

There were also a number of schools regularly visited for the traditional half-hour religious instruction : Aria, Mokauiti, Mapiu, Ongarue and Okahukura. An annual catechism/holiday camp was organised for many years for the children of the many centres in the King Country, and they were joined by children from areas of the Waikato Maori mission. The camp was at the Waihi school, hostel and convent complex on the hill overlooking the Waihi Maori village. The children were prepared for First Holy Communion by volunteer groups of Mercy nuns, Marist nuns or Sisters of the Mission from Auckland and Hamilton. The children slept in the hostel, and local ladies did all the catering, using meat, vegetables and other food donated by a great many people. Over the years, the priests in attendance were Fathers van Tilborg, Nederhof, Laidler, Horrigan, Zeyen and O'Brien. Recreation was supervised by the priests as they took the children for walks to the waterfall, or swimming in the lake and lounging in hot thermal pools, -- all in usually warm January weather. A big nuisance at night were mosquitos!! The camp ended with First Communion Mass and a party. On the following morning, the children returned home, and back to irregular contact with the priest and Mass!

Father O'Brien covered the vast scattered area attached to Aria on his own from 1955 to 1960 when he was joined by Fr. John Dijkman for a year. Then came a succession of priestsFathers Lorenzo Bracken, Peter Bell, Peter Flannery, Joseph Laidler and Denis Horrigan. Of those, only Fr. Bracken spent some time in Aria. In 1962, Fr. Aarts, the Mill Hill Superior, reached a decision with Archbishop Liston in consultation with Fr. Sheerin of Te Kuiti which resulted in Piopio being handed over to care of the Mill Hill Missionaries in Aria, and for them to build a new house in Piopio. The Aria cottage was sold to Barbara Ratima of the Aria Ratima family, and the Higgins builders of Te Kuiti were engaged to build the new house. However, first of all, the Church had to be moved nearer to the road so that the house could be built on the Church site. That problem was solved by the expertise and ingenuity of the Piopio parishoners, the White brothers, who did the work voluntarily. When Fathers O'Brien & Bracken found themselves without a home after selling the Aria cottage and before the new house was finished, the Piopio postmaster and his wife, Mr. & Mrs. Ellis offered to put them up. After some time they moved from there to the home of John & Joyce Mcgarvey. Such kindness has never been forgotten.

On February 17th 1962, Fr. Aarts and Archbishop Liston blessed and opened the new church at Mapiu. Fr. O'Brien bought the old Mapiu school from the education department for £250, with alterations and improvements being done by Patrick O'Sullivan together with Frs. O'Brien & Bell,--- and seating made by Joe Sweeman of Te Kuiti all at a cost of £500. The following day, the Archbishop blessed the new Piopio presbytery and also the much-improved church, gave First Holy Communion to 35 children, and in the afternoon administered Confirmation to 58 candidates.

Frs. O'Brien & Bracken remained together in Piopio until 1964 when Fr. Bracken went overseas. (Fr. O'Brien had already gone overseas shortly after the big day on February 18th 1962, and Fr. Snoeren had filled in his absence.) Fr. Bracken was replaced by Fr. Flannery. Fr. O'Brien moved to Rotorua in 1966. After that, Frs. Flannery, Laidler, Horrigan, Bracken, (2nd time), Horrigan and Anselm Aherne