During the 1890s at a time when Helping Hand Missions were being established in many cities around Australia and New Zealand, Doctors Eric and Margaret Caro and some members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Napier, New Zealand, formed what was termed a Christian Help Band to assist released female prisoners and “the fallen.” Temporarily housed in the Caro home while more permanent accommodation could be obtained, the women were cared for until suitable positions could be found for them.

Ten volunteers were given the job of canvassing around the city for suitable housing, furniture, and donations. In 1896, a suitable rental property was found at Coote Road, Bluff Hill, Napier, and Bethany Home opened its doors. From its spacious verandas, the ocean could be viewed in three directions. Bethany Home was the first of many similar ventures under the management of the newly formed Australasian Medical Missionary Benevolent Association.

Coming under the umbrella of this new association, this institution had to be self-supporting. Within two weeks, accommodation, furnishings, a guaranteed rental income, a matron, and inmates were organized. Miss Radford, the
former president of the Christian Help Band, offered her services free of charge as the first matron and brought her piano and some household furniture to the home with her.\textsuperscript{9} The home was opened to all women without distinction of creed or nationality.\textsuperscript{7}

Newspapers reported the official opening of Bethany Home by the Napier mayor on February 16, 1898.\textsuperscript{8} Often referred to as Bethany Rescue Home, the facility housed 25 women during its first year of operation, 11 of whom were recently released prisoners. The local newspaper reported that “some of the others have also turned into the right path, and are now supporting themselves in a proper manner. Of course, some of the most inverterate \textsuperscript{sic} drunkards could not see the error of their ways, and relapsed into their old unfortunate habits.”\textsuperscript{9}

Five months later, the Napier newspaper stated that “the work has gone steadily forward, literally hundreds of visits having been made, hundreds of meals provided, and hundreds of garments given to those who were in straitened circumstances. Physiology classes for children have also been undertaken with the most gratifying results.”\textsuperscript{10}

Within a year, Miss Alice Parr became the matron of the home, a position she held for 17 years before taking up private nursing practice.\textsuperscript{11} To help make the home self-supporting, the plan was to take in laundry work (washing, ironing, and mangling), plain sewing, knitting, and other suitable employment.\textsuperscript{12} At this time a small maternity room was also established.\textsuperscript{13} Much support from the citizens of Napier helped keep the home operating. A special program by the Frivolity Minstrels in the Theatre Royal was performed in aid of the Bethany Home.\textsuperscript{14} Many newspaper reports for the home carried information on the residents at the time and also information on donations and expenditure.\textsuperscript{15}

A move further uphill to Shakespeare Terrace, later known as 29 Fitzroy Road, was soon undertaken. Here more women could be cared for in the larger premises. Bethany had expanded to include the rescue and temporary care of children from unfavorable or dangerous surroundings.

On August 14, 1914, the Bethany Home was transferred to the Salvation Army. They retained the name Bethany Home, which was subsequently used for most of the Salvation Army Hospitals in New Zealand.\textsuperscript{16} Bethany Home was officially reopened by the Salvation Army on November 26, 1914, with a large interested audience. The bishop of Waipau stated that “as long as there was sin in the world such Institutions would be necessary,” and “he felt that all large towns needed a similar Institution as the one opening to-day. It would be a place where sinners would be brought to their Saviour.”\textsuperscript{17} This denomination ran private maternity hospitals bearing the name Bethany Home in Russell, Auckland, Gisborne, Napier, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin.\textsuperscript{18}

The role of Bethany Home changed over the years when Child Welfare officers were appointed in 1925, and young children could be housed there briefly until a suitable home was found for them. The 1931 Napier earthquake badly damaged the building, and it did not reopen until 1938. In 1942 the home was relocated once again, to 42 Morris Street, Nelson Park, Napier, and functioned under the name Bethany Maternity Hospital. The facility closed its doors in October 1978.\textsuperscript{19}

\textbf{SOURCES}


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“Medical Missionary and Benevolent Association.” \textit{Union Conference Record}, July 17, 1899, 11.

“Napier Bethany Home.” \textit{Hawke’s Bay Herald}, February 17, 1898, 3.


\textbf{NOTES}

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2. “Medical Missionary and Benevolent Association,” Union Conference Record, July 17, 1899, 11.
4. Ibid.
5. “Medical Missionary and Benevolent Association.”
10. “In the May number . . . .,” Hawke’s Bay Herald, July 18, 1898, 2.
19. “From Seventh-day Adventist to The Salvation Army,” 2.