FROM NEW ZEALAND.

Annual Conference at Waitangi.—Good Meetings.—Speeches and Testimonies.—Christmas.

Editor Deseret News:

The distance between the districts in New Zealand renders it advisable to hold two general conferences each year, and the "Hui Tau," or annual conference of the northern districts was held at Waitangi, near Te Puke, Bay of Plenty, on the 23d, 24th and 25th of Dec., 1892.

Elders were present from all the districts on the island except Wairarapa, and many of them had traveled nearly 300 miles on horseback to attend conference.

As usual, great preparations had been made for the entertainment of visiting members, and the Maoris in the vicinity, who were not members of the Church, readily assisted in furnishing provisions and other accommodations.

The meetings were held in a large Maori whare, or meeting house, decorated in the usual Maori style.

Conference was called to order on Friday, Dec. 23rd, by the president of the Australasian mission, Elder W. T. Stewart, and the following named Elders were present: Elders M Bennion, C. W. Taylor, J. M. Hendry, John G. Kelson, O. Andrus, G. Hales, E. Atkin, J. M. Hixson, W. Douglas, Hans Madsen, L. C. Rasmussen, R.G. Meikle, B. Hamblin, B. Goddard, E. J. Palmer, C. B. Bartlett, C. Peterson and J. S. Abbott.

After the usual opening exercises, Elder W.T. Stewart greeted the Saints who had assembled from the surrounding districts, and stated that the work was steadily progressing and the interest increasing throughout the mission. He invoked the blessing of God upon the gathering and desired regular attendance by the members.

Elder M. Bennion, president of the Whangarei district, reported that the work amongst the natives was according to the usual routine, and there was nothing special to report. Meetings, however, had been held among the Europeans, and an earnest spirit of inquiry had been aroused. He testified to the fulfillment of prophecy and referred to the blessings awaiting those who remained faithful to their covenants.

Elder E. Atkin, president of the Bay of Islands district, stated that most of the 400 members in that district were interested in the work of the Lord, though some were quite weak and careless. He considered that progress was being made and the Elders were meeting with some success.

Elders Hales, Hartlett and Pouaka (a native) also addressed the meeting.

The afternoon meeting convened at 2:30 in which Elder W. Douglas, President of the Waikato district reported the labors of the Elders in that district, which had been attended with success, and there were prospects of some work being done among the Europeans. He bore testimony to the restoration of the Gospel, with all the keys and ordinances necessary for the observance of its laws.

Elder Madsen reported the Hauraki district, stating that many of the members were Saints indeed and the field was in a good condition. Related the pleasant experiences of the Elders among the Europeans while explaining the principles of the Gospel, and spoke at some length on the first principles of the Gospel.

Elder J. S. Abbott exhorted the members to keep the commandments of God as taught by our Savior.

An interesting testimony meeting was held in the evening which continued till nearly midnight, many of the native members bearing faithful testimonies. The second day's meetings were well attended, and services commenced at 10 a.m.

Elder C. W. Taylor read the statistical report for the six months ending July 31st, which showed the total number of souls in the mission to be 3,335. The number of baptisms for the half year was reported as 71. There are 29 Elders from Zion laboring in the mission, four of whom are engaged exclusively among the Europeans.

The general authorities of the Church and the traveling Elders were unanimously sustained. Elder Andrus, president of the Taurangs district, stated that the district was in the same condition as when last reported. No special progress had been made, though many efforts had been put forth to reach the outsiders. Some were willing to receive and shelter the Elders for the night, on condition that no effort was made to preach the Gospel. He spoke many encouraging words to the Saints on Gospel principles.

Elders Hamblin, Peterson, Palmer and Brother Ormsby (a half caste Maori) also bore their testimonies.

In the afternoon meeting Elder J. M. Hendry reported the Wairapa district as in good condition, and spoke also upon the Word of Wisdom and the necessity of the Saints living up to its requirements. He was gratified to learn that some of the natives intended leaving for Zion soon, and only those filled with the Spirit of God would ever enjoy the blessings of gathering with His Saints.

Elder Meikle and Heina (a native) addressed the meeting, after which Elder Stewart spoke to the Saints on the necessity of Prophets in the Church of Christ. He showed clearly that the people of God must be guided by revelation, and that Christ had often revealed Himself after His ascension. He referred to the opposition to the work of the Lord, and earnestly exhorted all to be faithful and prayed that the blessings of God might rest upon the people.

A Priesthood meeting was held on Saturday evening and the subject of furnishing "Ready References" in the Maori language was introduced by Elder Stewart. The native members heartily sustained the proposition, and expressed their willingness to assist in the publication. This valuable work can be used to greater advantage for the Maori people than in any other section of the missionary field. The members are very diligent in searching the scriptural references in their daily hacklas, or prayer meetings. In a few months after the little volume is issued many of the natives will have committed its contents to memory.

The third day of conference was Christmas day. Elder C. W. Taylor was the first speaker, and he addressed the farewell address to the New Zealand Saints, having been released with Elder Bennion, to return to Zion. He referred to his labors, and earnestly exhorted the members to faithfulness.

Elder B. Goddard reported the Manawatu district in a flourishing condition, and referred to the progress recently made, two new branches having been established, and baptisms were quite numerous. Referred to the labors of the Elders on the South Island and refuted the Scandalous story circulated by an archbishop in the Nelson diocese, copies of which had been sent all through the mission. He showed the necessity of a Church organization as taught by the Apostles, with the ordinances and blessings of the Gospel.

In the afternoon there was an increased attendance. Sacrament was administered by Elders M. Bennion and C. W. Taylor, after which Elder J. M. Hixson, president of the Mahurangi district, reported their labors in the part of the mission. He referred to the exemplary lives of the presidents of the branches and the good feeling which prevailed.

Elder L. C. Rasmussen reported the Poverty Bay district, and also addressed the congregation on the second coming of Christ, exhorting the people to live so that they might be prepared to reign with Him on earth.

Elder John G. Kelson, president of Hawkes Bay district, stated that the Saints were surrounded by great worldly temptations, and this necessitated much labor among those who were weak in the faith. He bore a faithful testimony to the work of God, and urged the members to be diligent in their callings.

Elder W. T. Stewart testified to the good spirit which had prevailed during the conference. He referred to the death of Elder Chipman in the Waikato district, and bore testimony to his zeal and good character. He spoke on the subject of the condition of departed spirits, and the labors necessary for the redemption of the dead, and expressed a belief that Elder Chipman had been called to continue his labors behind the veil.

The testimony meeting held in the evening continued till about eleven o'clock, and twenty-two members bore faithful testimonies.

A good spirit prevailed and much good will undoubtedly result from the meetings.

A MIDSUMMER CHRISTMAS IN NEW ZEALAND.

Christmas in the antipodes has a changed aspect. We miss the frosty blasts and fleecy snow, and Santa Claus cannot appear in his time honored garb of white.

Instead of the merry jingling of sleigh bells, we hear the sweet warbling of the feathered songsters and the skylark soars aloft with glad song to greet Sol as he rises in the glory of summer.

The weather is almost oppressively hot, which often indicates a heavy thunder shower.

A sumptuous Christmas dinner was provided for the Elders, who gathered to attend conference at Waitangi, New Zealand.

The dinner room was very similar to one of our oldtime boweries, and was tastefully decorated and festooned with native grasses and vines.

"A Merry Christmas to all!" greeted the guests as they entered and the tables groaned beneath their loads of beef, pork, vegetables, plum puddings, tarts. It is needless to say that full justice was done to the bounteous repast.

Christmas eve was a memorable occasion. Our conference meeting continued till after 10 o'clock, but notwithstanding the late hour it was deemed advisable to celebrate the festive eve with an appropriate program. A master of ceremonies was appointed and the merry laughter and joyous shouts continued into the early morning hours. Santa Claus was present and the brethren cheerfully surrendered their sacks in the hope of receiving elegant tokens from his ever bountiful hands. The gifts were too varied and numerous to permit a description in this letter.

Appropriate addresses were delivered by Elders C. W. Taylor and W. T. Stewart, and these were followed with songs, recitations, toasts.

The sentiment on Our Wives and Sweethearts was enthusiastically received and the unanimity which prevailed indicated that the loved ones at home were not forgotten.

A lamenting "Home, Sweet Home," and "Star Spangled Banner," the company dispersed after a general hand-shaking and Christmas greetings.

Few, if any, refrained from reflections of the happy gatherings and family reunions in Utah's vales, but this also proved a family gathering, for all were brethren united in doing Father's will and laboring to proclaim Christ's mission for the salvation of His children.

It was fitting, therefore, that they should celebrate the advent of Him who was heralded with "Peace on earth, good will towards men."

PHENIX.

Gift to the University.

The Utah University has been presented with two magnificent specimens of crystals of selenite by Dr. James E. Talmage, curator of the Deseret Museum. The larger and more valuable specimen is nearly forty inches long and about eight inches in diameter. Both are transparent and were found in Wayne county, in southern Utah. Dr. Talmage has secured several fine specimens of this character and has presented a number of them to the leading educational institutions of the Territory.

At a time when so much attention is given to physical education, it is interesting to remember that Benjamin Franklin felt John Adams the duty made it a point of religion to exercise. When sixty-six years old, Franklin wrote to his son as follows:

"Exercise is general thought, and the care of them by physic is so precarious.

"The measures of each sort of exercise is to be judged by the degree of warmth it produces in the body rather than by time or distance.

"There is more exercise in one trifling game of bowls or tennis to a sedentary man than two miles walking to and from in five or ten minutes; more in walking upstairs up and down chambers than a league on a level road.

"This you may try when you have a proper room for this, or contriving a proper quantity of exercise in a handful of minutes.

"The dumbbell is another exercise to the latter comprehension kind, by the use of it I have to forty strokes equivalent to a mile from day to day to the knots in a minute, counted by a second watch, and I suppose the warmth thereby increases with quickness of pulse."

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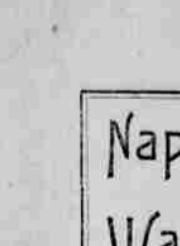

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