



County Newsphotos, Motherwell

SHIELDMUIR METHODIST CHURCH CLOSES

SHIELDMUIR Methodist Church, spiritual centre of Methodists in the Craigneuk area for almost a century, was closed down last Sunday evening.

The church, which became established in 1872 in Craigneuk Street, was built largely to serve local Methodists of the time who had moved into the area from North East England and parts of Wales in search of employment in the Lanarkshire industrial belt.

Down through the years it has been a popular and thriving meeting place of local Methodists. Originally, it was a church of Primitive Methodism, but like others of its kind in 1932, it became linked, with the Wesleyan

Methodists and the United Methodists, into the one united church now known as The Methodist Church. For a number of years it has been one of the six local Methodist Churches which make up the Motherwell and Wishaw Methodist Circuit.

Decision to close the church because population movement had sadly depleted its congregation, was made by the trustees of the church some nine months ago. Since then it has been winding down.

Last Sunday morning, the Rev. George Cloke, B.D., minister of the joint charges of Wishaw, Castlehill and Shieldmuir Methodist Churches, administered the Sacrament of Holy Communion to members for the last time within the church and members had a family opportunity of saying farewell to their church.

In the vening the congregation of the church was joined by the congregations of the other Methodist Churches in the Circuit in a valedictory service.

SAD OCCASION

The occasion was one which saddened the hearts of many older members of the congregation and which recalled for them the many highlights of their lives which they had celebrated within the old church.

There was a shaft of hope, however, in the appropriate sermon preached by Circuit Superintendent, the Rev. H. H. Tennent, Motherwell, who in choosing his text from Jeremiah 18, with the story of the potter who took the damaged pot and by using the same clay remodelled a better vessel, drew parallels between the potter and his vessel and the congregation at Shieldmuir and their closing church. He indicated that God did not throw away the marred vessel but used it to rebuild something better. The Reformation and the present ecumenical movement within the churches might be regarded in such a light. The Church was not bricks and mortar, he said, but the people who formed the congregation. God's sovereignty was not rigid nor was Fate fixed. The congregation at Shieldmuir must accept that they were vessels through which there could be

even greater rebuilding.

The service was conducted by the Rev. Mr Cloke and Scripture readings were by Deaconess Miss Helen Davie who left the church over a year ago for work in the Mission Field in Gambia and was home on her first furlough.

The bulk of the congregation of the church will now be joining their colleagues at Wishaw Methodist Church although some have found fellowship in other local churches.

Several offers have been made for the church premises and site and its fate will come under discussion at the next meeting of the Town Council.