miss Pou's affirmation of belief and pledge to serve Christ in this task.

A special feature of the service was the beautiful singing from trios of junior and senior Maori B.C. members. This was a sign not of a work that might begin, but of a work already established and an evidence of Miss Pou's acceptance by her people.

### **Maori Work: Associate Work Scheme**

Assembly 1967 approved a scheme whereby the Maori work done by an individual church may be associated with the work of the Maori Department. Two churches have joined this scheme, Hastings and Otorohanga. The King Country work, led by the Otorohanga Church, is characterised by the inspiring witness of Mr Ned Muraahi and the unflinching efforts of the minister, Rev. I. F. Taylor. Mr Taylor tells his story:—

"It is a dark, wet, winter's night. A group of four leaves the car on the main road and crosses the paddocks, splashing through the water. The flooded river is reached—the narrow footbridge is under water. The raft of 44-gallon drums is ready to be pulled across to the other side. There is a further walk in the rain up the gently sloping hill towards the light of a lantern in the distance. At last it is reached and the home of the Muraahi family welcomes the arrivals. And the purpose of all this— to gather in fellowship and prayer at Napinapi Pa with our brethren in Christ. Other times it is the reverse and they come out in similar manner to us. Such is the dedication of our Maori brethren as they seek to know more of the Lord.

"Mr Ned Murrahi and helpers have been conducting an effective children's work at Piopio each Sunday and have also visited several of the homes, thus contacting the parents. Recently the children competed in the Piopio Sunday Schools' competitions and succeeded in winning the trophy for Bible knowledge. The fact that these children are absorbing the Word of God augurs well for the future of the work in the King Country.

"At Otorohanga several homes are under pastoral care from the Church and some children attend the Sunday School. Our real present concern is for the parents."

### **At Hastings**

In a quiet, unassuming way Miss Mere Pou began her Sunday School and visitation ministry whilst working in Hastings. She has now been appointed a full-time deaconess with the Hastings Church. The minister, Rev. G. T. Macann, is right on the target when he writes:—

"'Who's winning?' The little boy looked up, marble in hand ready to play, as if to say, 'You watch and see that I will win,' and proceeded to demonstrate his skill with the marble. He was right on the target the first time, not so straight with the next one, and his mate was able to get his marble back again and live to play another game. "It was Monday evening outside the Youth Hall and the boys were snatching a minute or two of fun before Bible Class. Once inside everything was right on the target. Miss Pou led the singing with choruses and hymns and the groups went off to their classes.

"The evenings consist of Bible study. There are no tricks, no gimmicks, no games (except at the special social), no fish and chips, just the study of the Bible and Christian doctrine. And the young people come, week after week, eager to hear the Word of God. Everything is right on the target.

"'Is this fun or keeps?' 'Keeps!' When you play marbles it's for real. Bible Class is not fun either. It's for keeps. It's for eternity. The members are taking seriously the facts of the faith. Miss Pou is now speaking to many members personally in her new flat in the Camberly area.