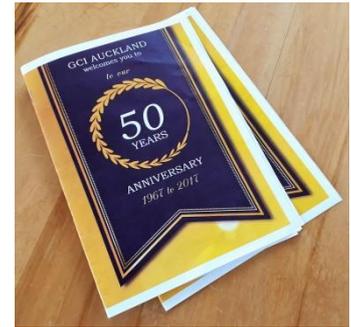


Auckland Golden Anniversary Celebration

Fifty excited people attended the fiftieth anniversary of the Auckland Church on Saturday November 4th, fifty years to the day after our very first service. The event was held at the Mt Eden hall where we have been meeting regularly for services for the past 15 years.



After three baptising tours in the early 1960's Graemme Marshall came to live in New Zealand in August 1967. On September 7th of that year, the first WCG Bible Study was held in Auckland, at the Workingman's Clubrooms in Kitchener Street. Following the Feast of Tabernacles, held at Blackheath, NSW, the first Church service took place on November 4, 1967, in an upstairs room in Queen's Arcade, with Wayne Cole giving the sermon.



Fifty years later, lots of memories came flooding back to mind as members past and present enjoyed renewing old acquaintances and comparing stories and anecdotes. There was plenty of "mix and mingle" time, pleasantly enhanced by a delicious and abundant finger food lunch organised by Marilyn Wong.



I read out messages of greetings from members unable to be present, including Don and Alix Engle, Gary and Pam Harvey, Kerry and Anne Gubb, Rod and Ruth Matthews and Bob and Sandy Morton. Kerry noted his funniest recollection as "Big, burly Guy Ashton dressed up as a bumble-bee dancing across the Rotorua stage during the Festival".



Rod Matthews' message encouraged the attendees to "look around at one another, think of those who went before us and recall that we are but a part of a spiritual Body so much bigger, immortal, as yet unrevealed, but flowering plants in the garden of God. We celebrate together this golden anniversary milestone on a journey as yet unfinished but with a sure destination."

Brief addresses were given by David Wong, Barry Nottingham, Robert Thompson and Dennis Richards, reminiscing on incidents and lessons gleaned during half a century of history. Then we watched a video especially prepared by Joseph Tkach for the occasion. Following this, an anniversary cake decorated in our theme colours of purple and gold was cut by five members present at the first service, Jeannette Findlay, Rex Morgan, Barry Nottingham, Robert and Noreen Thompson.



Lianne Trevarthen had spent countless hours putting together a comprehensive display of photos and mementos highlighting many aspects of our history. She also compiled a slide show that was screened continuously throughout the day, and produced a colourful commemorative brochure for attendees.



The member who had travelled furthest for the occasion was Barbara Best (formerly Hutchison), who had also come across the Tasman for the 40th anniversary. Bill Hutchison was of course one of the prominent characters in the early history of the church.

I commented in my address that a 50th anniversary is also called a golden anniversary, and ultimately we're all here because God chose to refine our character into spiritual gold for his everlasting temple at the centre of the New Jerusalem, which is described as being made of pure gold.



It was certainly a wonderful day of golden memories, and it seemed that no one wanted to leave. The buzz of conversation continued well after the planned closing time, finally interrupted by the next group who had hired the hall wanting to make their way inside!