

Closing the Church College of New Zealand: A Case Study in International Church Education Policy

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“It is the *policy* and *practice* of the Church,” observed the *Church News*, “to discontinue operation of such [Church] schools when local school systems are able to provide quality education.”¹ Thus the difficult decision was announced on June 29, 2006, to close the Church College of New Zealand by November 2009. The pronouncement and even the very words chosen to convey it place the decision in the historical context of Latter-day Saint education. This *policy* regarding Church school closures was established over nine decades ago, and the *practice* has been consistently applied worldwide since. Church education in the Pacific, and specifically the Church College of New Zealand, merely follows a pattern of establishment, growth and development, and ultimately closure in favor of public school alternatives modeled by earlier Church school endeavors. Understood in this historical context, the decision to close the school, though troublesome to many members, can be seen as a positive step in the forward movement of both the Church and education in New Zealand.

1. Paul V. Johnson, administrator of religious education and elementary and secondary education, as quoted in Leann J. Walton, “New Zealand Church College to Close,” *Church News*, July 8, 2006, 11; emphasis added.

Church Educational System Policy and Practice

The educational policy of the Church developed during its first century of existence. From the earliest days of the Restoration, education was an important part of Latter-day Saint life. Revelations commanded the writing of school-books (see D&C 55:4) and praised the existence of a school in Zion (see D&C 97:3). Elementary schools were operated in Kirtland on both the Isaac Morley farm and the flats east of the Newel K. Whitney store in the early 1830s.² Educational opportunities expanded to include adult education like the School of the Prophets, the School of the Elders, a Hebrew school in Kirtland, and later even a university in Nauvoo. After moving to Salt Lake City, education continued to influence Church members. The first school opened just three months after the Saints' arrival in the valley. Three years later, the University of Deseret was formed.³

While education has always been stressed, current Church educational policy and practice stem from decisions made by President Wilford Woodruff in the late 1880s. Responding to federal pressure to reduce Church influence in public education, President Woodruff announced, "The time has arrived when the proper education of our children should be taken in hand by us as a people."⁴ Calling upon each stake in the Church to form its own academy patterned after Provo's Brigham Young Academy, local leaders responded, forming more than

2. Milton V. Backman Jr., *The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1830–1838* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 264.

3. For an overview of Church educational history, see Scott C. Esplin, "Education in Transition: Church and State Relationships in Utah Education, 1888–1933" (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 2006).

4. Wilford Woodruff, letter to the Presidency of St. George Stake, June 8, 1888, quoted in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1833–1964* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 3:168.

thirty such institutions.⁵ These academies were the forerunner to current Church secondary schools, including the Church College of New Zealand.

Though the Church schools founded by President Woodruff operated with relative success for over three decades, the policy of taking education “in hand by us as a people” changed dramatically in the 1920s. Financial pressures contributed to the change. President Heber J. Grant observed, “I am free to confess that nothing has worried me more since I became President than the expansion of the appropriation for the Church school system.”⁶ However, the decision to reformulate policy seems to have been more than financial. As educational alternatives improved in Utah, Church school superintendent Adam S. Bennion remarked, “It became increasingly clearer that the Church could not and ought not compete against the public high school. . . . It became evident that when the public high school was

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5. Enumerating the total number of stake academies is problematic. Early Church educational histories, including M. Lynn Bennion’s *Mormonism and Education*, list twenty-two. Expanding the number, William E. Berrett and Alma P. Burton in *Readings in L.D.S. Church History* count thirty-four. Explaining the difference, Berrett and Burton state, “Various historians have listed the Church Academies and the supposed dates of their founding. These lists show certain discrepancies. The differences arise from the fact that some academies, started on a Stake basis, in response to the request of the First Presidency in 1888, did not operate continuously due to lack of funds and proper facilities. Some were revived by direct Church appropriations, while others were wholly discontinued. Only 22 of the academies had school buildings especially erected for school purposes” (*Readings in L.D.S. Church History* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1958], 3:38). Berrett and Burton present evidence for twelve additional schools based on Church correspondence with appointed principals. Complicating the count, however, Berrett’s later work, *A Miracle in Weekday Religious Education*, adds four more, increasing the total to thirty-seven.
 6. Heber J. Grant, General Church Board of Education Minutes, February 23, 1926, quoted in William Peter Miller, “Weber College—1888 to 1933,” Church History Library, Salt Lake City.

established, the Church was in the field of competition. Such competition was costly and full of difficulties.”⁷

Early in the twentieth century, Church commissioner of education Joseph F. Merrill summarized the new educational policy that emerged: “The policy of the Church was to eliminate Church schools as fast as circumstances would permit.”⁸ Throughout the 1920s and into the early 1930s, the Church divested itself of most of its secular education systems, choosing instead to augment public schools with seminary and institute programs. Elder Rulon S. Wells of the Church’s First Council of Seventy summarized the change, “The present policy of the Church, . . . in withdrawing from secular education, must not be construed by the people as a withdrawal from the great cause of education; but it does seem like an unnecessary duplication of work for the Church to undertake to do, in an adequate way, what is already being so well done by our public schools.”⁹ By the 1930s, the general Church education policy and practice had been established: encourage the acquisition of knowledge through qualified public educational options supported by released-time or after-hours religious education programs.

Following the Pattern: Educational Policy and Practice in New Zealand

Though more than a generation behind, educational policy and practice in New Zealand have followed the pattern

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7. Adam S. Bennion, letter to Church Board of Education, February 1, 1928, Papers, 1909–1958, MSS 1, box 6, folder 8; L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.
 8. Joseph F. Merrill, as quoted in Ernest L. Wilkinson, ed., *Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 2:85.
 9. Rulon S. Wells, in Conference Report, April 7, 1929, 103.

established in earlier Church school decisions. Like the earlier academies, education in New Zealand began with a period of establishment and growth, only to now be replaced by improved public school alternatives. The history of Church education in New Zealand, from its earliest beginnings through the recent closure announcement of the Church College, parallels that of earlier Church schools.

Establishing Church education in the Pacific. Like the early days of the Church in Kirtland, education in the Pacific began with the earliest missionaries and converts. Encouraging the assignment of elders to New Zealand, Augustus Farnham, president of the Australasian Mission, wrote the Church's First Presidency on August 14, 1853: "I also wish to go and open up the gospel at New Zealand. . . . I have received some little information from that Island, New Zealand. I am informed the chiefs of the tribes say the [Christian] missionaries do not preach to them the right gospel; that they are keeping back the part they need. And they do not feel to receive their teaching. From what I can learn, the field is ready to harvest; and as soon as possible, we shall send some laborers there to weed the crop and try to gather the wheat."¹⁰ With Church approval, the first missionaries arrived in Auckland on October 27, 1854.

Though President Farnham envisioned working with the native Maori people, the first missionary efforts focused on the pakeha, or European population of the country. Missionaries found some success, though permanent Church membership in New Zealand remained small due to the relatively few missionaries serving in the country and the encouragement for converts to migrate to Utah. Mission leaders, however, increasingly turned their attention toward the Maori people, where they eventually found great success. By the mid-1880s, Maori branches outnumbered pakeha branches four to one in the

10. *Deseret News*, December 8, 1853, 96.

country. Growth continued through the turn of the century, when most of the Maori tribes had been introduced to the gospel. By 1901, there were seventy-nine branches of the Church and nearly four thousand members in New Zealand.¹¹

As Church membership increased, institutional growth followed. Mission leaders quickly assessed the need for education among the Maori people. Throughout New Zealand, government schools were operated in the more populated areas, but in the Maori communities and rural areas of the country, few schools existed. Responding to this need, Church leaders formed their first school at Nuhaka on January 11, 1886.¹² Seeing the success of the endeavor, mission leaders soon established other schools in the various districts.

Though the schools were helpful for many Maori families, numerous factors hampered success. Chief among them was concern regarding educational excellence. Missionary teachers were seldom professionally trained and almost always educated in the American school system rather than New Zealand's British model. Staffed by foreign volunteers, the schools also experienced frequent turnover and suffered from poor financing and limited supplies.¹³ As a result, none of the mission schools was formally recognized by the New Zealand Department of Education. By the early 1900s, the native schools for the youth of the Church slowly ceased to operate, replaced by a more efficient and widespread state school system.¹⁴

The Maori Agricultural College. Though elementary education increasingly became a state function in New Zealand, the

11. R. Lanier Britsch, *Unto the Islands of the Sea: A History of the Latter-day Saints in the Pacific* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986), 272.

12. Brian W. Hunt, *Zion in New Zealand: A History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in New Zealand, 1854–1977* (Temple View, New Zealand: Church College of New Zealand, 1977), 27.

13. Britsch, *Unto the Islands of the Sea*, 288–89.

14. Hunt, *Zion in New Zealand*, 31.

early missionary education efforts paved the way for a more permanent secondary school, the Maori Agricultural College (MAC), which opened its doors in 1913. Like the elementary schools, the college was initially operated by the missionaries and focused toward the educational needs of the Maori people. The aims of the school, as printed in the first catalog, included “to teach Maoris the principles of agriculture . . . , to instruct them in the manual arts . . . , to train them in the secular branches of education that they may cope successfully with their associates in the commercial and social world, and to furnish them with an opportunity to possess themselves of that education that will imbue them with a better understanding of the obligations of life and a higher appreciation of its opportunities.”¹⁵

Though the MAC started well, the school faced some of the same challenges confronted in the earlier Maori elementary schools. The New Zealand Department of Education continued to oppose both the faculty and the curriculum. Too many teachers were untrained missionaries, unfamiliar with formal educational pedagogy.¹⁶ As before, the government refused to grant approved status, a limitation which, in turn, kept Maori students from accessing governmental scholarships.¹⁷ As a result, school attendance remained low, averaging between twenty-seven and thirty students annually.¹⁸

Mission leaders worked hard to improve the school and thereby achieve government approved status. In January 1930, school president Ariel S. Baliff observed:

In the past three school years every effort has been put forth by the President of the Mission and staff to place

15. As cited in Britsch, *Unto the Islands of the Sea*, 292.

16. Britsch, *Unto the Islands of the Sea*, 294.

17. Hunt, *Zion in New Zealand*, 51.

18. Britsch, *Unto the Islands of the Sea*, 294.

the M.A.C. on the standard that you have asked for. You have asked for teachers that the Government would accept; that has been arranged. You have asked us to prepare the boys for the Government examinations; that has also been arranged. You have complained at the amount of work that the boys have had to do at the college, stating they did not have enough time to study; this year they will be freed from the tying jobs and ample time given for study. Every thing that has been asked for in reason and possibility, has been granted. Yes, this year we will receive our first visit from the Secondary Department Inspector. From this we anticipate with every reason to believe that our college will be a registered Secondary School this year.¹⁹

The hard work paid off when the MAC received governmental approval later that year. With official status, enrollment jumped to eighty students.

While prospects looked bright for the MAC in 1930, policy change in Church education threatened its growth. In a letter sent to the school in February 1930, Elder David O. McKay championed the cause of the school, emphasizing its continued existence: “The boys surely look well in that excellent picture; they seem to be the finest type of young manhood and I am truly proud of them. . . . I hope that the time will never come when we haven’t one (Church school) in New Zealand.”²⁰ Elder McKay’s fears materialized later that year when the First Presidency sent a letter to the mission president informing him that the school would close after the 1930–31 school year. Reasons for closure included the high cost to operate the school, improvements in the New Zealand system of public education, and the Church’s general policy of retreating from secular education.²¹ Similar reasons were given for the divestiture of the Church’s other schools

19. *Te Karere*, January 1930, 26–27, as cited in Hunt, *Zion in New Zealand*, 43.

20. As cited in Hunt, *Zion in New Zealand*, 51.

21. Britsch, *Unto the Islands of the Sea*, 307.

in the United States during this era. The closure of the MAC appears to have been merely an outgrowth of the Church educational policy of the time. In the end, nature ended the college before the Church could. On February 3, 1931, an earthquake struck the area, rendering the school buildings unsafe.

Establishing the Church College of New Zealand. With closure of the MAC, the Church removed itself from education in New Zealand for the next two decades. However, through the influence of two prominent Church officials in Salt Lake City, formal Church education returned to New Zealand in the 1950s. For their efforts, Elders Matthew Cowley and David O. McKay may be considered the founding fathers of the Church College of New Zealand.

Elder Cowley's ties to New Zealand stem from his service as a young missionary in the country from 1914 to 1919 and again as the mission president from 1938 to 1945. Upon returning to Salt Lake, he was called to fill the vacancy created in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles after the death of President Heber J. Grant. As a new Apostle, one of Elder Cowley's first assignments was as president of the Pacific missions of the Church. Bringing him back in contact with New Zealand, he investigated the possibility of reestablishing Church schools in the Pacific. Elder Cowley's previous experience in New Zealand and especially with the MAC had convinced him of the positive influence of Church education. He remarked, "As I went around among the native people, I discovered that the leaders of the natives—of the native race—today are not those who went to the Church of England school or are not those who went to the Catholic schools—the leaders in the native race are the young men who learned at the feet of the Mormon elders at the Maori Agricultural College."²² Based on this previous experience, Elder

22. Henry A. Smith, *Matthew Cowley: Man of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954), 213.

Cowley recommended to the First Presidency the construction of a school to take the place of the old MAC.

Elder David O. McKay likewise had long ties to New Zealand. He first visited the country in 1921 during his worldwide tour of missions. Touring the all-boy MAC, he encouraged local leaders to find a possible site for a similar all-girl school.²³ Elder McKay's ties to Church education go back even further, however. Before becoming an Apostle in 1906, McKay was a professional educator, teaching at and serving as principal of the Church's Weber Stake Academy. As an Apostle, Elder McKay served as Church commissioner of education and later participated in the discussions regarding the closure of Church schools in the 1920s. During the deliberations, McKay argued: "I think the intimation that we ought to abandon our present Church Schools and go into the seminary business exclusively is not only premature but dangerous. The seminary has not been tested yet but the Church schools have, and if we go back to the old Catholic Church you will find Church schools have been tested for hundreds of years and that church still holds to them. . . . Let us hold our seminaries but not do away with our Church schools."²⁴

Though the decision to close carried the day, Elder McKay cast the lone dissenting vote against the action.²⁵ In 1934, following the closure of most of the Church schools, Elder McKay was called into the First Presidency by President Heber J. Grant. From this position and later as Church President, he championed the expansion of Church education, especially internationally.

As President of the Church, President McKay and his counselors acted on Elder Cowley's recommendation that Church

23. Hunt, *Zion in New Zealand*, 55. The proposed all-girl school never materialized.

24. As cited in Wilkinson, *Brigham Young University*, 2:73.

25. Esplin, "Education in Transition," 209.

education return to New Zealand in September 1948 by announcing that a secondary school would be built. A site was located near Hamilton, and construction began in 1950. Throughout the project, President McKay maintained an active interest. In 1955 he made his second visit to New Zealand to search for a site for a temple and to check on the progress of the school. Impressed with what he saw, he reversed his previous intention of curtailing the program and instead announced, “We will not curtail, we will enlarge this project.”²⁶ Turning the mandate into reality was a challenge, however. For example, Arnold Ehlers, supervising architect for the Church, expressed his frustration that, though buildings were being discussed, there was no formal educational plan for the school. Expressing the concern to President McKay, Ehlers recalled:

I remember we sat in President McKay’s office with all these brethren one day and I was putting in a plea for a written program that covered everything that the school was intended to do. I said, “Now, President McKay, there’s not a one of us in this office that’s an educator. We don’t know anything about education. We need educators to develop this program for us.”

But you know, it hit me just like that, like a bat out of . . . heaven when I said that, and I went to him after and I said, “President McKay, I owe you a big apology. When I said that there wasn’t an educator in this room, I completely forgot your background.” He put his arm around me and said, “Brother Ehlers, don’t you think another moment about that. Don’t let that bother you a bit.”²⁷

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26. David W. Cummings, *Mighty Missionary of the Pacific: The Building Program of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—Its History, Scope, and Significance* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1961), 51.
27. Arnold H. Ehlers interview, December 19, 1986, interviewed by Richard W. Jackson, James H. Moyle Oral History Collection, Church History Library, 31.

With President McKay's oversight and the labor of dedicated professional and volunteer workers, the campus was ready for dedication together with the New Zealand Temple in 1958.

Throughout the remainder of the McKay presidency, the Church College of New Zealand continued to grow, expanding from a first year enrollment of 342 students in 1958 to 647 students in 1970, the year of President McKay's death. However, though the program seemed to be flourishing, the Church College of New Zealand continued to exist as an exception to general Church education policy, which operated schools only in areas with inadequate public education.²⁸ Following President McKay's death, changes occurred at the school. Younger boarding students could no longer attend the school without special permission, and students were encouraged to live at home and support local schools where possible. Furthermore, the college was not to take the place of parents or pressure them to support the institution just because it was a Church school.²⁹ With these changes in place, enrollment dropped from 663 in 1972 to 450 in 1974.

With decreasing enrollment, Church leaders began to question the persistence of the Church College of New Zealand as an exception to existing Church education policy. Early in the 1970s, officials asked Alton Wade, administrator of Church schools in the Pacific, and Barney Wihongi, school administrator in Utah and former student at the Church College of New Zealand, to conduct a study regarding the continuance of the school. The pair contacted over two hundred individuals,

28. Hunt, *Zion in New Zealand*, 77. For an explanation of additional Church school exceptions (BYU, Ricks College, and LDS Business School), see Scott C. Esplin, "Education in Transition" (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 2006), 206–17.

29. Alton L. Wade and Barney Wihongi, *The Church College of New Zealand, Past, Present, Future: An Analysis* (Temple View, NZ: Church College of New Zealand, 1974), 2.

including faculty, staff, Church leaders, students, and government and education officials, finding that “the data, based on board criteria only, does not support the continuation of CCNZ. However, the history of the project, its proximity to the temple, the community which has grown up around it, the reputation of the school in the eyes of the New Zealand public, and the symbol which the College represents to the New Zealand saints should be considered.”³⁰ With these considerations, Wade and Wihongi concluded, “It is recommended that the Church College of New Zealand continue in its present role as a secondary school.”³¹

Though the school’s existence was questioned, the Church College refocused its emphasis and survived. Discouraging younger students (third and fourth forms, U.S. eighth and ninth grades) from attending caused an increase in senior class enrollment. The ratio of younger and older students shifted. As students enrolled in the fifth, sixth, and seventh forms (U.S. tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades), enrollment in these upper grades increased from 36 percent of the school population in 1970 to 65 percent of the total population by 1977.³² Additionally, the school deemphasized boarding. In 1967, for example, boarding students made up 83 percent of the student body. A decade later, that percentage dropped significantly, with only 46 percent of the students boarding on campus.³³

While the existence of the Church College was being questioned, a religious education alternative was formed across New Zealand. As it had occurred in Utah to the Church academies during the 1920s, a seminary program was introduced for those attending public schools in New Zealand in February

30. Wade and Wihongi, *The Church College of New Zealand*, 25.

31. Wade and Wihongi, *The Church College of New Zealand*, 26.

32. Hunt, *Zion in New Zealand*, 77.

33. Hunt, *Zion in New Zealand*, 77.

1970. The seminary alternative offered distinct advantages for Church members in the country, including the possibility of keeping youth near their parents rather than sending them to or moving near the Church College. For Church leaders, religious education could be offered to more students for much less cost. Under this model, the enrollment for the Church College remained around 700 students. Seminary, on the other hand, grew to serve 2,311 students by 2006.

Closing the Church College. With an established seminary alternative in the country and aging facilities at the CCNZ, the stage was set for a return to the Church school closure pattern. Like the Utah debate in the 1920s, however, the decision appears to have been a difficult one. Announcing the closure to faculty, staff, parents, and students on June 29, 2006, commissioner of Church education Elder W. Rolfe Kerr remarked, “This has been an agonizing, multi-year decision which has been made at the highest levels of Church administration. President Gordon B. Hinckley visited the school himself three years ago to make a personal evaluation.”³⁴ After the announcement, Area President Elder Spencer J. Condie revealed:

The decision to close CCNZ has been extremely difficult, and that is why it has taken several years to reach its announcement. The Brethren have carefully considered the great good that has come from this wonderful institution, including thousands of competent, talented graduates, over the past half century. The Brethren have considered the positive influence which CCNZ has had in bringing the Church “out of obscurity” throughout all of New Zealand. They have tender concerns about disrupting the professional careers of the faithful faculty and the vocational pursuits of the devoted staff members. The Brethren have deliberated long about the disruption the

34. Walton, “New Zealand Church College to Close,” 11.

school's closure might have upon the lovely little community of Temple View.³⁵

Thus, this closure seems to follow the difficult pattern set by earlier Church school closures.

When the schools in the Intermountain West were closed or turned over to the state, Church leaders praised the effectiveness of the public schools. Offering Gila College to the state of Arizona, commissioner of Church education Joseph F. Merrill wrote, "I was connected with the University of Utah for thirty-four years. During this period I was thoroughly converted to the thought that the L.D.S. Church should in nowise compete with the public schools. And so I am using the influence of this office to get over the thought that it is the policy of this Department to give one hundred percent support to the state systems of education under which the L.D.S. Church is doing any educational work."³⁶ According to the policy then established, Church schools are closed when adequate public alternatives can replace them.

Announcing the closure of the Church College of New Zealand, Elder Paul V. Johnson, administrator of religious education and elementary and secondary schools, had similar praise for New Zealand public schools, noting that "educational standards in New Zealand are the highest in the Pacific region and among the highest in the world."³⁷ Elder Condie similarly observed, "The original mission of the Church College

35. Spencer J. Condie, "The Hollowing Precedes the Hallowing," *New Zealand/Pacific Islands Newsroom*, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, <http://www.ldschurch.org.nz/newsroom/article.asp?id=6CF745AD-C98B-4B90-B0F5-00FC66549BA9>.

36. Joseph F. Merrill, letter to H. L. Schantz, February 1, 1929, Joseph F. Merrill Papers, 1887–1952, MSS 1540, box 5, folder 3, Special Collections, L. Tom Perry Special Collections.

37. Walton, "New Zealand Church College to Close," 11.

of New Zealand (CCNZ) was to provide suitable educational facilities for Latter-day Saint youth living in remote towns and villages who, half a century ago, did not have access to adequate schools. Now, fifty years later, New Zealand has recently been ranked by UNICEF as having the 10th best school system in the entire world.”³⁸ Reassuring members impacted by the announcement, Elder Condie promised, “The decision to close CCNZ was not made before receiving assurances that the New Zealand Ministry of Education would be able to provide adequate alternative educational opportunities for CCNZ students.”³⁹ In addition, Church leaders were confident that existing Church programs, especially seminary, could provide religious instruction for its youth.⁴⁰ Apparently the strength of the public school system, supported by a successful seminary program, factored heavily into the closure decision, much as it did in the United States.

A second factor impacting the decision to close seems to have been the financial burdens of operating the school. Following the closure of the earlier Church schools, Elder Merrill observed, “The Church Board of Education and the Church’s leading educators and thinkers in many fields had long realized that Church-operated academies were a financial burden and were performing a limited service, geographically at least.”⁴¹ In announcing the closure of the Church College of New Zealand seventy years later, Elder Johnson similarly noted that the school’s aging facilities had been a contributing factor in the

38. Condie, “The Hollowing Precedes the Hallowing.”

39. Condie, “The Hollowing Precedes the Hallowing.”

40. David Eames, “Mormons Admit Closure of Church College Will Be a Loss,” *New Zealand Herald*, June 30, 2006, http://www.nzherald.co.nz/topic/story.cfm?c_id=329&objectid=10389025.

41. Joseph F. Merrill, “A New Institution in Religious Education,” *Improvement Era*, January 1938, 12.

decision.⁴² Likewise, Elder Condie remarked that the “Brethren have weighed the benefits of maintaining CCNZ versus the benefits of using these financial resources for the construction of temples, building and maintaining chapels, supporting missionary work, and extending humanitarian aid throughout the world where needs are the greatest.”⁴³ Noting that “the decision is sad in many ways,” Elder Kerr reiterated that the financial impact of the decision “will allow the Church to bless others in parts of the world where the need is greater.”⁴⁴

Also like the closures of the 1920s and 30s, the announcement to discontinue the Church College of New Zealand has been difficult for some members. Reporting on the decision, the local *Waikato Times* preserved the response of one member: “Maureen Davies rushed out of the meeting at the Temple View high school last night, a handkerchief held to her face as she tried to hide her grief at the school’s closure. ‘I can’t believe it,’ she said. ‘We’ve talked about it, but we never realised it would happen this soon.’”⁴⁵ Former student and now parent Daniel Beijerling similarly observed, “The closure of the schools means all our hopes and plans for our children’s educational future have been dashed to pieces, and suddenly we’re forced to make decisions we hadn’t counted on.”⁴⁶

Sensing members’ attachment to the school, Elder Condie remarked, “To ease the burden of closure, the Brethren felt impressed to allow a three-and-a-half year notice, so the closure will not take permanent effect until the end of . . . November

42. Walton, “New Zealand Church College to Close,” 11.

43. Condie, “The Hollowing Precedes the Hallowing.”

44. Walton, “New Zealand Church College to Close,” 11.

45. Justine Turner, “Tears Shed Over Closure,” *Waikato Times*, June 30, 2006, 1.

46. Denise Irvine and Lester Thorley, “A College of Community,” *Waikato Times*, July 8, 2006, 3.

2009.”⁴⁷ Promising that the decision had not been made lightly, he concluded, “The decision to close this school was made by fifteen inspired, wise and experienced men whom we sustain as prophets, seers and revelators. I pray that you will continue to sustain them in this important decision.”⁴⁸ Though sadness surrounded the decision, protests did not materialize. A week after the announcement, the local newspaper observed, “It . . . seems unthinkable those who love the college are not protesting at the decision. Not petitioning church officials, staging protests, chaining themselves to railings, as happens in communities where state schools get such bad news. . . . They’re sad, but not angry, and certainly not interested in recriminations.”⁴⁹ A local mother characterized the response, “I felt a bit sad at first, but it’s quite an exciting new perspective on life. . . . Hopefully the children will be good examples in state schools or others where they go.”⁵⁰

Conclusion

Though both eras of closure were met with sadness, the 1920s decision to close Church schools in the United States in favor of public school alternatives and the 2006 announcement to close the Church College of New Zealand follow a pattern of educational policy in the Church. The Utah closures opened the door for increased interaction in the educational arena between faithful members and those of other faiths. It highlighted a transitional era in Church history in which the Church and its members increasingly came out of obscurity to greater participation within regional and national society.

47. Condie, “The Hollowing Precedes the Hallowing.”

48. Condie, “The Hollowing Precedes the Hallowing.”

49. Irvine and Thorley, “A College of Community,” 3.

50. Irvine and Thorley, “A College of Community,” 3.

The closure of the Church College of New Zealand may likewise prove to be a positive step forward for the Church and its members in the Pacific. Commenting on its potential, Elder Condie remarked, “I thought how wonderful it would be to spread these enthusiastic Latter-day Saint youth throughout the entire nation so they could enrich and edify the lives of other youth from Kaikohe to Invercargill.”⁵¹ Like the replacement of academies with seminaries in Church education a generation ago, the closure of the Church College of New Zealand may prove to be a milestone in the history of the Church in the Pacific.

51. Condie, “The Hollowing Precedes the Hallowing.”