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ST. COLUMBA'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, PARKVIEW

A study of a Church in an urban community.

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
the B.D. Degree by J.F. Paterson, B.A. (Rand).

C O N T E N T S

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ST. COLUMBA'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH PARKVIEW
A STUDY OF A CHURCH IN AN URBAN COMMUNITY.

CHAPTER 1

The Early Years of St. Columba's

Parkview is situated to the north of Johannesburg, below the Westcliff ridge, about four miles from the city centre. A graceful suburb, its large but rarely ostentatious houses are set in well-kept and pleasant gardens, and the jacaranda-lined streets lend it an air of tranquility in marked contrast to the noise and bustle of the nearby city. It was laid out in 1906 by Charles Presswell Tomkins, who had the intention of

".... creating a garden township, taking advantage of the best natural features"⁽¹⁾, and by 1920 it was the centre of the rapidly developing northern areas of Johannesburg.

One man who was aware of its growth was the Minister of Clifton Presbyterian Church, Rev. James Gray. A man of vision and determination, he had been responsible for establishing the first Presbyterian Church in the Transvaal, at Barberton, and now his enthusiasm for Church extension work was directed towards Parkview. In August, 1920, two months after his induction to the charge at Clifton, he reported to his Session that:

"The growing suburb of Parkview had no Church to see to the spiritual needs of the people there and in the districts around". (2)

He drew to their attention the fact that the Transvaal Consolidated Lands Investment Co. were offering building sites in the area, with loans, so that if the residents of the area were in favour, and were prepared to help obtain the necessary funds, then the time was ripe for establishing a new Church.

The vision was swiftly followed by action. At the next Session meeting, Rev. Gray was able to report that the T.C.L. was prepared to grant a quarter acre plot free of charge to the Church, and reserve an equal plot for £75. In addition, a loan of £1,500 would be available for the building. With this definite proposal in mind, the Clifton Session proceeded to organize a meeting of interested residents of Parkview in Mr. Adam Dall's Tea Gardens on the corner of Tyrone Avenue and Ennis Road, Parkview, inviting Mr. T. McKenzie, Convenor

of the Transvaal Presbytery's Church Extension Committee to the gathering. The meeting was held on the 8th October, 1920, but only 10 people, including James Gray, were present. (3) Despite this, however, it resolved to continue the movement, and to collect names of those interested in the establishment of a Presbyterian Church in the district, and submit these to Presbytery. When Presbytery next met on 19th October, 1920, the resolution of the meeting to continue, plus a list of 120 names willing to support them were handed to it, and Parkview immediately became a preaching station under Clifton.

A "strong" committee (4) was appointed to carry the movement forward, and by the time Presbytery met on 21st December, 1920, Rev. Gray was able to report that plans for a Church building to hold 210 people had been prepared, and a tender of £1,879 accepted. It is a tribute to the faith of this original committee that, realising that the loan from T.C.L. would not cover the cost of the proposed Church, £350 was subscribed on the spot by the committee. It was a faith which quickly brought concrete results. The foundation stone of the new building was laid by Lady Phillips on February 16th, 1921, and the Church was officially opened on 3rd July, 1921, by Mr. Charles Greig in the presence of a congregation of over 200.

James Gray's sermon on the occasion of that opening reveals the thoughts which were responsible for the Church being there at all. He describes the growing tendency of urbanization, and mentions how the invention of the motor car and motor bicycle had helped to speed this process on its way. He continues:-

"But the compulsion to travel so far to work is not upon them to travel to worship. Besides, few could or would spare the expense of taking their families to Church and so the town Church and the Country member and his family has tended to become of a very nominal and unsubstantial character. Souls may be lost or saved in the suburbs as well as in the slums, in the country as in the city". (5)

Parkview Presbyterian Church, then, started life because James Gray understood that the Church must be prepared to follow the people, that the responsibility of those "souls in the suburbs" belonged to the Church. But

notwithstanding this responsibility, it had been a venture of faith on the part of these few men which had brought this preaching station into existence. The future of Johannesburg in the early twenties was not all that certain: it was still very much a boom town, only 35 years old, and no-one was quite sure how long the gold would last. Even in 1936 Sarah Gertrude Millin was to sum up the general atmosphere of the town when she wrote:

"The Star wants to know what Johannesburg will be like 50 years

hence. Who has ever, in Johannesburg, thought of 50 years hence..?"(7) Permanent residents who had decided to make Johannesburg their home, were still fairly few, many more thought of it as a large gambling machine where the quantity of gold was such that one could hardly lose. There was an element of unease and unrest in the town - these were the "Unstable Years" (8) - unemployment was a problem in Johannesburg due to the influx of "poor whites" from rural areas, just beginning to gain momentum at this time, and the Strike of 1922 witnesses to the dissatisfaction of an important section of the populace.

The status of a full congregation was soon reached: Those who took the decision to build a church in Parkview showed a confidence in the development of Johannesburg which was not universally shared. By authority of the Presbytery, this took place on 21st October, 1921, with Rev. James Gray appointed interim Moderator. A session was elected (11th November, 1921), and met for the first time on the 19th April, 1922, when the Rev. Gray read to them from the Book of Order, impressing upon them the duties of eldership.

The main business of this first Session meeting, held less than two years after the idea of a new church had been raised, was the division of the congregation into four "districts", one for the care of each of the new elders. (9) Mr. William Moir was assigned the entire area "North of the Lake" (i.e. the Zoo Lake in the Hermann Eckstein Park), Mr. John Davison was allotted the district "south of the Lake to Lurgan Road", Mr. Thos. Sawers had the area "Lurgan Road to Galway Road", and Mr. Charles Greig "Galway Road and Southwards". As the Church stood in Lurgan Road, this meant that most of the original congregation lived within comfortable walking distance of it. (10). Only those in Mr. Moir's district - a total of 15 - would have required some form of transport to get to Church, so that Rev. Gray's concern over people's unwillingness to travel to

Church must have been largely alleviated by the centrality of the new Parkview Presbyterian Church; in this respect the site appears to have been well chosen. Charles Greig was appointed Session Clerk, a most important decision, for he was to hold this position until his death in 1944, and because of this he played a vital role in the formative years of the Church.

The next step was to find a Minister for the new congregation. Once again James Gray took the initiative and approached the Rev. Joseph Robertson, at that time stationed in Middelburg, Transvaal, with a view to his coming to Parkview. Born in Blairgowrie, Dundee, Joseph Robertson had originally studied to become an engineer, and had come to Johannesburg in order to join an elder brother in an engineering business. Once in South Africa, however, the call to enter the Holy Ministry came to him, and he settled in Middelburg first as a student pastor (before the 1st World War), then as a fully ordained minister (29th December, 1920). His congregation there was spread over an extremely large, rural area, bounded by Witbank on one side and Machadodorp on the other, quite different from a growing urban community. However, the Session obviously respected a recommendation made by James Gray, and promptly invited Robertson to preach at the Church, and to administer the Sacraments at the April communion. There was a record turnout of 54 for the service, and the impression made was a favourable one, for the Congregational Meeting held the following month agreed - seemingly unanimously - to call the Rev. Joseph Robertson as Parkview Presbyterian Church's first minister. He accepted, and on the 29th August, 1923, was duly inducted. It was a vital decision in the life of the young Church, for Robertson's ministry was to last 25 years until his death in 1949, forming the solid foundation on which others were to build.

The new Church, to which Robertson soon gave the name of St. Columba's, (11) enjoyed steady growth in its early years. The Sunday School, which had originally met in the home of Miss Ray Arnot before the Church building was complete, started off with "some 40 or 50 children" (12), and although figures for the following years are not available, the report from the Sunday School at successive AGM's was invariably "encouraging" and "optimistic". The Sunday School was not without its teething problems, however, for Miss Arnot, after

3 years of service, was considered "not re-acceptable as Sunday School Superintendent" because she was of the Plymouth Brethren persuasion (13).

Her place was taken by Mr. Thos. Sawers who worked untiringly as Sunday School Superintendent until he was forced to resign on medical advice in 1934. Writing in praise of him at the time of his retirement, Rev. Robertson says:

"It was felt that our people should know with what modesty, diligence and great love Mr. Sawers had carried on the work among the children, taking over the Sunday School when it was a small thing in comparison with what it is today, largely due to his great energy and wonderful way with the children(14)". The clumsiness of expression, unusual for Robertson, adds sincerity to the tribute. Thos. Sawers is a fine example of the importance to the congregation of the work and witness of individual Christians.

Shortly after Robertson's arrival a Minister's Bible Class was begun, and he was soon able to report that "it was in a very healthy ^{condition} ~~condition~~ (sic)" (15). Then on 1st November, 1924, Miss Maud Macdonald, Miss Kathleen Lorimer and Miss Elizabeth Thompson became the first 3 young people to be confirmed in St. Columba's. The Women's Association was active from the beginning, under the leadership of Mrs. Jean Greig, wife of the Session Clerk, and by the end of 1925 the decision had been taken to organize "a young people's ^{guild} ~~guild~~ (sic), say during the winter months" (16).

The first visitation from Presbytery took place during August, 1925, and the report of the visitation committee reflects the growth of the Church and is a justification of the optimism and enthusiasm of its founders. The report of the committee begins as follows:

"The Presbytery rejoices in the evidences of substantial growth in membership since the inception of this congregation...."(17), and continues in congratulatory vein almost throughout, commending the Sunday School, the W.A. and the Bible Class. Warning notes are also sounded, notably the need for more regular attendance at communions. It was suggested that the money collected by the Sunday School might be more effectively distributed, and an interest in Orphanages or Native Missions be cultivated in the children. Taken overall, even allowing for a tendency in visitation committees to be too kind, it is a glowing report for the young Church, which seems to have done all

/6....that

that was expected of it, and more, up to this time (18).

A further more concrete indication of the growth of the Church was the decision of the 1926 AGM to agree to the appointment of two new elders, Messrs. Rob Arthur and Percy Morrisby, to serve the increasing congregation. By the end of 1926 membership had reached 161, an increase of about 100 in five years - not a startling, but a steady and promising growth. About half of these had joined by certificate from other Presbyterian Churches, and several seem to have been new arrivals to Johannesburg. Removals were fairly few during these early years, although the Session Minutes record that, at the end of 1926, 18 people were removed from the roll because they had left the district (19), so that the congregation can be said to have been influenced quite substantially by the fluidity of the population, typical of an urban population, particularly in a rapidly growing town like Johannesburg.

With the election of the new elders came the reorganization of districts, and although the new districts indicate a slight widening of the area served by the Church, the overall impression is that of a greater concentration within the Parkview district. Mr. Moir retained Parkwood, Parktown North and Rosebank as his district, much as before, and Mr. Sawers continued to serve Galway, Westmeath and Lurgan Roads. Mr. Davison had Forest Town added to his list, while Mr. Greig's already small district was reduced to Kerry and Kilkenny Roads. The two new districts were in the Westcliff area and the adjoining parts of Parkview indicating a growth of the congregation towards town, and not, as yet, in a northerly direction. The community remained a local one.

Spiritually the congregation seemed to be making progress as well, although this is a much more difficult advance to measure, for there can be no statistics of the soul. But there are clues which indicate that the spiritual wellbeing of the congregation was being carefully watched: a Young Worshippers League was formed in 1927 "for the purpose of encouraging the children in the neighbourhood to attend Sunday Morning Service" (20), a Mission was held at the Church in April, 1927 "for the deepening of spiritual life", at which the addresses given by the Rev. Hunter were of a "deep spiritual nature" (21), a Christmas morning service was held for the first time in 1928, and a Harvest

/7.... Festival

Festival in 1927. Rev. Robertson's influence is clear in these developments, and Charles Greig is not slow to pay tribute to him in the Session Minutes. For example, after one communion service (12th August, 1926) he writes: "This was a feast of great spiritual fervour. The holy calm was commented upon by many" (22). The AGM of 1929 recognized "Mr. Robertson's successful and highly appreciated ministry" (23), and the life and increasing diversity of activity within the congregation appear to bear witness to the truth of this statement. The latest in the list of organizations, adding to the Sunday School, Bible Class, Women's Association, Young Worshipper's League and possibly a Youth Group as well, was the Band of Hope, started for the younger children by Miss Janet Kiddie with an initial membership of 42 in May, 1928. The emphasis of this group was ^{on} ~~a~~ Temperance, with handiwork activities following a hymn, a prayer, a Temperance story, and the reciting of the Pledge.

In April, 1929, a most important milestone in the development of the Church in Parkview was reached when Presbytery requested the Moderator and Kirk Session of St. Columba's to take over Clifton Church as a "Mission Station", so that "the congregation of Clifton be under the guidance and administration of the Moderator and Session of St. Columba's" (24). The Session agreed to comply with the request, which meant that only eight short years after its establishment, St. Columba's had accepted responsibility for its parent.

There are several reasons for this apparently sudden demise of Clifton. One was undoubtedly the retirement from the active ministry of James Gray in 1928. But Clifton had never been a particularly large congregation at any time, possibly because of its proximity to St. Georges in Bree Street. The growth of St. Columba's (the congregation numbered about 165 at this time) indicated that it was situated more suitably to serve the needs of the Presbyterian community north of Johannesburg. The need foreseen by Rev. Gray of a Church in Parkview had been proved correct. The changing nature of Johannesburg is reflected in the rise of St. Columba's and the fall of Clifton. As the city expanded, so the suburbs further away from the city had become more populated (25). A report in the Rand Daily Mail of September 5, 1928, states that:

"The greatest advance in recent years has taken place in what one might call the northern suburbs, including Parktown, Dunkeld, Rose-

bank, Parktown North, Parkview and Houghton, Eight years ago there was actually no Saxonwold as it is found today." (26)

Although Braamfontein was not at this stage the collection of multi-storied office-blocks which it was later to become, most of the middle- and upper-income group citizens were making their homes further north, their places being taken by people with largely Afrikaner (and hence not Presbyterian) backgrounds from rural areas. The scarcity of land and the increase of industry had led to many erstwhile farmers making their way to the cities, creating the "poor white" problem which was to have such an important effect on South African politics. As they tended to occupy the older, cheaper housing nearer the city, those with Presbyterian backgrounds tended to become fewer in these areas. The Church in Parkview catered for a growing population, much of it immigrant, and this became stronger as Clifton became weaker. Clifton did not cease to exist until July, 1959, but its membership was never greater than 50 after 1929, and in the 1930's the average attendances at Communion services there numbered about 30.

Practically, the decision to take over Clifton as a Mission Station meant the extra burden of a service every Sunday afternoon for the Minister of St. Columba's. For the next 35 years there was never a time when the Minister of St. Columba's was not responsible for at least one more charge besides his own, and on occasions it was two or three. It was a burden which demonstrated the importance of the Church in Parkview in serving the needs of northern Johannesburg.

REFERENCES

CHAPTER 1

- (1) S.A. Survey Journal, December, 1951, p. 4 : quoted in "Johannesburg Street Names" by Anna Smith.
- (2) Session Minutes 1 : 1
- (3) The full list of those who attended reads: Rev. James Gray
Charles Greig
I.M. Henderson
A.B. Gardner
R.B. Morrison
T. Sawers
R. Arthur
W. Moir
J. Cochrane
John Duthie
- (4) S. M. 1 : 1
- (5) Rev. James Gray's Sermon at the opening of the Parkview Presbyterian Church, 3rd July, 1921. Published in St. Columba's Record, July, 1946.
- (6) List of foundation members - see St. C.R. July, 1946.
Also Communicants Roll Book.
- (7) Sarah Gertrude Millin in the "Star", Monday, September 21, 1936.
- Special Supplement on the City's Jubilee.
- (8) So described by Hobart Houghton (years 1919-32) in his description of Economic Development in the Oxford History of South Africa, Vol. II (Chap. I).
- (9) Charles Greig and Thomas Sawers had previously been ordained elders, and were hence only inducted to the eldership at St. Columba's ;
John Davison and William Moir were ordained and inducted.
- (10) The divisions were, by district: Moir 15
Davison 14
Sawers 17
Greig 9

Only Sawers was not in his own district - he lived in Dundalk Avenue,
Davison's District.

- (11) Decision of Congregation Meeting, 19th December, 1923, on Robertson's
recommendation.
- (12) S. M. 1 : 2
- (13) S. M. 1 : 24 , 2nd September, 1924
- (14) St. O.R. June, 1935.
- (15) S. M. 1 : 22 , 28th July, 1924
- (16) S. M. 1 : 31 , 6th November, 1925
- (17) S. M. Insert 1 : 31/32, 20th December, 1925
- (18) The members of this visitation committee were Rev. D. Hunter (Yeoville)
Chairman,
Rev. Dower (Brakpan) and
M. Hogg, elder (Yeoville)
- (19) S. M. 1 : 45 , 31st December, 1926
- (20) S. M. 1 : 45 , 31st December, 1926
- (21) S. M. 1 : 48 , 10-17th April, 1927
- (22) S. M. 1 : 42, 43 , 12th April, 1926
- (23) S. M. 1 : 65 , 13th March, 1929
- (24) S. M. 1 : 66, 67 , 25th April, 1929
- (25) Johannesburg had achieved city status in 1928.
- (26) Rand Daily Mail 5th September, 1928.

CHAPTER 2

The Years of Joseph Robertson's Ministry

From 1930 until the death of Joseph Robertson in 1949, St. Columba's Church led, with one or two exceptions, an undramatic existence, concerned mainly with its own well-being. Until the hardships and tragedies of the Second World War became part of everyday life, the Church as a community paid little heed to events of local, national or world importance. During these years St. Columba's grew in numbers steadily. By the end of 1929 the active membership was 189, this had increased to 289 by the end of 1934, 385 by the end of 1939, 414 by the end of 1944 and 437 by the end of 1949 (1). At the same time Parkview and the suburbs surrounding it were also growing (2). New suburbs came into being close by: Greenside in 1931, Greenside East in 1933, Emmerentia in 1937, and Roosevelt Park, an area specially provided for ex-servicemen, in 1945 (3), and until St. Ninian's became a preaching station in 1950, St. Columba's remained the only Presbyterian Church close enough to serve them.

There is evidence to show that the growth of St. Columba's was not as encouraging as the membership figures seem to indicate. Attendances at Communion, for example, show that the highest number at a service was 268 in November, 1938, and the average attendance in 1938 was higher than that of 1947, 48 or 49 (4). The amount of money put in the collection plate was roughly the same after the war as it had been during the depression of 1932, 33 (5) and this despite a numerical increase of about 200 people in the congregation. The actual, as opposed to the numerical, growth, appears to have stopped round about 1934/5, and thereafter the annual turnover of 40 or 50 people coming to and leaving the district simply tended to favour St. Columba's. The additions to the Church roll are not always given separately but where they are, in every case after 1932 those added by certificate considerably outnumber those added by profession (6). But what statistics prove depends on the examination of other aspects of the Church's life.

Spiritual growth is always the hardest aspect of a Church's life to assess, but again there is some evidence that in the last 12 years or so of Robertson's ministry not all was well. Perhaps most important in this respect was the

struggle to obtain elders for the Session, and the clash between Rev. Robertson and John Rogan, the Session Clerk, but more will be said of this later. An attempt was made above (7) to measure the spiritual activity of the Church by its diversification, and taking the same principle in order to achieve some kind of comparison, it is found that by 1948/9, some progress, but not much, has been made. The "Young People's Guild" was in operation - after having sparked and died on several occasions, and the Women's Association was of course still very active, although the membership at monthly meetings had not increased at all (8). There has come into being a Girl's Auxiliary, run by the W.A., a Junior Choir, and a small Dorcas society. Of the organizations that previously existed, only the Band of Hope had disappeared. Yet there is without doubt an element of dissatisfaction in the Church; where reports had previously been glowing and full of hope and optimism, now there is concern that things are not all they should be in the Church. For example, the Session Report of April, 1948. The Report admits that ".... we cannot boast of very great progress". (9), is worried that the Session is still too small, complains that the average attendance at communion is only 50% of the congregation, and says of normal services:

"While the attendance at the morning services has been good upon the whole, here again it is not a healthy sign that more who could attend are absent for fairly long periods". (10)

The Choir report for the year 1948 exhibits ever more strongly the feeling that the congregation is not as involved as it should be ; only a few faithful members" are doing their share of the work, and the choir is too small to perform any difficult works. A concert presented by some of the young people".... was not a financial success owing to lack of support from our Church people".(11)

Undoubtedly, by the end of Robertson's ministry something was missing from the life of the Church. Robertson himself had never fully recovered from the illness he contracted while on active service with the 1st Transvaal Scottish (as Padre) in 1940, and perhaps the waning of his energies is reflected in the waning of the congregation's enthusiasm. Robertson's sole concern in life, until he was called away on army duties, seems to have been

St. Columba's and St. Columba's alone, which had the unfortunate effect of making the Church largely introverted, largely concerned with itself and nobody else. Certainly a young community must look to its own people and its own needs, and base its growth on a solid foundation, but very little reference can be found in St. Columba's early history to many real contributions as a congregation to the community outside of itself.

The Church had a debt to be paid off; the original loan for the Church buildings, to which was added that for the manse, and much of its activity was directed to this end: the W.A. in particular was always a tower of strength when it came to fund-raising, and without this organization one wonders if the Church would ever have become solvent at all. But even once these debts had been paid off, about 12 years after the opening of the Church, the congregation, led by the Minister and Session, continued to look to itself. The Rev. Robertson's letter "From the Vestry" in the St. Columba's Record of February, 1935 points the way, first of all giving us an insight into the general financial situation in South Africa:

"Money, that, perforce because of the uncertainty of security was locked up, has now been released and our country compares very favourably with other countries. Some would even say: Taking all into consideration, that the advantage is with South Africa." (12)

After this optimistic introduction, he sets out to launch his annual financial appeal to the congregation. Pointing out that "it is now old news that we are free from the incubus of debt" (13) he maps out the programme for the coming year:

"I frankly confess that I find it very difficult this year to fix an objective that might meet with the approval of all our Church family. With no debt the natural thing is to ask 'What are we going to work for?' and Mrs. Skewis, our enthusiastic President of the W.A., at a recent meeting of the Board of Management, asked for a lead in the matter. It was then pointed out that it would be necessary to find extra income for the purpose of meeting the necessary expenditure involved in connection with the sewerage scheme in our district,

which, we understand, will be completed early this year. Roughly an amount of £100 will be required for this. Added to the above amount we are expected to provide another £100 for the schemes of the Presbyterian Church of S.A. Then, as you must have noticed - if you look at the monthly financial statement in the Record - there is invariably a deficit, making another £100 necessary." (14)

In other words, the "objective" is £200 for St. Columba's Church expenses, and £100 for the Presbyterian Church of South Africa, an amount "expected" of the congregation, and the following year (1936) sees the same pattern, with £80 allocated "to provide for the unexpected expenditure in the form of maintenance of the Church property, etc." (15). In October, 1936, writing in connection with the annual Bazaar, the idea of a "new Church building" is put forward, and the possibility of creating "a special fund for such a purpose." (16) This fund was in fact started with a sum of £400 after the Bazaar, although it was 15 more years before the Church was built. Perhaps it is significant that the decline in enthusiasm of the congregation begins from round about the time when the initial debt had been paid off, and its efforts are concentrated on everyday payments and long-distance self-perpetuating schemes. Even during the war years, much of the congregation's energy was directed towards this building fund and other internal schemes.

Financially, then, the Church seemed to concentrate largely on itself. Despite the fact that most months there was a debit balance between revenue and expenditure - weekly offerings never adequately catered for expenditure during Robertson's ministry - , St. Columba's was never really a "struggling" Church. The area which it served was not a poor one, and the members were generally of middle - or upper - income groups. Besides the numerous people who were able to go overseas on visits to relatives, and the St. Columba's Record bears witness that there were many of them, a glance at the occupations of the members soon reveals that this is true. Between 1932 and 1938, for example, St. Columba's could boast of no fewer than 11 Accountants, 12 Engineers (including Dr. Hamlin, the City Engineer of Johannesburg), 2 Medical Doctors, a Dentist, 2 Chemists, a Solicitor, a Jeweller (Chas. Greig), 2 Company

Directors, a Draper (J.B. Orr), a Scientist and 5 Business Managers (17) and most of the others were fairly lucratively employed. In May 1933 Messrs. Moir, Forfar, Morrisby and Greig were all granted leave of absence to travel overseas, leaving only 3 elders and the Moderator on the Session for the time being. Yet despite the financial comfort of the congregation, the income never quite matched the expenditure, and the only money which left St. Columba's was the contribution to the All Schemes Fund of the General Assembly, approximately 10% of the total income (18).

Nor was the congregation exceptionally generous to its Minister. A special meeting of the congregation on 24th May, 1931 (19) agreed to raise his salary by £36 p.a., making it £654:12:0 p.a., at which sum it remained for the next 11 years. At the end of 1932 the organist at that time, Mr. Foster, wrote to the Session asking to be paid in future; not that the Session was behind in its payments, but it had not, it seems, previously occurred to them that an organist would appreciate some remuneration for his efforts on behalf of the congregation. The Session, let it be known, readily agreed to the request, and the princely sum of £6:0:0 per month was duly accorded to Mr. Foster. When Mr. Foster resigned shortly afterwards (for business reasons), Mr. J.A. Hall was appointed in his place with a salary of £60 p.a., or £5:0:0 per month. It was a canny congregation this.

What of activities other than financial? St. Columba's is largely introverted here as well. Very little reference can be found anywhere to action on behalf of the local or national community. Miss Kiddie's Band of Hope produced articles which were given away, and the Sunday School sent an annual supply of Easter Eggs to the Hope Home. That, plus occasional donations from the W.A. to some deserving charity, sums up, with one or two rare exceptions (20), the entire giving activity of St. Columba's up until 1939. Only occasionally did matters outside the immediate concerns of the Church disturb the consciences of the Session. In December, 1927 Messrs. Morrisby and Moir were appointed delegates from the Church, joining the deputation to Pretoria to interview Mr. Tielman Roos about "several clauses in the liquor bill" at the request of the S.A. Temperance Alliance. (21) It is 10 years before any similar activity is recorded in the

Session Minutes, then, in May, 1937, the Session held a lengthy discussion on the Native Laws Amendment Bill, coming to the conclusion that the bill was being "pushed through parliament with undue haste...." and that the government should "....stay their hand and allow of more discussion and probably prevent what might be an irreparable blunder." (22) The Moderator was instructed to wire the government to this effect.

The third and last occasion during Robertson's ministry when the Church took an active interest in public affairs - apart from references to the 2nd World War - was in December, 1942, when the Session agreed that ".... we as a representative body do everything in our power to help abolish the public scourge known as dog racing." (23) This was apparently raised because a commission investigating dog racing was sitting at that time, and the Moderator and members of the Women's Association were instructed to give evidence to this commission if it was advisable.

The meeting in May, 1937 was quite untypical of the normal activities of the Session, for not only did discussion centre around the Native Laws Amendment Bill, but here also the Session was informed that the Native Missions Committee had allocated the district of Sophiatown to St. Columba's - perhaps this is what sparked off the political debate. The Session decided "to be interested" (24) in this district, although little more is heard of it. Also at the same meeting was a letter from the International Peace Campaign Committee asking for assistance to carry on the work in connection with World Peace, and the Session referred to this letter to the Board of Management for favourable consideration. Note that in all these instances, save perhaps the Native Laws Amendment discussion, the initiative had come from outside St. Columba's, and action, or at least response, had been required of the Session.

In February, 1939, the Sunday School teachers' meeting decided that the Sunday School should take an active part in assisting one of the Native Sunday Schools in the Presbytery, the assistance to be "of an advisory and a practical nature." (25), and this decision was heartily endorsed by the Session. This is the first time that a really positive outward move had been made by St. Columba's, and the initiative had come from the Sunday School teachers, although it must also be noted that as early as 1934 the Assembly had strongly recommended

that "European Sunday Schools wherever possible.... take an interest in the local Native Sunday School, and help both with teaching material and with personal service".(26) In August,1939 Hamilton Memorial Church Mission Sunday School was placed under the care of St. Columba's Sunday School. The move was one which bore fruit, and the association started here remained throughout the ministries of Rev. Emlyn Jones and Rev. Dr. Jack Dalziel, up to the present day.

One final point in the investigation of St. Columba's as an inward looking congregation is to note that the number of visiting preachers to the Church is very small. Apart from old friends like James Gray and David Hunter, and the occasional anonymous "pulpit supply" when the minister was on leave, virtually no variation is injected into the staple Robertson diet of St. Columba's. It has been said by those who heard him that he was not a greatly inspiring preacher (27), but apart from the year spent as Padre to the Transvaal Scottish in 1940, when Rev. David Hunter added considerable spice to the notes "From the Vestry" if nothing else, Robertson occupied his own pulpit. It is not until 1942, when the Rev. Stanley Smith, an English Church Missionary to Seamen came to St. Columba's, that any guest preacher is mentioned in the Session Minutes (28). The St. Columba's Record, too, is edited, and mostly written, by Robertson until 1948, with little variation in form and not much imagination in composition.

It is a feature of Robertson's ministry, then, that, apart from the isolated instances mentioned above, the Church played little part in affairs which were not immediately connected with it, and when it did, it was usually at the request of an outside interested party. The Minister is largely responsible for this introspection, because of his own complete involvement with St. Columba's, and because he is the one who seems to set the goals for the congregation. However, before leaving the subject of external concerns, mention must be made of St. Columba's part in Church Extension north of Johannesburg, and the Church's continued care of its mother Church, Clifton.

In July,1935, Mr. George Saunders, who had been the sole remaining elder at Clifton for a number of years (29) died. His death presented a problem for St. Columba's Session: could they properly arrange for the election and ordination of a new elder for Clifton Preaching Station? Since 1929, when Clifton came under their care, the Minister had conducted regular services on

Sunday afternoon at Clifton, but this did not help to make clear what the next step should be. Robertson was instructed by the Session to write to Presbytery in order to clarify the position, and apparently the result of this was to set up at Clifton a Management Committee, consisting of Messrs. J. Bethune and B.F. Smits as a provisional measure. In the meantime, two elders from St. Columba's accompanied the Minister to Clifton whenever the quarterly communion service was held there. This arrangement lasted for ten years. It was only in February, 1945, that the matter was taken up once more, when Presbytery eventually agreed to the appointment of a provisional Session, consisting of the above mentioned gentlemen, thereby releasing Clifton from the immediate care of the St. Columba's Session, although the Minister continued there as Interim Moderator. For the remainder of Robertson's ministry, the matter rested here.

Also in 1935, St. Columba's first movement northward occurred when a new Sunday School was opened in Parkwood, and after a year was reported to be "making admirable progress" (30). But it was a short-lived venture, for by January, 1941, notice of its existence has disappeared from the St. Columba's Record, and the Session Report of 1941 makes no mention of it. Whether its organizers had left the district because of the war, or numbers had not proved sufficient for its continuance is not known - it simply vanished as quickly as it had appeared. Its brief existence, however, does bear witness to the now increasingly felt need for extension work north of St. Columba's to cater for the increasing population. It was for this reason that St. Columba's had been founded, but in the absence of a James Gray to explode a new Church into existence, progress was to be much more sedate.

The topic of Church Extension was first broached in November, 1937, when the Session Minutes record the following statement:

"In view of new Township opening up North West of Parkview the matter of extending the influence of the Presbyterian Church was considered...." (31)

Despite this consideration, 8 years were to pass before the topic was re-introduced - probably because of the uncertainty of the War years - and by 1945 it was becoming an urgent matter. This time, the matter was brought

up because Presbytery had bought a stand in Parktown North for Church Extension purposes, and had decided to transfer the stand to St. Columba's, instructing the Session to consider "erecting Presbyterian Churches in Parktown North and Greenside East" (32). The elders were requested to do some homework on the matter, and the June meeting of 1945 was devoted to discussion on Church extension. Figures were presented indicating the numbers of St. Columba's members in the areas under consideration (33). Numerous ideas for the best place to build a new Church - assuming they went ahead with the project - were put forward, some favouring Greenside, others Parktown North, and Mr. Paynter suggested that the Melrose, Houghton, Illovo, Inanda district should receive first attention. In the end it was generally agreed that Greenside was too close for a new Church, but that Parktown North was a likely proposition. Rev. Robertson stated that he had "Never approved of the geographical position of the ground purchased by the Presbytery in Parktown North for £625...." (34) Mr. Nicoll finally suggested that the entire Session visit the site together, in order to see for themselves, and this was agreed upon.

The visit must have been a successful one, for at the July meeting Rev. Robertson, in contrast to his previously expressed feelings, "was of the opinion that a small hall should be erected on the Parktown North site for a Sunday School and a service, even if only once monthly" (35). The matter was referred to the Board of Management, which agreed at its October meeting to be responsible for the expenses of the erection of the Parktown North building. By January, 1946 several donations towards the building of this new Church had been received, and the drawing up of plans was begun. These plans were given to the City Council in October, and returned in January, 1947, but by this time the Board of Management had changed its mind, and submitted new plans in March, 1947.

The St. Columba's Record of January, 1948, was the first issue to reflect a Balance for "St. Ninian's - proposed new Church at Parktown North," the sum being £77:2:11, all donations. In August, 1948, a letter from Mr. Yule (the acting Session Clerk, who had shown a great deal of interest in the St. Ninian's project) was read in connection with the progress made in preliminary work at Parktown North. It is also minuted that "Mr. G. Borthwick has agreed to assist

in Sunday School work there as soon as it is started" (36) - implying, of course, that it had not yet begun. The Sunday School opened, in fact a year later (August, 1949) at the home of Mr. Borthwick. In March, 1949, a branch of the W.A. was constituted at St. Ninian's, so that the W.A. was actually the first body to exist at St. Ninian's - even before the congregation. All in all, 12 years had passed since an extension to the north had first been considered, and 4 years since Presbytery had bought the Parktown North stand. The building was completed in 1950, and Rev. Emlyn Jones conducted the first service in it on 8th October, 1950. The establishment of a new congregation in Parktown North was by far the most concrete development outside of its own community that St. Columba's achieved during Rev. Robertson's ministry.

If work outside St. Columba's was not engaging much of the Church's attention, at least until 1945 when the interest in the Parktown North extension gained momentum, what were the internal matters of concern? The normal Church activities were Sunday services, Sunday School, W.A. etc., and these ran, for the most part, smoothly enough. The Sunday School was in the competent hands of Mr. John Robertson (no relation to the Minister) from 1934, when Thos. Sawers retired, until 1946, when it was taken over by Dr. James Murray, a man who was to become a world expert in the field of cancer research, and who has served the Church faithfully his whole life. Two areas of the Church gave cause for concern, however; the youth work, and the eldership.

The meeting of the Session on the 4th August, 1933, listened to the Moderator express the hope that the Young People's Club might be "revived". (37) It will be recalled that a decision to form a young people's club had been taken at the end of 1925 (38), but this original club had obviously faded away in the meantime (39). Youth work was the main concern of the meeting, for the same evening the Session noted that a Junior Choir had started, and it also agreed that two delegates from St. Columba's should be sent to the Youth Conference due to be held at St. George's on 26th August. With the Sunday School and Bible Class giving invariably 'encouraging' reports, and even 'taxing the available accommodation severely' (40), it is surprising that a youth organization of some sort did not exist, but even after the decision of August, 1933

nothing happened immediately, although a "Social Club", complete with Chairman and Secretary appeared - once - in the list of organizations at the front of the St. Columba's Record of January, 1934. Then in May, 1934, a Mr. Mawhinny arrived from Brakpan, where he had apparently run a group called "The Younger Set" with great success, membership reaching 250 (41). At Rev. Robertson's request he ".... very kindly (threw) his lot in with us at St. Columba's, and was unanimously elected by the young people to be their Chairman and leader"(42).

The life of the St. Columba's Younger Set was as brief as it was brilliant. Parkview, a suburban area served by good schools was always an area well endowed with children of all ages, and now St. Columba's began to attract them. Between May, 1934 and May, 1935 the Younger Set blossomed like a desert flower, then withered and died once again. There can be little doubt that it was Mr. Mawhinny who acted as the life-giving rain for this flower. On the 4th May, when the group held its inaugural social, over 100 young people attended (43), and the description of the evening shows Mr. Mawhinny's ability to organize a party and really get things going. "Each one present received an enclosed envelope containing part of a name, and they had to look for the person who had the other part...." (44)

Other evenings and games are enthusiastically described in subsequent issues of the Record - the kind of spontaneous enthusiasm rarely found elsewhere. One minute on-the-spot talks, discussions, mock elections, dances, evenings to entertain parents, all form part of an exciting and varied programme. Even more important and noticeable, the "Cinderella Dance" organized by the youth was in aid of the Civilian blind, all profits being sent to this charity, and to a home for crippled children - the kind of giving so completely lacking at other times in the church's life. Noticeable, too, is the fact that "Youth Services" suddenly appear as regular monthly features on the Sunday programme, where no Youth Services were before. A magazine described as "The Review of Reviews" was even produced by the Younger Set. The magazine notes say (paternalistically) with regard to this that

"One would like to have given the readers of the Record an opportunity of perusing this wonderful magazine, but unfortunately space only permits of the publication of the

poem written by one of the Younger Set, on the Younger Set, which, by the way, was received with great éclat" (45)

At the bottom of the same page is a note to the effect that:

"Unfortunately the poem on the Younger Set has not reached the Editor in time for publication". (46)

The poem never does appear, and one cannot help feeling that if the Editor (i.e. the Minister) had shown a little more willingness to have that poem published - if not one month, then the next - the Younger Set would have received the encouragement it needed for a longer life. However, it was not only the poem which did not get included in the St. Columba's Record: after September the Younger Set itself is accorded no further space. The name continues to appear on the front page, with Mr. T.J. Mawhinny as Chairman and Mr. P.J. Kitcher as Secretary, until April 1935, then suddenly it becomes "The Social Club", with Rev. J.A. Robertson as Chairman. The Social Club disappears from the front page of the Record in August, 1936.

The Younger Set had flourished for only a few months, yet it was long enough to show the potential for Youth Work existing in Parkview at the time - given the incentive, the young people would have come. This brief period of bright light only helps to emphasize the darkness of the youth work at other times during St. Columba's first 30 years, for although other attempts at youth work are made, very little success was ever really obtained (47), and in these further attempts the initiative never came from the Minister. Mr. Mawhinny apparently did not leave the area, but he ceased to take an active part in leading the Youth group. The reason for this appears to be the discouragement he received from the Minister, who did not approve of dances, for example (48). Once his inspiring leadership was gone, the interest of the young people quickly vanished, and the only conclusion one can draw is that the Minister, who tried to take over, did not have the same ability to attract and organize the youth, a fact which is probably borne out by his tendency to refer to them as "young-eyed joys" playing "happy games" (49). A Young People's Guild was started again in 1944, becoming a "Youth Fellowship" in 1948, but it was a struggling body, with a fairly small membership (about 25 seems to be the highest figure), and its annual report for 1949 states:

/23.... It

"It is regretted, however, that the regular meetings of the Fellowship during the latter part of the year have not been successful". (50)

The eldership crisis bears witness to the fact that all was not well in the Church, from about 1935 onwards, although numbers continued to grow.

When John Robertson and Alex Nicoll were inducted to the eldership in February, 1935, the Session was 9 strong, the largest it had ever been, and the congregation was just short of the 300 mark. In May of the same year, Mr. William Moir resigned; no reason is given for his resignation in the Session Minutes, but the St. Columba's Record of June 1935 states that

"It is with deep regret that one of our respected elders,

Mr. William Moir, has resigned from our Church Fellowship" (51)

There is no indication that he has moved, or joined another congregation, simply that he has left the Church Fellowship (52), and that his resignation is accepted with regret. The Session now reduced to eight, was not really large enough to cater adequately for the needs of the congregation, and suitable candidates were sought to fill up the ranks. In 1936 Mr. Andrew and Mr. Rogan were suggested as likely men, for both had served as elders elsewhere, but both declined when asked, because their stay in the neighbourhood was uncertain. So the matter of increasing the Session was "held in abeyance" (53).

The meeting of 30th July, 1937 raised the subject again, and it was decided to approach Mr. Brooks - who had also been an elder elsewhere - to serve on the Session. However, the November meeting of that year was informed that

"Mr. Brooks could not see his way clear to join at the present time." (54)

In May, 1938, it was felt that three new elders were now required, but although several members of the congregation were approached, all "had begged to be excused for the present." (55) The matter was once more held in abeyance. May, 1939, resurrected the problem: a motion was passed to the effect that the "Session should be augmented by 2 or 3 members" (56). In the same month Mr. Robert Arthur resigned, as he had decided to settle permanently at the coast, this left a Session of 6 elders to cater for a congregation now

in the region of 350 (57), spread over an ever-increasing area.

In May, 1940, five people were approached with a view to eldership, and this time one of them, Mr. H.P. Skewis, and eventually a second, Mr. Alec Moig, accepted. They were duly ordained and inducted in January, 1941, but by this time Thos. Sawers had died (March, 1940), leaving the total numbers of elders the same as it had been in 1937, when the smallness of the Session had been felt to be something of an urgent problem. In January, 1942, three new elders - John Rogan and Thomas Orr, who were both previously ordained, and H.W. Paynter - were added, and in October 1944 a further seven men were approached. Two of these last - Mr. Brooks and Dr. James Murray - accepted, both of them having refused on previous occasions.

The problem of an inadequate Session was by no means over, however; in August, 1944, Charles Greig died, after 23 years as Session Clerk. In 1946 there were several resignations; Mr. Rogan (who had taken over from Charles Greig as Session Clerk) in March, Dr. Hamlin the same month, and J.B. Robertson in October, so that once again only eight elders remained, only one more than in 1937, and now the congregation numbered 455. The search for elders continued, and in May, 1947, Messrs. Yule and Borthwick joined the Session, but in August, 1947 Mr. Thos. Orr died, and at the end of the same year Mr. Brooks resigned, as he had moved out to Roodepoort, so that the situation remained the same. With Alex Nicoll and Percy Morrisby overseas during 1947, 6 elders were actually available for duty. The constant cry for additional elders went up once again in April, 1948, with several more names being put forward, but it was February, 1949 before Messrs. Townsend and Schwartzel were added to the Session, so that at the time of Rev. Robertson's death in April, 1949, 10 elders served the 437 strong congregation of St. Columba's.

The smallness of the Session over these years (1936-1949) had several side effects. In October 1946, 4 lay members were sought to represent St. Columba's at the Witwatersrand Church Council, but no elders were available. Elders were supposed to visit the Sunday School in rotation, but often the complaint from the Sunday School was that no-one had visited them. The complaint of January, 1948, that no elders were available to attend Presbytery meetings was one of several years standing (58). In these ways, the short-

age of elders helped the tendency of St. Columba's to be an introverted community, with little spiritual contact with other Churches, Presbyterian or otherwise.

What caused this reluctance to serve on the Session? There will be as many reasons as there were individuals who were approached, but one or two possible underlying causes can be suggested. It is possible that an old-fashioned view of the eldership prevailed, of men stern and dour, and to a certain extent this was true. It is perhaps significant that none of the people approached to become elders were women, despite the following remit sent to Presbytery on the 9th May, 1932:

"Unanimously approved that the Session of St. Columba's advise the Presbytery that it is of opinion that women members in full communion have exactly the same rights and privileges as men in full communion, including the right to Eldership".(59)

Even when the shortage was greatest, no one even suggested asking a woman member of the congregation to join the Session.

Perhaps, also, there was a lack of commitment on the part of the congregation, or a lack of certainty in the leadership of the Minister. One outstanding event suggests that this might have been one element in the problem, and that event was the resignation of Mr. John Rogan, the Session Clerk.

The Session was informed of his resignation at the meeting of 8th March, 1946. He had accused the Minister of preaching spiritualism, thereby undermining the faith of him and his family, and he had no intention of entering the Church again. The Session greeted this announcement in stunned silence. Eventually Dr. Hamlin voiced the thoughts of all by saying: "This is a serious matter" - he could find nothing else to say. Dr. Murray made the first positive statement when he suggested that Mr. Rogan be approached by some of the elders, but Robertson did not want this. He offered to resign himself, but the Session did not want to accept his resignation. Instead, probably wisely, they decided to call a special meeting in order to discuss the problem fully after having thought the matter over.

This second meeting took place on 8th April, 1946. In the intervening period, however, some of the elders had met together privately, and at the start of the meeting they presented a statement to the Moderator. The gist of the statement is as follows: the Session was faced with a problem which it could not solve. It had only heard one side of the argument, and must hear the other. The matter had to be approached and discussed from the point of view "What would Jesus have me do?" The Session realized that both the Moderator and Session Clerk had given sons during the war, and surely these sons would have wished for a reconciliation. The Moderator should take the first step to heal the breach. (60)

There is much to commend in the Session's approach to a very difficult problem, but it is worthy of note that there is no immediate reaction against Rogan or in favour of Robertson, even at the first meeting. The Session, in fact, showed some sympathy with Mr. Rogan (which may suggest they had suspected something similar in the Minister's preaching themselves), and suggested that the Moderator attempt to heal the breach. In a sense, the very presenting of a statement from the elders to the Moderator suggests a case of "Moderator vs The Rest".

Robertson's reaction increases this feeling: he expressed surprise that the elders had not yet ascertained Rogan's point of view, in spite of his wish at the previous meeting that they should not approach him. He could not, he felt, take the initiative in healing the quarrel, but he withdrew his offer to resign. When pressed by Dr. Hamlin, Robertson replied that he "could not take the first step to heal a breach which he did not create" (61) - which is a terrible thing for a Christian Minister to say. The Session felt that they wanted Robertson to be present when Rogan gave his side of the argument, but Robertson adamantly refused to meet with him. Finally the meeting ended, not very happily, with the compromise that two members of the Session, Dr. James Murray and Mr. John Robertson, were appointed to meet Mr. Rogan.

Mr. Rogan, however, was not in a compromising mood. He refused to meet the deputation, saying that he would only be prepared to meet with the full

Session plus the Moderator, which was precisely what the Moderator would not have. Mr. Rogan also said, however, that even if the meeting were to take place he would not return to St. Columba's, and he would not accept the teaching of the Rev. Robertson. It was probably this uncompromising attitude on the part of Rogan which persuaded Dr. Murray to propose that his resignation be accepted with regret. Mr. J. Robertson still wanted the Session to meet with Mr. Rogan, but the resignation was accepted, with his protest recorded.

The reason for the dispute was the Minister's apparent preaching of "spiritualism", and this, together with William Moir's reported reason for resignation (see above p23 n. 51), cannot be disregarded. There is more than likely a measure of truth in the accusation, although it is not known what Mr. Rogan's understanding of the term "spiritualism" was. The fact that the Session's statement drew attention to the loss of Rev. Robertson's and Mr. Rogan's sons during the war seems to suggest that perhaps the root of the problem lay here, but there is no doubt that Mr. Rogan's argument lay with the Minister personally. It is also extremely likely that there was a personality clash between the two men, and several present members of St. Columba's congregation who remember him describe Mr. Rogan as a likeable, but quick-tempered man. Dr. Hamlin's resignation in April, 1936 - the same meeting at which the Rogan question was fully discussed - because of a "probable departure" at the end of the year is probably not coincidence, particularly when it is realised that both he and Rogan were re-inducted to the Session in September, 1950, after Evelyn Jones' arrival as the new Minister. The attitude of the Session suggests some sympathy, if not support, for Mr. Rogan. It may be coincidental as well, but possibly not, that after 1935 the Annual Session reports to the congregation no longer include tributes to the Minister and the way he "still gives himself whole-heartedly to the Church's needs" (62), which are a regular feature of the reports up to that point - 1935 being the same year in which Mr. Moir resigned.

It had not always been so; besides the regular tributes as mentioned above, there is the statement recorded in the Minutes in 1931, arising out of discussion on a letter from Presbytery's Life and Work Committee, which

/20.... makes

makes it clear that there was no quarrel with him then:

"Our Minister preaches the gospel to the entire approbation of the Session and with great acceptance of the congregation. A meeting for fellowship and prayer is held in the Vestry every Wednesday evening when everyone is encouraged to talk freely and fully. We consider that, humbly admitting all our faults and frailties everything humanly possible is being done to lead the congregation in the Christ-life" (63).

Perhaps a weekly prayer meeting is hardly one's concept of "everything humanly possible", but the general feeling is one of satisfaction and support for the Minister and his work. It may be significant that this Wednesday evening group stopped operating in November, 1945, because attendances were too small.

Before leaving the subject of eldership, a tribute must be paid to the life and work of Charles Greig. Born in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, in 1869, he came to South Africa because of poor health. He found the Witwatersrand climate to his liking, and decided to remain, setting up a jeweller's shop in the young, gold-mad city. Soon he was a well-known businessman, and Rev. Robertson wrote of him:

"I recall how more than twenty-one years ago, when it was known in my country parish that I would be leaving for Parkview, a jeweller who knew our brother and his associations said to me 'The most honest jeweller in Johannesburg is Mr. Charles Greig'" (64)

An honest man, and a man of God; these were the descriptions given of the first Session Clerk of St. Columba's. He was not only Session Clerk, but also one of the men responsible for the founding of St. Columba's. He moved to Parkview from Braamfontein just before 1920, and had realised then the need for a new Church, as well as the potential for growth that existed in the area, and readily supported James Gray's plan. He was present at the meeting in Mr. Adam Dall's tea gardens at which the decision to proceed with the task of establishing a church had been made. It is not surprising, therefore, that St. Columba's meant a great deal to him:

"It is no exaggeration to say that he loved every stone in it, and some of us have reason to believe that one of the greatest thrills in his life was seeing it built It was to him the house of God, the very gate of heaven. Into it he always came with regular and dignified demeanour, always with a kind of measured step he trod its courts, and those who knew him through these years and are still with us, will thank God for every remembrance of him the sight of our brother in his usual place in the body of the Church on the Lord's Day and on those days that were always "high days" for him, when we celebrated the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which he never missed if it were at all possible to be present, even planning his holidays that he should not be absent.." (65) This not only gives a picture of Charles Greig, but is typical of Robertson's pedantic and ornate style.

That Greig and the Minister had a close friendship and understanding is clear not only from the tribute quoted above, but also from the Session Minutes, for twentythree years written in Greig's own hand. The Minutes often mention "Mr. Robertson's successful and highly appreciated ministry" (66), and one routine record of the Communion service concludes with:

"This was a feast of great spiritual fervour. The holy calm was commented upon by many". (67)

Charles Greig was also responsible for a number of fine gifts to the church, including a full silver communion set consisting of chalice, plates, trays and cups, but his importance to the church cannot be measured in material ways. His contribution as an elder and Session Clerk over the first twenty-three years of the life of St. Columba's is incalculable and invaluable. A man probably of no great education (his spelling mistakes are fairly frequent, and at times fantastic), but of great faith, he stands as an example of how important a role laymen play in the life of the Church.

The dispute between Rogan and the Minister, the fall off in the growth of the congregation, and the general apparent lack of enthusiasm must also be seen in relation to the Second World War, which had a profound effect on all sections of the population, including St. Columba's. Rev. Robertson left for North Africa in July, 1940, as Padre to the 1st Transvaal Scottish. He was forced to return to South Africa less than a year later because of ill-health,

and was not allowed to return to the front. He never fully recovered, and during the remaining years of his life he spent a great deal of time in hospital. The death of his elder son Colin on active service, shortly after D-day, added immeasurably to his suffering.

The life of the Church as a whole was also affected by the war. The Minutes of the 1941 AGM record an attendance of 30 "which is considered good under the prevailing conditions because many members are doing extra duties" (68). Note is also made of the fact that activities had been curtailed by war-time conditions, and the purging of the roll had not taken place at the end of 1940 for 3 reasons:

- (a) Absence of the Minister on active service.
- (b) Lady members were absent because their husbands were on active service.
- (c) Members had temporarily left the district (69).

Rev. David Hunter acted as Interim Moderator, and his straightforward comments "From the Vestry" tell the reader of a fascinating and penetrating personality (70), but his stay was not long enough to have a profound effect on the congregation as a whole. The AGM of 1943 makes mention of "quite a number of Young People away doing war work" (71), and from this point the obituaries of members killed in the War appear more and more frequently.

Church attendance was affected, too; for example the Session Report for 1943 reads:

"The Session regrets the apparent apathy of many people in this respect" (72), and calls for a renewal of diligence.

The end of the War did not solve this problem, however, and the Session Reports of 1947, 1948 and 1949 all mention the poor attendance at services. A Session Minute of January, 1948 read:

"The poor attendance particularly at the evening service was discussed and it is minuted that the poor transport service is one of the primary causes" (73)

The truth was that the Church had never really picked up again after the war, in spite of an influx of immigrants to Johannesburg, and the rapid growth of the northern suburbs in the post-war years.

Youth Work, the eldership crisis, the falling off of attendances at

services, all point to a decline in St. Columba's during the latter years of Robertson's ministry, and the sense of community spirit within the congregation was very low at this time; every organization seemed to exist separately. Robertson died on April 22nd, 1949, never having properly recovered from his period of active service, worn out and tired. His life had been St. Columba's since 1923, and there is no indication that he ever had the desire or opportunity to move elsewhere. One has the impression of a conservative man, dedicated to his charge, yet lacking any charismatic qualities; a man often with more imagination than application, he was ~~centered around~~ something of a romantic by nature. His "Notes from the Vestry" are poetic in style, while his "Obituaries" show an exceptional talent for compounding euphemisms (74) Taken overall, he did a great deal for the church which meant so much to him in his 25 years of ministry there. He had seen it, and helped it grow from a fledgling body of about 100 members to a congregation of 450, which served an ever increasing area north of Johannesburg.

REFERENCES

CHAPTER 2

- (1) See Appendix for full figures. (*Graph no 2*)
- (2) See Chapter 4, ~~and~~ Appendix.
- (3) Information from "Johannesburg Street Names" by Anna Smith.
- (4) Example of average attendances at communion are:

1936 - 183	1947 - 198
1937 - 196	1948 - 192
1938 - 205	1949 - 155

- (5) Compare for example :

March, 1932	-	£ 57 : 16 : 0
August, 1932	-	£ 54 : 3 : 1
March, 1948	-	£ 62 : 17 : 4
June, 1948	-	£ 42 : 9 : 5
October, 1948	-	£ 51 : 4 : 5

The above figures are close to the average/month for those years.

- (6) ~~See Appendix.~~

- (7) Chapter 1, p. ~~5~~⁶.
- (8) W. A. Minutes.
- (9) St. C.R. , April, 1948.
- (10) Ibid.
- (11) St. C.R. , April, 1949.
- (12) St. C.R. , February, 1935.
- (13) Ibid.
- (14) Ibid.
- (15) St. C.R. , February, 1936.
- (16) St. C.R. , October, 1936.
- (17) Information from Baptismal Register: This list represents about half the available figures.
- (18) About £100 a year (£128 in 1940) a careful search reveals a donation of £5 sent to the British and Foreign Society on the 20th January, 1931, after a special collection had been held to raise the amount, but this is an exceptional burst of generosity.
- (19) S.M. 1 : 91, 92 24th May, 1931.

- (20) See below on "The Younger Set".
- (21) S.M. 1 : 53, 54 28th December, 1928.
- (22) S.M. 1 : 144, 145 4th May, 1937.
- (23) S.M. 1 : 194 13th December, 1942.
- (24) S.M. 1 : 145 4th May, 1937.
- (25) S.M. 1 : 157 3rd February, 1939.
- (26) Proceedings of the 35th General Assembly, 1934, p.21.
- (27) In particular Mr. Phil Kitcher is my source here, although others have not altered the impression.
- (28) S.M. 1 : 189 1st May, 1942.
- (29) At least since 1932, when St. Columba's Record starts - only he is mentioned from then on.
- (30) St. C.R. March, 1936.
- (31) S.M. 1 : 146, 147 30th July, 1937.
- (32) S.M. 1 : 223 16th February, 1945.
- (33) The figures given were:
- | | | |
|----------------|-----|--------------------|
| Greenside | 43) | |
| Emmarentia | 1) | 55 representing |
| Northcliff | 8) | 21 homes |
| Linden | 3) | |
| Parktown North | 35) | 66 representing |
| Parkhurst | 29) | 44 homes |
| Craighall | 2) | |
| | 121 | members, 65 homes. |
- (34) S.M. 1 : 230 7th June, 1945.
- (35) S.M. 1 : 223 27th July, 1945.
- (36) S.M. 1 : 299, 300 4th August, 1948.
- (37) S.M. 1 : 112 4th August, 1933.
- (38) See above. *ps*
- (39) May be more than one previous youth group - St. C.R. May, 1934 - similar organizations have existed in the past.
- (40) S.M. 1 : 113 16th October, 1933.
- (41) St. C.R. May, 1934.
- (42) Ibid.
- (43) St. C.R. June, 1934 "well over a hundred".
- (44) St. C.R. June, 1934

- (45) St. C.R. August, 1934
- (46) Ibid.
- (47) A Girls' Auxiliary was started March, 1939, disappears December, 1942. Started again August, 1946.
- (48) Mr. Phil Kitcher is convinced that this is what happened.
- (49) St. C.R. May, 1934 and June, 1934.
- (50) St. C.R. April, 1949.
- (51) St. C.R. June, 1935.
- (52) Mr. Phil Kitcher says that Mr. Moir left the Church because the Minister did not preach from the Bible - a similar complaint to the one which was to cause much dissension 11 years later between the Minister and Mr. John Rogan.
- (53) S.M. 1 : 137 31st July, 1936.
- (54) S.M. 1 : 148 2nd November, 1937.
- (55) S.M. 1 : 154 5th August, 1938.
- (56) S.M. 1 : 160 3rd May, 1939.
- (57) The Congregation numbered 385 at the end of 1939.
- (58) See also, for example S.M. 1 : 234 26th October, 1945.
- (59) S.M. 1 : 100 9th May, 1932.
- (60) S.M. 1 : 249, 250 and Insert between 249-50, 8th April, 1946.
- (61) S.M. 1 : 249, 250 8th April, 1946.
- (62) St. C.R. March, 1934.
- (63) S.M. 1 : 87 6th February, 1931. The discussion was over the matter raised by Presbytery contained in the Blue Book, 1930, pp. 447-48 concerning recommendations re family worship.
- (64) St. C.R. September, 1944.
- (65) Ibid.
- (66) eg, S.M. 1 : 76 19th March, 1930.
- (67) S.M. 1 : 42, 43 12th August, 1926.
- (68) S.M. 1 : 176 19th March, 1941.
- (69) Ibid.
- (70) For example, the paragraph in the St. C.R., December, 1940 which reads:

"It is no easy task at the present time to edit a Presbyterian Magazine, when, say, in the great Dutch Reformed Church Synod of the Cape, such clotted nonsense is talked, about for instance Free Masonry, while such as the Ossewa Brandwag numbers among its enthusiasts well known minister politicians of the same Church".

- (71) S.M. 1 : 196, 197 23rd March, 1943.
- (72) St. C.R. April, 1944.
- (73) S.M. 1 : 292. 30th January, 1948.
- (74) Examples of this, taken from St. C.R., are:

"Summerland", "calling away from this earthly scene",
"fragrant memory", "entered a new and wonderful adventure
with those who never grow old", "passing, just as the sun
was westering", "inhabitants of the Upper World", amongst
many others.

CHAPTER 3

The Ministry of Emlyn Jones, and the growth of St. Columba's.

"It is now seven and a half years since the Rev. Emlyn Jones began his ministry at St. Columba's. During that time he has become the beloved friend, adviser and counsellor of all and the Minister of a congregation which has grown from a membership of 437 at the end of 1949, to 1,054 today. (83 members of St. Columba's were given their Disjunction Certificates shortly after Mr. Jones arrived in 1950 to form the new congregation of St. Ninian's in Parkhurst). Our New Church Building is already five years old, and we are entering upon another building programme. This is made necessary by the growth of the Sunday School from 150 to 483 members and of the Boys Brigade and other Youth Organizations which have grown from literally nothing to a membership of well over 200". (1)

Thus begins the appeal of the Session to the congregation asking them to help relieve the burden of the Minister, who had tendered his resignation because the volume of work was too great for him. The figures given are accurate, but they tell of only a fraction of the growth which had taken place.

After Rev. Robertson's death the Church had lived through a period of uncertainty, waiting for a new Minister. Rev. William Samson was appointed as interim Moderator, and Mr. Yule, who had been acting Session Clerk since the beginning of 1948, agreed to accept the clerkship because of the pressing need. Mr. George Rogerson assumed editorship of the St. Columba's Record.

A Congregational Meeting was held on the 29th July, 1949, with 75 members present, and decided to proceed to a Call. The conditions of the call were to be : Stipend £50 p.m. + C.O.L. ; "Locomotion Allowance" - £6 p.m. + the use of the motor car, and the Manse. (2) The Rev. Emlyn Jones of Gwelo, and Rev. L.B. Thornton of Springs were nominated, and Rev. Jones carried the vote; the Call was signed by all present and all seemed well. Unfortunately the Rev. Jones declined the Call.

It appeared that the Presbytery in Rhodesia had recently lost 2 out of 5 Ministers, and the loss of a third would have been a severe blow, so that pressure was put on Rev. Jones to decline. Another Congregational Meeting

had to be called, and this time the Vacancy Committee presented 3 candidates, namely Rev. C. Stunden of Florida, Rev. A. Rea of Turffontein and Rev. H. MacDonald of Oudtshoorn, but also recommended Rev. Jones once more. Nominations were called for, and three received: Rev. Thornton, Rev. Jones and Rev. MacDonald. The voting revealed that only 1 vote (in favour of Rev. Jones) separated Rev. Jones and Rev. MacDonald, so a third Congregational Meeting was called, and Rev. Jones again received the majority of votes. This time, largely through the personal intervention of Dr. J. Murray, the call was accepted (January, 1950), and on 12th February, 1950, Rev. Emlyn Jones was inducted to the charge of St. Columba's Church, Parkview.

It was the start of a new era for St. Columba's, as can be seen from the description at the opening of this chapter. What caused the change? Much of it can be summed up very briefly - Emlyn Jones. Of course, any Church is more than just its Minister, but the nine years that Rev. Jones was at St. Columba's demonstrate quite clearly the importance a Minister can have for a Church. It is true that the Northern Suburbs of Johannesburg were still growing: the suburb of Roosevelt Park, about 2½ miles to the North West of Parkview was proclaimed in 1945, for example; but this in itself does not explain the tremendous resurgence of life within the Church. Other Churches in the area - for example St. Francis Anglican Church, only ½ mile away - did not experience anything like the growth at St. Columba's. It is the purpose of this chapter to explain what form the growth took.

The focus is fixed first of all upon Youth work. It will be recalled that, apart from the brief life of "The Younger Set", the involvement of the youth in the life of the Church had been at best sporadic during Robertson's ministry. There had been an occasion when he had written in his letter "From the Vestry" that

".... I have been dreaming for some time about forming a Boys' Brigade in connection with St. Columba's...." (3), but nothing had ever come of it. Rev. Jones took immediate and effective interest in the youth, with remarkable results.

His first meeting with two "delegates" from the young people (4) took place about a month after his arrival, and he was "favourably impressed" (5).

He expressed the hope to them that the Youth Fellowship would soon be re-suscitated, and this hope was quickly fulfilled, for by the end of April the Youth had met the Session and the Board of Management in a 3-cornered quiz (the name of the winning team is not mentioned)(6). At the same meeting, the Youth Fellowship drew up a programme for the following 3 months, and from then on went from strength to strength. Subsequent reports in the St. Columba's Record always indicate a healthy, lively condition for the group, which spent 50% of its meetings on devotional topics.

Young people were encouraged from the first to take part in Church services, and one service a quarter was devoted to youth (7). It was as a result of this policy that the present writer got to make his first appearance in a pulpit - in November, 1951, six years old, and 4 months out of Scotland (8). The Sunday School Anniversary service soon became an important occasion, attracting many parents and many more children. The young people were given a part to play, too, in the opening service of dedication for the new Church, (9) another indication of the renewed interest in them as a vital part of the congregation.

In January, 1954, the first meeting of the 14th Johannesburg Boys' Brigade Company took place, 12 boys attending, under the leadership of Captain Rae Niven (10). About a year earlier the Minister had suggested to the Session that a Boy Scout troop be established, but this had apparently been altered to a B.B. Company because the association with the Church of such a Company was much closer. In Rae Niven the boys had an excellent and dedicated leader, in Emlyn Jones an interested and involved Chaplain, and the Company grew, slowly at first, then very rapidly, and by the end of 1957 it could boast 77 members, a fully equipped pipe band, and its own colours. (11).

Several other organizations made their appearance as a direct result of the formation of the Boys' Brigade - The Life Boys (Junior Reserves of the Boys' Brigade) started in January, 1955, as did the Girls' Life Brigade, the girls equivalent of the B.B. In April, 1956 Girls' Life Cadets, for girls 9 - 12 was begun, and in the same month an organization unique to St. Columba's - The Junior Life Boys - was started because the demand from boys between the ages of 7 - 9 to join Life Boys was so great. Despite all these new organizations, the Youth Fellowship continued to command a membership of

between 40 and 50. A Badminton Club, too, made its appearance at the beginning of 1956.

The Sunday School, Bible Class and Confirmation Class all increased dramatically in these years as well, involving the Church in building schemes almost as soon as the new Church Building was complete because the existing space was hopelessly inadequate. In January, 1957 the Session was informed that the numbers attending Sunday School and Bible Class (485) were so great that classes were being held in the Manse, the Church, the Kitchen, the Board Room and the Store Room as well as the Hall (which had in any event been extended in September, 1953 (12)), and that something would have to be done urgently (13). The number of young confirmands reached a record 74 in 1958. Besides the quarterly Youth Service, there were monthly Church parades by each of the uniformed organizations, and "special" services, like the Sunday School Anniversary service as well. It is interesting to note that when the S.C.A. "team" from Wits University came to take a service in St. Columba's in May, 1954, all 4 members of the team were also members of St. Columba's (14). The Sunday School won the Shield for general efficiency in 1954, having finished 2nd in 1953 (15). A junior Choir was formed in 1954, and in 1958 had an average attendance of 24, and had just made its first broadcast (16).

There is a lot more which could be said about the activity of the youth at St. Columba's, but this is sufficient to show the vast increase in youth work over these years, and the marked contrast between the 1950's and the previous 30 years, but this was only one aspect of the change. Naturally, the Session grew as well. The difficulty experienced over the eldership soon disappeared, firstly with the return of John Rogan and Dr. Hamlin, then with the ordination of 2 more elders before the end of 1950. By the time Dr. Jack Dalziel arrived in 1959, there were 35 men on the Session, and the problem being experienced was not that of too small a Session, but too large a Session.

A month after his arrival, Rev. Jones decided that the Session would meet once monthly in future - instead of the normal quarterly meetings up until then. It is a small move, but it immediately suggests a more business-like approach to affairs, and an anticipation of busier days ahead. But perhaps the most important step forward for the Session, and therefore for the con-

gregation which it overseered, was the decision on 29th July, 1953, to devote four Session Meetings a year to the deepening of spiritual life. The first meeting of this nature was held in October, 1953, when the Rev. Tom Hawthorn - Regional Secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and an elder of St. Columba's - gave an address on "the Eldership" (17), and this and subsequent meetings proved very moving. It is difficult to pinpoint any particular event which can be said to have been directly influenced by this decision of the Session, but it is clear in the overall picture the Church benefitted immeasurably from the new sense of purpose and dedication which pervaded the Session. The leadership came from Emlyn Jones, who inspired the elders, who in turn gave new life to the people, who in their turn spread the good news far and wide. Proof of the renewed life amongst the elders can be found in St. Columba's wholehearted support for the newly formed "Elders Association" of the Transvaal Presbytery - formed of Elders from different congregations meeting to discuss mutual problems and to see spiritual strength together. Mention is made enthusiastically of the Association from time to time (18), and suggestions made concerning future meetings. This is quite a change from the group of elders who for years could not find a delegate to attend Presbytery Meetings. (19) Also significant here is the remark in the Minutes that

"The Moderator stated that several visiting Ministers had

remarked upon the large attendance of Elders at the Services"(20).

Perhaps this was more noticeable simply because there were so many, but it does speak of a worshipping community, which derived its strength from the only real Source.

The spiritual revival was by no means confined to the Session; it is probably true to say that the visible, numerical resurgence of St. Columba's was due in the first place to a re-discovery of the beauty of the worship of God. Emlyn Jones was a preacher able to move a congregation, and his preaching undoubtedly attracted many people, but the renewal at St. Columba's went deeper and, in order to see this, it is necessary to look at some of the changes brought about by Rev. Jones in the first year or so of his ministry there.

The first change, or perhaps the first innovation, was the introduction of a monthly "after-Kirk social", so that people could meet and talk together (21). This became a particularly important gathering as the Church grew larger, as it helped considerably to retain the "family" atmosphere of the Church at a time when it was virtually impossible for any one person to know more than half the rest of the congregation. It is interesting that this was the request of Rev. Jones at his first Session Meeting - it was obviously something he considered important for the community.

Other changes followed swiftly, which cumulatively made a great difference. In October, 1950 (22) it was decided to ask the organist to start playing 10 minutes before the start of each service; the doxology was also to be sung at the commencement of a service. More important was the introduction of "special" services: A Harvest Festival was held in March, 1950, a Carol Service, a Sunday School Anniversary Service, and a Watchnight Service, all to become regular and popular features, were all introduced in 1950. In February, 1951, it became necessary to introduce the celebration of Communion at both morning and evening services, and in June, 1951 a Pre-communion service was held for the first time on the Friday before communion. All this helped to achieve what the Rev. Jones felt necessary for a Church service:

"The main idea (is) to get the atmosphere of Joy and Enthusiastic Reverence into worship". (23)

Another addition which was noted with appreciation was

"The Moderator inviting members of other Churches or denominations to join us". (24)

The Session and Choir now met with the Minister before each service for prayer (25), so that all in all it can be said that the changes and innovations made were to the spiritual advantage of the congregation, directly or indirectly. That this was felt, by the people is reflected in the Session Report for 1953:

"There was a remarkable indication of the deepening of spiritual life of the congregation shown by the good attendances at what would have been a hopeless experiment not so long ago." (26)

It was a tribute to the Minister that results had been achieved so quickly, it had been his aim from the first to inspire this spiritual renewal.

"I am confident that not a single member of St. Columba's is satisfied with the condition of things in our Church. We all want to see a revival of genuine religion in our midst. We all feel the need of a deeper and richer spiritual experience." (27)

Although these hopes for the future were rapidly brought to fruition, they did not happen without some attendant difficulties. One of these was the problem of improving the standard of the music and congregational singing. Mr. Hall had been the organist for ten years, between 1933 and 1943, and then again since 1946, and had given great service to the Church in those years; but now the Session,

"After a full discussion with regards the Sunday praises, all agreed that there was a lack of Spiritual taste in the music of the Church." (28)

As a result of this discussion, a delegation from the Session met Mr. Hall, and he offered his resignation, which was accepted. He was given a presentation cheque of £20:0:0, and continued not only as a member of the congregation, but as a member of the choir, which he still is. There is no sense of bitterness in this resignation; one has the impression that Mr. Hall was a member of St. Columba's first, and organist and choirmaster only when needed, as had been the case so often in the past. Now that the Church was growing a different kind of leader was needed.

He was found in Mr. Harry Stanton, a man who proved ideally suited for the position. A first class musician, programme compiler at the S.A.B.C. and Director of the S.A.B.C. male singers, he was chosen out of a list of nine applicants - a response which in itself says much about the increasing prestige of the Church in Johannesburg and further afield. He started with a salary of £210 per annum, compared to the £120 per annum which Mr. Hall had been offered in 1946, and, with the completion of the new Church and the installation of the new organ (August, 1952), his monthly pre-service recitals soon attracted many people to the Church. The Choir increased in membership and quality after his arrival, and was invited to take part in broadcasts on

several occasions. (29) More important than this was the fact that:

"There is no doubt that the standard of hymn singing has improved enormously." (30)

The improvement in congregational praise was another important factor in the growth of St. Columba's.

On 10th December, 1952, the Session received a letter from Ian Hay expressing a sincere desire to enter the ministry, which, after being accepted by Presbytery, was duly acclaimed, and several opportunities given to him to preach (31). Hay was the first member of St. Columba's to take this step, but he was followed by others, some of whom became (and still are) active Ministers. The mere fact that young men were beginning to come forward from this congregation and offer themselves for the ministry is yet another indication of the type of growth which was taking place within it.

Many further instances exist of spiritual growth within St. Columba's - the Holy Week services, the re-start of mid-week intercession group, the new regular feature at Session Meetings of a detailed discussion of the health of individual members - but perhaps the best testimonial comes from a member of the congregation writing in the St. Columba's Record of September, 1953.

"This growth of our spiritual life is nowhere more clearly seen or felt, than in the Quarterly Communion Services. With every Communion that has passed we have observed a growing awareness of the innermost meaning of the Sacrament. This was particularly evident at the Communion Service which has just passed. Large and expectant congregations were impressed by the sense of inspiration and majesty which was manifest at both services.

As the services proceeded an atmosphere of hushed expectancy and even awe spread over us. The elements were placed before us and as we ^apartook together of the sacred symbols we felt the nearness of His Presence. Uplifted alike by the inspiration of the Word which was spoken, the harmony of the Praise, and the spirit of worship which pervaded the service, we were conscious of His continuing presence who Himself meets us at His table. Not one of us left the House of God without a sense of blessing and inner

peace which this world cannot give." (32)

This is the kind of tribute which makes it clear where the real strength of the Church lay.

How did this growth effect the Church? There are many aspects to the answer to that question, and it is necessary to have a brief look at some of them.

First of all, the Church, of necessity, but with a great willingness, too, became far more "extrovert". It was said above that one of the features of St. Columba's in the first 30 years was its concentration on itself (33). Now, the opposite was true. This was because, in one way, whether they liked it or not, the congregation had to learn to share its Minister. No sooner had Rev. Jones arrived than he was off to Cape Town to conduct a week-long mission at Gardens Church, a previously arranged engagement, but this was only the first of many such engagements. Rev. Jones was in constant demand all over the country, preaching, conducting missions, and St. Columba's quickly got used to seeing visitors in the pulpit. Even when the Minister was there, a number of preachers were invited to take services, giving the congregation a much wider "education". (34).

Besides visiting preachers, visiting people of distinction from all walks of life were often to be seen at the Church - The Dundee Footballers, members of the Lions Rugby team (who came along no less than 4 times), members of the M.C.C. cricket team, Dr. McLeod of Iona, Emllyn Williams, Dr. Oswald Smith from Canada - these are but a few among many, and all were accorded the same kind of welcome which was given the Young confirmands after the Confirmation Service - an enthusiastic welcome to the Church because it was the Church, at a packed after Kirk Social. The Mayor of Johannesburg was a regular visitor to the annual Anniversary Service, to commemorate the opening of the new Church in 1952, and in 1957 the Mayor of Johannesburg, Mr. Glynn Morris, was himself a member of St. Columba's.

The outward looking aspect of the Church was taking on more concrete forms as well. As early as August, 1950, the Presbytery quinquennial visitation raised the question of extension work among Africans (35). The topic was not pursued until 1956, when the Rev. Barthoud, Superintendent of Missions in the

Transvaal Presbytery, was invited to speak to a combined meeting of the Session and Board of Management. (36). The talk proved effective, because at its next meeting the Session again gave careful consideration to the problem, noting the part still played by the Church at Hamilton Memorial Sunday School, but deciding that this was quite insufficient (37). "A building must be erected in Meadowlands", was the outcome of the November meeting (38), and so St. Columba's embarked on a project of building a manse for the Meadowlands' Minister, a task completed by May, 1958. However, the Session's meeting of June, 1958 was told, quite sensibly, that "A manse was useless without a place of worship" (39). It seems as if the original enthusiasm to help a less fortunate community had unfortunately not been tempered with much forethought. The matter was put before the Missions Committee of the Presbytery, with the assurance that St. Columba's would support actively any positive move on their part. When this Committee voted £700 for the construction of a Hall at Meadowlands, St. Columba's responded by offering £1,800 towards the building costs (40). The project was completed shortly after Dr. Jack Dalziel had become sole Minister of the Church.

The background to St. Columba's work in Meadowlands is to be found in the Natives Resettlement Act of 1954, "which provided for the removal of all Africans from the 'Western Areas' (Sophiatown, Martindale, Newclare and Pageview) to Meadowlands and Diepkloof, which were to be controlled by a Resettlement Board created by the Government". (40a)

The building programme undertaken at Meadowlands by St. Columba's from 1956 onwards underlines the new interest of the congregation in matters outside of its immediate sphere of influence, for although the Natives Resettlement Act had created a situation which urgently called out for assistance, the problem of urban Africans was not a new one. The huge influx of Africans to the towns began in 1939, and the housing shortage in the "Emergency Camps" created by the Johannesburg Municipality was far more acute before 1948 than after (40b). It was not until the 1950's, however, that St. Columba's as a congregation showed any interest in the problem.

Interest in the welfare of Africans, their living conditions, treatment at the hands of the law, and other such matters were constantly brought before the Session after John Lang had joined it (41). From this time on, very few

Session Meetings passed by without his drawing attention to some distressing aspect of new legislation, the paucity of mission work in certain areas, or perhaps the immediate needs of the Coronationville Nursery School. For example, at the April meeting of 1957, he asked the Session to condemn the New Native Laws Amendment Bill "which sought in every way to curtail the traditional rights of the Christian Church to enjoy freedom of worship and the fundamental rights of human beings to enjoy freedom of association" (42). When the Moderator explained that such condemnation could only be made by Assembly, he proceeded on this, and subsequent occasions to make sure the matter went through the Transvaal Presbytery to the Assembly with the backing of the St. Columba's Session. The presence of a man such as this on the Session ensured that the Church was kept very much aware of what was happening in the country.

Even before the arrival of John Lang, however, the Church had taken an interest in the Africans who lived in the Parkview area. In August, 1952, the possibility of holding services for Africans in the Church Hall had been discussed, apparently without any result, but in May, 1955, application was made for permission to use the Hall twice weekly for "Native Night Schools", (43) and a permit was obtained for Mondays and Wednesdays. Mr. Rogerson offered to form the link between the Session and the School, and by February, 1956, he was able to report on attendance of about 20, with 6 of the more advanced pupils asking for a 3rd evening's lessons (44). It was a positive outward move on the Church's part.

The Youth Fellowship and the Sunday School also played their part in taking the bounty of St. Columba's to those in greater need; regular visits were paid by the Youth Fellowship to children's homes and orphanages, and the Sunday School, no longer content to simply send off Easter Eggs, gave parties to the children at places such as the Hope Home and the Rand Epileptic Employment Association (45). One good example of the desire to help others occurred in December, 1952, when a tornado destroyed much of the location Albertynsville. The following morning: "Youngsters from the Church were collecting clothes and money from the householders in Parkview, Westcliff and parts of Greenside. Ten car loads of clothing was taken in to the Red Cross, St. John, Salvation

Army and the Swiss Mission." (46) Besides this, the proceeds of the nativity play were immediately donated to the disaster fund.

Such growth meant expansion and extension to other areas. The new church was completed in 1952, extended in 1953, and the vastly increased numbers led to the building of new halls in 1957. But important as was its growth on the St. Columba's site, there was extension at other points. The move to establish a Church in Parktown North had been well under way when Rev. Jones arrived, and the work was speedily completed. By July, 1950 it had been decided to start monthly services at St. Ninian's, and in September it achieved the status of Preaching Station under St. Columba's. During the course of 1951, St. Ninian's came directly under the charge of Presbytery, but St. Columba's never lost touch with the congregation, and Rev. Jones, even when not Interim Moderator, still took several services there.

In May, 1956, a new venture was entered into when a Sunday School, with Mr. Arthur Owens in charge, was begun at the local school in Bryanston. By June it had 50 members, and within a year the membership was 110. It was clear that the possibilities of a starting of a separate congregation in the area were great, and a meeting of those interested in such a move took place at Bryanston in April, 1957, with about 40 people present (48). It was felt then that a canvas of the area would help clarify the actual situation, and by the end of April it had been ascertained that of 430 families canvassed, 73 were sympathetic to the Presbyterian cause (49). It was a sufficient number for St. Columba's to put Messrs. Ingles and Owens in charge of further arrangements, and such was the enthusiasm that by the end of 1957 a site had been purchased for the new Church, and a rota for regular evening services prepared. In June, 1958 the application for Bryanston to become a preaching station had been granted (50).

At the same time as developments were taking place in Bryanston, investigation into the possibility of further extension in the areas of Linden, Emmarentia Extension, Blairgowrie and Roosevelt was being carried out by St. Columba's in part by the Youth Fellowship (51). For a while no results of this survey are apparent, and the matter is still under consideration at the beginning of 1957, but in June, 1957, St. Columba's received the offer of a

site in Linden, and immediately recommended to Presbytery that the offer be accepted (52). The site was purchased, but Linden had to wait until after Emlyn Jones had left St. Columba's before they had a Sunday School of their own.

In the meantime, St. Columba's still had charge over St. Mungo's in Braamfontein. A faithful few continued to gather there, but with the transformation of Braamfontein from a slum area to a suburb of skyscrapers, it became increasingly obvious that the future of this congregation was in jeopardy. A joint meeting of the St. Mungo's Provisional Session and four appointed representatives of the St. Columba's Session took place in March, 1954, to discuss the future of the congregation and the increasingly valuable property. This committee decided to ask Presbytery to explore the possibilities for St. Mungo's (53). Further meetings and discussions took place, at one of which (in January, 1955) it was pointed out that if St. Mungo's was forced to have an evening service instead of a 4.30 p.m. one, it would be forced to close down altogether. Little happened for the next few years, but when it did, it happened very suddenly, for at the meeting of June 3, 1959, with the two St. Mungo's elders present again, it was decided that, seeing that the membership was only 32, and the number attending Sunday School only 25, and bearing in mind that St. George's Church had purchased a new site barely half-a-mile away, it would be in the best interests of all concerned if St. Mungo's, Clifton, be moved to Bryanston, and a resolution to this effect was taken (54). The decision was challenged, once she knew of it, by Mrs. Bethune of the St. Mungo's, Clifton, congregation, a member for many years, but the protest was in vain, and St. Mungo's, Clifton, ceased to exist from 1st October, 1959, having been under St. Columba's for 30 years. It was a sound move, indicative of the northward expansion of the population which had prompted the start of St. Columba's by Clifton in 1921.

The amount of work to be done inevitably resulted in great strain being placed on the Minister, then in his fifties, and it was only a matter of time before the question of acquiring an assistant was raised. In September, 1955, Charles Gordon came to St. Columba's as its first assistant Minister, and his year with the Church proved the need for such a man, and was probably

a factor in helping to increase the growth of the Church's population. When he accepted a call to George in 1957 the gap so created was felt all the more for his having been there, and only a few months later Rev. Jones felt called upon to offer his resignation, being unable to cope with the pressure of work, not only at St. Columba's (in itself a big enough task for any one man), but at St. Mungo's and Bryanston as well, and occasional spells as Interim Moderator of Mayfair.

The Session immediately appointed a committee to investigate the reasons for resignation, and the advisability or otherwise of accepting it. Not surprisingly, the committee came to the conclusion that resignation would not be to the advantage of the Church, that Rev. Jones must remain, but that help in the form of an assistant, a secretary, and a youth organizer must be found. The result was the withdrawal of the resignation, and before the end of the year an assistant, Rev. J. Kromberg, had been found. In January, 1958, too, Mr. J. Buchler started work as youth organizer, Mrs. Hamlin as secretary. It seemed as though the problem had been solved.

Unfortunately the solution only lasted a year, for in January, 1959, Rev. Kromberg was moved to Natal by the Assembly, and much of the strain returned. A Sub-committee to find another assistant was set up later that year, and in November, 1959, made the following recommendations to Session:

(a) an assistant be found, (b) a colleague and successor be called, or (c) a successor be called. The Sub-committee, in investigating the second two of these three proposals had come to the conclusion that there were only two possible successors to Rev. Jones in South Africa; Rev. Dr. Jack Dalziel of Durban, and Rev. Dr. Calvin Cook of Pietermaritzburg (55). Mr. Lang had been to Durban, and ascertained that Dr. Dalziel would be willing to accept a call, and so the decision to approach a congregational meeting with the purpose of putting before it a proposal that Dr. Dalziel be called as colleague and successor was made.

At the congregational meeting, held on 14th December, 1958, John Lang outlined the position "in his usual masterly way" (56). Rev. Jones said that the time had come for a younger and fitter Minister to take over, and then Professor Murray "with a heavy heart" (57) proposed that a colleague and

/52.... successor....



successor be called. Dr. Dalziel was proposed, and the meeting accepted this with 186 votes for, 1 against. The era of "Emlyn" had come to an end.

During the eight years of Emlyn's ministry, St. Columba's underwent a remarkable transformation from a medium-sized congregation which had reached the peak of its growth, to the largest church in South Africa (58), with ten different organisations (mainly for youth), and a Sunday School of 500 pupils. The Rev. Jones was himself the main reason for the change, not only through his preaching, but because he brought a new sense of community to the church, a greater depth of spiritual understanding to the people, and a stronger sense of purpose to the church's activities. He had the rare ability to utilize leadership qualities in others, and develop these qualities to their full potential in the service of the Church. His interest in youth work and his understanding of young people was an important factor in the growth, for with the numerous young people attracted by the uniformed organizations, came many parents, in many cases people who had resided in the district for some time. His popularity led to many calls being made on him both in Johannesburg and other parts of the Union, which in turn meant a widening of the horizons of St. Columba's. His belief in the responsibility of a Christian Church to the greater community, which was enthusiastically condoned by the Session, meant an increase in the church's involvement in the mission field. All this adds up to one clear fact; the direct relationship between the growth of St. Columba's and the ministry there of Emlyn Jones.

CHAPTER 3

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- (1) St. C.R., July, 1957.
- (2) S.M. 1 : 319, 29th July, 1949.
- (3) St. C.R., September, 1937.
- (4) One delegation of boys, and one of girls; S.M. 1 : 328, 28th March, 1950.
- (5) S.M. 1 : 328, 28th March, 1950.
- (6) S.M. 1 : 329, 26th April, 1950.
- (7) S.M. 1 : 344, 18th December, 1950.
- (8) St. C.R., November, 1951.
- (9) S.M. 1 : 390, 26th June, 1952.
- (10) St. C.R., July, 1954.
- (11) Annual Report of Boys Brigade in St. C.R., February, 1958.
- (12) S.M. 2 : 30, 22nd September, 1953.
- (13) S.M. 2 : 140, 22nd January, 1957.
- (14) St. C.R., July, 1954.
- (15) S.M. 2 : 79, 27th April, 1955.
- (16) St. C.R., February, 1958.
- (17) S.M. 2 : 33, 28th October, 1953.
- (18) For example, S.M. 2 : 84, 25th May, 1955.
- (19) See above. p 24
- (20) S.M. 2 : 86, 29th June, 1955.
- (21) This was first mentioned to the Session on 19th February, 1950, Emlyn's first Session Meeting. S.M. 1 : 326.
- (22) S.M. 1 : 340, 25th October, 1950.
- (23) Rev. Jones, S.M. 1 : 342, 29th November, 1950.
- (24) S.M. 1 : 331, 21st May, 1950.
- (25) S.M. 1 : 328, 28th March, 1950.
- (26) St. C.R., March, 1954.
- (27) St. C.R., April, 1950.
- (28) S.M. 1 : 365, 23rd April, 1952.

- (29) Notably the programme in honour of Vaughan Williams on his 85th birthday. Later on, when Dr. Jack Dalziel was Minister, the choir had a weekly programme broadcast on Sunday evening.
- (30) St. C.R., March, 1953 - Choir report.
- (31) S.M. 2 : 9, 10. 10th December, 1957, 28th January, 1958.
- (32) St. C.R., September, 1953.
- (33) See above. *pp 13 ff*
- (34) St. C.R., March, 1956 - Session Report. For example, the list of visiting preachers for 1954, when the Minister was not very much away, contains 14 names, including 2 international rugby players; it reads:
- Rev. Dr. Calvin Cook
Rev. D.W. Davies
Rev. Tom Hawthorn
Rev. John du Toit
Rev. Robin Roe
Mr. George Logerson
Mr. Ian Hay
Rev. W.D. Campbell
Rev. P.G. Gordon
Rev. David Phillips
Rev. Marks Rendall
Mr. Johnny Buckler
Mr. Charles Gordon
Mr. Alex Tait
- (35) S.M. Insert 1 : 335/336 - Report from Presbytery.
- (36) S.M. 2 : 126, 26th September, 1956.
- (37) S.M. 2 : 127, 24th October, 1956.
- (38) S.M. 2 : 134, 135 28th November, 1956.
- (39) S.M. 2 : 216, 4th June, 1958.
- (40) S.M. 2 : 224, 9th July, 1958.
40 + B Oxford History of South Africa p 241 and p 235 resp.
- (41) He was ordained on December 9th, 1956 - S.M. 2 : 136.
- (42) S.M. 2 : 151, 3rd April, 1957.
- (43) S.M. 2 : 84, 25th May, 1955.

- (44) S.M. 2 : 108, 29th February, 1956.
- (45) See letters of thanks in St. C.R., February, 1951.
- (46) St. C.R., January, 1953.
- (47) ~~See above.~~
- (48) S.M. 2 : 149, 3rd April, 1957.
- (49) S.M. 2 : 155, 1st May, 1957.
- (50) S.M. 2 : 216, 4th June, 1958. In connection with the naming of the new Church, the following appears in the Minutes -

"The patronal name St. Patrick's was
humorously mentioned":

the "humorously" being an obviously later addition.

- (51) S.M. 2 : 107, 2nd February, 1956.
- (52) S.M. 2 : 159, 160, 5th June, 1957.
- (53) S.M. 2 : 47, 48, 25th March, 1954.
- (54) S.M. 3 : 21, 3rd June, 1959.
- (55) S.M. 2 : 255, 19th November, 1958.
- (56) S.M. 2 : 259, 14th December, 1958.
- (57) Ibid.
- (58) In 1960, Salisbury was the only congregation with a larger membership: Proceedings of the 59th General Assembly, pp. 228-233.

CHAPTER 4

The growth of St. Columba's in relation to the
growth of Parkview and surrounding suburbs

The actual numerical growth of Parkview and its surrounding suburbs is difficult to determine accurately, because no population figures for individual townships were kept until 1960, but other available figures give some indication of the development which took place.

The number of voters in Municipal Ward 2 of Johannesburg, incorporating Parkview, Parkwood, Westcliff and Parktown North amongst other suburbs, had increased from 8,615 in 1932 to 12,800 in 1950 (1). After 1950, the composition of the Wards changed drastically (one of the reasons being the northward expansion of Johannesburg), and no less than five Wards contained suburbs which adjoined Parkview, so that no accurate assessment of the population in and around Parkview can be made from these figures. What is clear is that the

suburbs continued expanding throughout the period 1932-1960 (2).

It is possible to say with reasonable certainty that most of the incoming population after the Second World War settled in the new suburbs (Roosevelt Park was specifically laid out for ex-servicemen), because the older suburbs, such as Parkview, were already fully developed. Two figures are available which can help to determine the extent of development in a particular suburb: the number of stands in the township, and the mileage of constructed streets in relation to the total mileage of streets planned. These cannot give an accurate break-down of the population, but they do provide a general picture. For example, Parkview had 994 stands in 1932, but it cannot be assumed that all of these were developed; 994 was probably the number of stands available when the township was laid out. The road mileage figures for 1932 show that only 4.89 out of a possible 13.42 miles of road had actually been constructed in 1932, probably indicating that only that proportion of the suburb had been fully developed. By 1945, 13.2 of the 13.42 miles of road had been completed, suggesting a much more fully developed suburb.

The point of these figures as far as St. Columba's is concerned is that by 1950, when Emlyn Jones arrived, Parkview and all the suburbs which

At St. Marks, Yeoville, the figure in 1949 was 520, and in 1959 499. Mayfair Church showed a decrease from 231 in 1949 to 203 in 1959 (5). It is probable that some of these losses were absorbed by the fast-growing St. Columba's, although without records showing the distribution of the congregation, it cannot be finally proved.

From the figures available, which are by and large inadequate, it is possible to say that St. Columba's, until 1948, grew in close relation to the growth of the surrounding areas, but after 1950, when the surrounding areas had ceased to grow significantly, and new churches had been built to cater for the new population, St. Columba's experienced unprecedented growth, which cannot therefore be related directly to population growth.

REFERENCES

CHAPTER 4

- (1) These figures, and all subsequent ones concerning Johannesburg and townships, were taken from Vade Mecum published by the Johannesburg Municipality.
- (2) No figures are available before 1932.
- (3) ~~See Appendix.~~
- (4) ~~See Appendix.~~
- (5) Figures taken from Proceedings of the General Assembly, 1950 and 1960.

CONCLUSION

The history of St. Columba's, before 1960 falls into two distinct sections, the division being the respective ministries of Joseph Robertson and Emlyn Jones. St. Columba's had been built in 1921 to fulfil a need in Johannesburg's northern suburbs, and had succeeded in doing so, seemingly successfully, until 1949, the congregation growing from 51 to 437 in that time, in some sort of loose relation to the expanding suburbs close by. From 1950 onward, however, the growth increased remarkably in a way not connected, or only partly connected, with the increasing population.

An attempt has been made in this thesis to pinpoint certain important differences between the two ministries, and the most influential of these have been described as (a) increased spiritual life of the congregation (b) a greater readiness to respond to others outside of the congregation, and a greater awareness of society generally on the part of the church community as a community (c) the greatly increased emphasis on youth work and (d) the ability to recognise and use leadership potential: Mr. Rawlinny would surely have been an invaluable member of the congregation had Emlyn Jones been Minister at that time.

From this, two most important conclusions can be reached. The first is that the Minister is of vital importance to the life of a church. This may be held to be a good or a bad thing, but it is undoubtedly true, and probably particularly so in an urban community where movement from one church to another, whether the same denomination or not, is very easy. The best Minister will attract the most people. While churches are not, or should not be, in competition with one another to gather together the largest congregation, it is surely the object of the church to spread the Word of God and bring as many people under its sphere of influence as possible. It is therefore in the interests of the Church to ensure that its Ministers are of the highest quality, carefully selected and properly trained, and that much harm can be done by placing an unsuited person in the pastoral ministry.

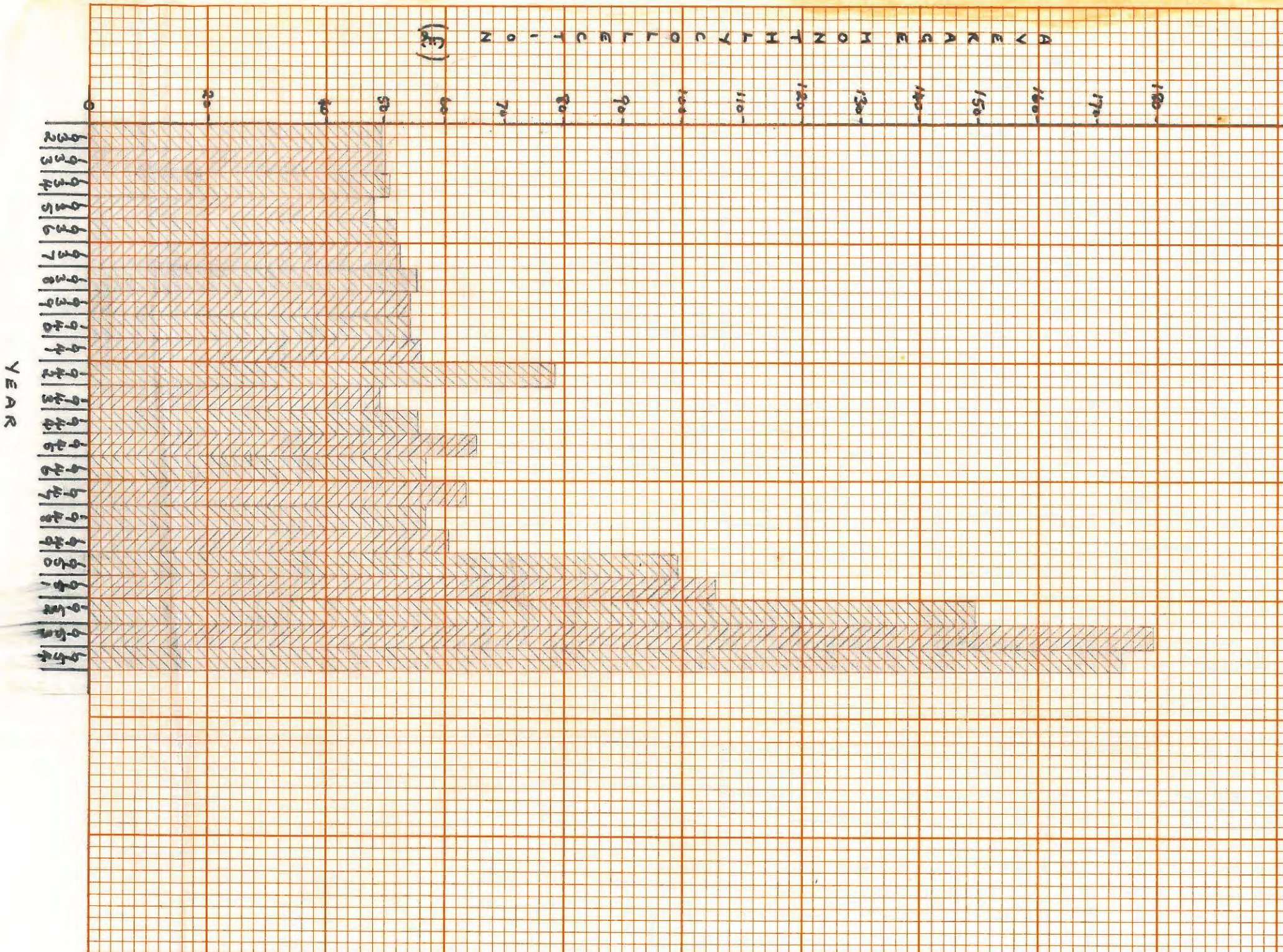
The second conclusion is that there is a direct relationship between the spiritual wellbeing of a congregation and its growth. The church which concentrates on its own needs to the exclusion of everything else will not show real advancement. It has been said that the only way to keep Christianity is to give it away, and in a very real sense this applies to the Church. The congregation which is inward looking will be too concerned with its own faults to see the needs of others. With the demonstration of Christian love by a community to those in greater need, comes real growth, which may or may not be demonstrated in numerical growth, and it has been one of the purposes of the thesis to show that the growth of St. Columba's was not simply numerical, rather that this was simply a by-product of spiritual growth.

A third conclusion, which has not been emphasised in the text due to lack of space, is that the contributions of individuals to a church is of great importance. The value of men such as Charles Greig, Thos. Sawers, James Murray, John Lang and Harry Stanton has been mentioned in passing, but to assess the extent of that value would require a second thesis, and the influence of people such as Rae Niven and David ffrench, leaders of the Boys' Brigade, or Jennifer and Elizabeth Hamlin, leaders of the Life Boys on the lives of hundreds of boys is incalculable. It emphasises the importance of proper utilization of leadership material by the Minister of a congregation, and underlines how essential it is that he should be a leader of leaders himself.

The church in urban society has a vast potential for growth which is rarely exploited. The difference between the two ministries (and Robertson's ministry was not an unsuccessful one) demonstrates this. Clearly, there are very few men of the calibre of Emlyn Jones, but the fact that the potential does exist, even if it takes such a man to realize it, should be a warning to the Church to avoid complacency: there are still many souls to be saved in the suburbs, and there is still much that the Church can do.

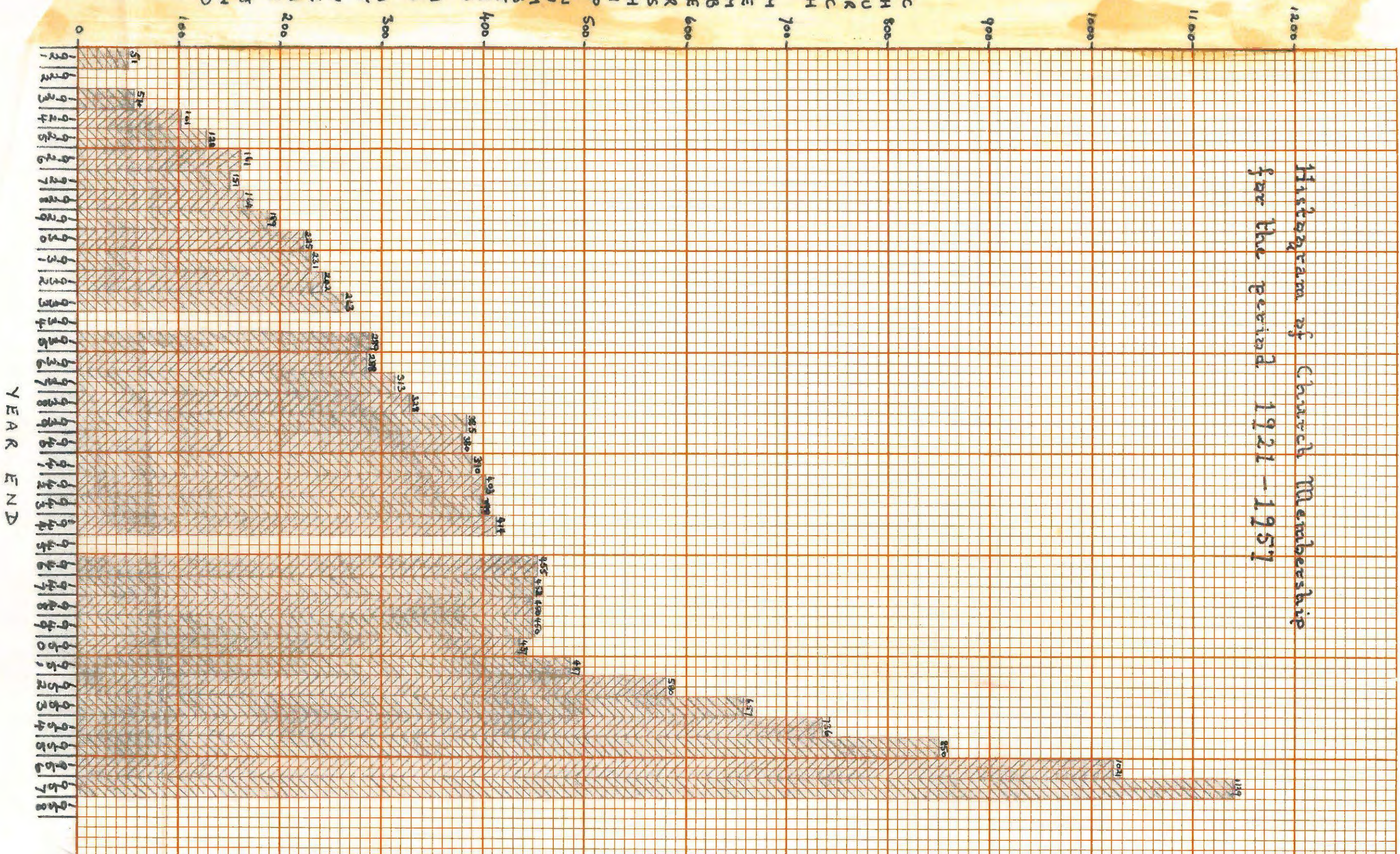
Histogram of Average Monthly Collection for the period

1932 - 1954



Graph 2

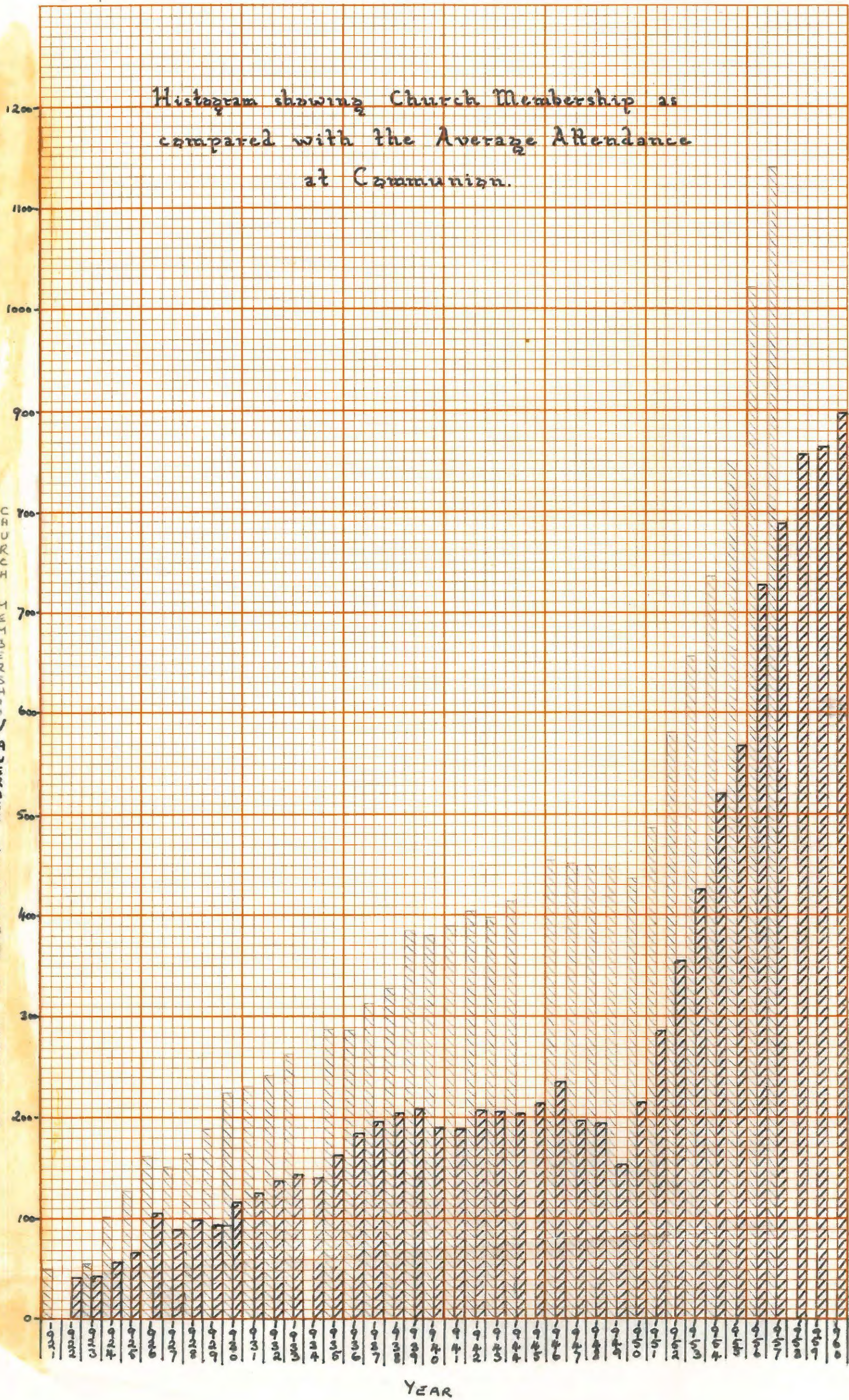
Histogram of Church Membership for the period 1921-1957



Graph 3

Histogram showing Church Membership as compared with the Average Attendance at Communion.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP - AVERAGE ATTENDANCE AT COMMUNION



Histogram of the numbers Attending Communion Each Quarter for the period 1922 - 1961



DIAGRAM OF A PORTION OF THE NORTHERN SUBURBS
OF JOHANNESBURG

BRYANSTON

CRAIGHALL INANDA

CRAIGHALL PARK ILLOVO

HURST DUNKELD OAKLANDS

PARKTOWN NORTH ROSEBANK ORCHARDS

PARKWOOD NORWOOD

ENSIDE SAXONWOLD HOUGHTON

PARKVIEW

ITIA WESTCLIFF FOREST TOWN

PARKTOWN YEOVILLE

BRAAMFONTEIN

JOHANNESBURG
CENTRAL

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JOHANNESBURG.

	<u>1922</u>	<u>1923</u>	<u>1928</u>	<u>1933</u>	<u>1938</u>	<u>1944</u>	<u>1949</u>	<u>1954</u>	<u>1959</u>
St. Columba's, Parkview	73	90	164	263	385	414	437	736	1340
St. George's, City	547	583	745	922	1035	950	973	891	727
St. Mark's , Yeoville	194	245	299	344	452	518	520	587	499
Mayfair	234	178	205	174	193	233	231	246	203
Clifton (St. Mungo's)	64	67	103	41	29	45	37	33	-
St. Ninian's	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	181	211
St. Giles	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	182
Bryanston	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50 Adherants.

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