

Speech given by Fr Alex Scutt at the Dedication of the new worship centre at St Philip's, Collingwood, Sunday June 19th, 2005

Let me begin by thanking you all for coming to this celebration today.

Brief Historical Outline: Past Incumbencies and their connections with the present

One hundred and fifty years ago, Collingwood became a municipality. A schoolroom was built on the corner of Marine Pde and Nicholson Street, Abbotsford, “near the Collingwood baths”. The first master was a Mr Cobbly, shortly thereafter to be replaced by a Mr Siddle. Three years later, in 1858, this schoolroom became the place of the first Anglican service held in the Borough of Collingwood. This area was the “Collingwood Flat”, the Yarra flood plain, a far cry from the “nobs” up the hill in Smith Street. In 1867 a beautiful bluestone church was consecrated on the site which is now the Park between the Vicarage and the Collingwood Town Hall. It stood on the site until 1968. Many of you here today knew the building well, and loved it and worshipped in it. Ever since, the dream has been to build a new worship centre on this wonderful site here on one of the busiest roads in Melbourne (44,000 cars a day, so latest reports say). Today this dream has become a reality. We have a long way to go still: the vicarage is still to be restored, community offices have still to be readied for their first tenants, and several other more minor works need to be done. Nonetheless, what we have here today in the way of a worship centre and associated facilities can justifiably be called a success, and for that there are many people to thank.

First, we must thank those who kept the dream of a new worship centre alive from the time of the demolition of the first St Philip's: people like Irene Cogdon, Olga Ware, Jean Hales, Bruce Chinnery, Millie Gobbett, Marjory Dower, the last two of whom have passed to their rest. And there are others too, either who are with us still or who have passed to their rest. There are the clergy who have over the one hundred and fifty years discharged their priestly vocation here with distinction, vigour, and hard work. Thomas Cornelius Cole (vicar from 1863–1865) was the first resident minister. His descendant, David, was the project for this beautiful new building. Members of the Cole family are here today, and Harry and Valda Cole sent their good wishes. Their interest in the stained glass windows of the old church, now in the Swan Hill Pioneer Settlement, has been invaluable. When Barnabas Walker (1865–1872) arrived, the church was only partially completed: there were the four walls of the nave erected, and there was no parsonage (it was finished in 1866). The *Church of England Messenger*, recording his death in 1878, tells us that during his incumbency here

“the nave was finished, the foundations laid of the transept, and one of the handsomest and most commodious parsonages in the diocese erected”.

It further records, rather more sadly, a classic case of what we today would call burn-out—and the eloquent Victorian English cannot hide the reality:

“At the close of morning and evening prayer he would fancy he had committed some grave mistake whilst conducting it, and it was only after the fullest assurance that all had gone well, that his fears were allayed.”

I cannot help thinking that despite clergy stress being as much a phenomenon of the twenty-first century as it was of the nineteenth, that Barnabas Walker may well have found relief in the worship centre which now stands in the place where he once ministered. We are pleased that members of his family are here this afternoon.

The Revd J.H Dewhurst was in charge from October 1872 to March 1874, when the Revd John Caton succeeded him and “laboured with much success for a period of ten years”. Rev W.W.Mantell, from St Thomas’ Essendon ministered for the following nine years and was succeeded by Rev. Thomas Symonds in 1893. “This gentleman passed away in the year 1897 at the rectory after a brief but faithful ministry.”

The man who filled the vacancy was Rev William McKie (1898–1904), whose son, John, became a Bishop in this Diocese, and who mentored me for a time at Trinity College and taught my father Divinity at Melbourne Grammar School. Another son, William, became a knight of the realm and the organist at Westminster Abbey. It was he who played at the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. One person who knew him well was the Revd Howard Hollis, now retired in this Diocese but at the time of the Coronation a Prebendary Canon at Westminster, and whose wife Margaret and son Richard are here today. Richard is one of our parishioners. During McKie’s incumbency “the Church ... was not as healthy financially as one would desire the house of God to be,” reads the *Jubilee Souvenir of St Philip’s Church of England* in 1915, but it also records that

“the ministrations of a man of McKie’s ability were very much needed at St Philip’s at this juncture. His visits to the homes of the sick and afflicted of the parish were looked forward to, and to the Master alone is known how much comfort he brought to the weary and the heavy laden.”

The next rector was the Rev W.L.Langley (1905–1907), who was the son of a former Bishop of Bendigo, so again—with the current Bishop of Bendigo’s presence with us here today—there is a connection with the parish of Collingwood. The above-mentioned *Souvenir* records that W.L.Langley was inducted by his father in the presence of a crowded congregation a little over one hundred years ago, 17th January, 1905. It was during his ministry that it became necessary to “enlarge, or in other words, to complete, the church”.

The Revd D.M.Deasey(1907–1912) followed in 1907 and was here for four and a half years. He was

“a great believer in direct giving and this was the only means employed. His faith in open air services [meant that] once a week, in the finer months, he would be found conducting one of these in Johnston Street, and at other periods, especially during Lent, at various

portions of the parish and by this means carried the Gospel to many who would not otherwise have received the message”.

In the 1915, the church celebrated its Jubilee and the incumbency was in the hands of the Revd H.B.Hewett.

Incumbencies in more recent times

Noel Danne

Skipping a few years we move to more recent times and more recent memory. There was the Reverend Noel Danne, and members of his family—daughter-in-law Elizabeth, son Noel, and granddaughters are here this afternoon. When Elizabeth phoned me telling me that her late husband Geoffrey (Noel’s son) had done his honours thesis for his architecture degree on the architecture of St Philip’s, and offered me the opportunity to see it, I jumped at the chance. I was not disappointed. This beautiful family heirloom, written in 1949, contains some superb photographs of every part of the old church outside and in. My heartfelt thanks go to the Danne family for letting me see this, and for making a copy of it available to us.

Ken Parker

Ken Parker’s ministry in the parish is still well remembered by people like Jean Hales, Irene Cogden, and Olga Ware. He has sent his best wishes and prayers to us for today, but unfortunately could not be with us due to other commitments in his current incumbency of Castlemaine.

Raymond “Mondie” Wilson

Mondie Wilson was also a much loved figure of the past who made his presence felt in so many ways here at St Philip’s. He was a much loved pastor of this parish, remembered for his fine teaching, artistic and calligraphic skills, his love of drama, and his evangelisation of the growing Vietnamese Community which eventually resulted in the formation of St Matthias North Richmond as a separate parish ministering to the Asian Community in North Richmond. Raymond “Mondie” Wilson was vicar for sixteen years before his move to Mont Albert in the middle 1990s and his death in 2000. Many of his family, friends, associates and former parishioners are here today and we welcome them among us. It was his vision, along with that of Bruce Chinnery, that a new building was envisioned after the tragic fire of 1984. I am personally saddened that he has not lived to see this day. I have been informed this week that some of his former associates are considering a contribution towards the cost of our stained glass windows in his memory.

Other clergy

I want also to pay tribute to Fr John Baldock, Fr John Clarkson (who with his wife Mary and son George send their prayers and best wishes for today), also to Fr Ken Cahill who read the Gospel this afternoon, for their incumbencies at St Philip’s at various times during the 1990s, and also to the associate clergy David Moore, now Vicar of East Kew; Fr Roy Bradley, one-time chaplain at Royal Perth Hospital and the Austin Hospital and a founder of the Clinical Pastoral Education movement in Australia; and Fr Martin O’Donovan, also unable to be with us today, but

sending his best wishes and prayers. There are other clergy too, such as Cecilia Frances, Stephen Ames, Peta and Charles Sherlock, Alison Taylor, Philippa Wetherall and others who have had an association with our people over the years and some of whom found their vocation to priesthood cradled here at St Philip's. Among the bishops, Bishop Peter Hollingworth, Bishop Andrew Curnow, and our present Bishop, Philip Huggins, are to be thanked for their supportive role throughout the years that have led to this day. It is good that they are all able to be here today.

It has been a lay-led process: The lay people

The Building Committee of the Parish

The most important thing to say about this project, though, is that it has been a lay-led process throughout, however much some of you lay folk may think otherwise. The Building Committee of the Parish has been the mainstay of the project from its inception, and there are many of you. Bruce Chinnery and Cath Hogan were the two wardens who were in office when I was appointed, and Bruce's commitment to St Philip's and to the vision of a new building on this site has been of the utmost importance. Trevor Blake and Jean Hales were also key people who helped to start the trajectory of the present project as members of the Building Committee. Bruce and Jean also contributed to the flowers at today's service in memory of Enid Hutchinson, Bruce's mother, and Jeanette Hales, Jean's daughter.

Eugen Koh, Robert Dawlings, Chad Nash have all had times of chairing the Building Committee and the fruit of their efforts in this capacity can be clearly seen all around you. It has been a long and arduous task, the administration of the finances a heavy burden, and the human dynamics at times close to impossible. The skills you severally brought to the task have been the right ones at the right times: tact, firmness, diplomacy, financial acumen to name only a few. I am personally gratefully to you all, and on behalf of the parish and the wider community I want to thank you all.

Members of the building committee of the parish other than those I have mentioned, have been Debbi Barnes, Fr Ken Cahill, Trevor Hogan, Susan Lawrence, Susan North, Jane Porter and Jill Webb. To them I want to give heartfelt congratulations and thanks on behalf of us all.

Churchwardens

I want also to thank those who, during the six or so years, have held the office of Churchwarden: Bruce Chinnery and Cath Bradley, Robert and Gwendolyn Dawlings (at different times), Jonathan Gill, Chad Nash and Jill Webb. In spite of very busy lives, your skills were also the right ones at the right times, and every one of you played a crucial role in bringing us to where we are now.

All members of the parish have helped to bring this project to where it is now: through the various consultation processes we undertook, through their interest and participation in various working groups looking at various aspects of the project. This work is continuing.

Home Worship

In this wise also, I would like to use this opportunity to thank all of those in whose homes we have worshipped over the past eleven months while this new church as being built: the Ruach Community with Roy and Margaret Bradley in Heidelberg, the Dawlings family, Chad Nash and

Jane Porter and their three boys, Eugen and Julia and their two girls, Louise and Brian and their family, Richard Hollis, Debbi Barnes, Susan Lawrence and Peter Davies and their family.

Children

Similarly, I want also to pay tribute to the children of the parish who have well and truly made their new children's area their own. They too have had their say over the years. They have grown up among this project and have contributed in very important ways. Their excitement at arriving in this new place has been infectious. Our oldest parishioner is...she will not thank me for telling you her age, but our youngest, James Lawrence-Davies, is a little over a week old.

Architects and builders

To the architects, Buchan Laird and Bawden, I want to offer my thanks for their hard work, loyalty, patience and skill in dealing with the many challenges that came with this brief. You have delivered us a worship centre which has won the admiration of us all, and one which will come to be treasured in years to come. It is a fine and beautiful modern church, blending well with the old buildings in the vicinity—the vicarage and the Town Hall, and a fine connection to the past. Thankyou to David Cole and David Forbes, John Vardis, and the team at the Buchan Group on behalf of us all.

To the builders, Long Contracting, Jonathon and Mark Long, with foreman Bert Shraven, we offer our thanks for your professionalism, skill and good grace over the past eleven months. Thankyou for your friendship and co-operation, on behalf of us all at St Philip's and beyond.

Diocesan Staff

I also want to thank those at 209 Flinders Lane, the Anglican Centre, for their ongoing support. Sally Petty who, as one person manages, a huge property portfolio, has told me of many sleepless nights over this project. She has helped us in so many ways to bring this to fruition. Her belief in it right from the start has been absolute. I thank you, Sally, on behalf of all of us here for your support which I know comes from the heart. There are also the other staff members who work in various capacities in the Anglican Centre, (all of them, I think, part-time): Clarrie Young, Stuart Hollingworth, Ralph Halnon and Robert Stanley. Throughout the project there have been several changes of Registrar and I pay tribute here to Leigh Mackay, Bishop Andrew Curnow, and the present Registrar John Mackenzie.

This afternoon's service

I want to pay tribute especially to our present Churchwardens, Debbi Barnes and Louise Keogh who have brought to the immediate task of moving in and preparing for today a commitment and energy for which we are all unfeignedly thankful. I want to offer my personal thanks to you both, as well as the thanks on behalf of all of us at St Philip's and others here gathered. It is hard to imagine a more difficult and painstaking task than that which you have undertaken over the past six weeks or so—money has been tight, things have changed from week to week, there have been last minute negotiations with so many people, as well as the practicalities of moving in.

Our service today has been possible only by the contribution of so many people: I want to thank all of you who have taken part, those in the sanctuary party, those from our parish under the

leadership of Robert Dawlings who have provided the singing and the music, those who were part of the procession bringing things into church. I hope you feel as I do, that it has truly been an event in which everyone in the parish has had a part. Also special thanks to all who have done the catering and kitchen preparations this afternoon. We are still setting up our kitchen, so to be able to cater for so many at such short notice is a tribute to you all. Thankyou one and all.

I want also especially to recognise those who have come from far and wide to be part of our service today: Bishop Andrew Curnow from Bendigo with his wife Jan; Philippa Wetherall, one-time parishioner and now priest on the Eyre Peninsula in South Australia; the Walker-Hale family from New Zealand who, during a year's sojourn in Australia a few years ago, made this parish their home and who are still, in a real sense, a part of our extended family. I also want to recognise those of you who have had an association with St Philip's in the past and who are coming back for the first time in many years. I hope today has brought back many happy memories and trust that in this new building, the association can continue. It has been a delight to meet with many of you and to know that you are here today. I also want to add my special thanks to Bishop Philip Huggins for his help and support in so many ways.

Neighbouring Churches

Before I move on to conclude, I want also to recognise those from neighbouring churches who have supported us in so many ways: Ernie Smith and the congregation at St Joseph's Catholic Church; the Good Shepherd and the Loreto Sisters and the two sisters who have so faithfully ministered in the Housing Commission flats across the road. Mark Bailey, who read the first lesson this afternoon, has been a good friend to St Philip's over the years: he, Gail and the community church of St Mark over in Valiant Street Abbotsford. I want to recognise also in this context St Martin's Community Church, the God's Squad and all at Care and Communication Concern. They too are great people to have as ecumenical colleagues and partners. There is Neil Horsburgh and the community that worships up in Clifton Hill where the House of the Gentle Bunyip used to be. Many of our folk have had strong connections with that community over the years, and I want to recognise that connection too. There is also the connection with St Andrews and St Lukes in Clifton Hill/North Fitzroy and I want to recognise the past ministries of Roger Sharr and Peta Sherlock and to thank Elizabeth Dean and the community there for their support and interest.

Very importantly, I want to recognise the Yarra Parish Mission of the Uniting Church, who for the past eleven months have hosted us as a community in their lovely worship centre in Nicholson Street—St David's—on alternate Sundays. This has been invaluable to us, and I hope that in the years to come, the friendships and contacts built up through that time can be strengthened and further joint ventures considered. I thank you for allowing us to use your storage spaces, and also for the loan of the electronic keyboard which we used for some of this afternoon's service. I particularly recognise Dawn Philips and Robert Hoskin and ask that you pass on our thanks for your hospitality in Christ to the rest of your community.

The Stained Glass Windows

In conclusion, let me say something about the stained glass windows, about which many of you have remarked with interest. Most of you will have received with your invitations a colour brochure depicting the small windows in the box frames behind the altar. These beautiful windows, in a mixture of blue and gold, will depict in various ways the streets and landmarks of Collingwood. Window Nine is on display in mock-up form today. For these we are seeking funds by public subscription for an overall cost, for the box windows, of \$15,000. Another brochure available today gives details of each window, its dimensions, and how much it costs to sponsor. You may contribute the cost of a single window, the partial cost of a window, or you can make a general contribution. You may wish to do so in memory of a particular individual or individuals, and each contribution will be recognised in a permanent way here in the church. We are still working out the best way we might do this: one suggestion is by means of a plaque alongside the suite of windows, or somewhere where it can easily be seen and read. The parish website will in due course provide comprehensive information about these windows and the sponsorship details.

The large feature window will be called the Trinity Window and any surplus money from the sponsorship of the smaller windows will go towards the cost of this. This window will indeed be one of the major works of church stained glass in Melbourne. Its majesty is clearly evident even now. The circles and square of the top part of the window clearly show even now the 'Father' aspect of the Holy Trinity. Below it, the straight but angled lines are the streets of Melbourne's CBD extending into the adjacent suite of windows where the abstracted map reaches into Collingwood and Hoddle Street. The lowest section references the indigenous concept of map-making: moving through the landscape identifying waterholes, hills and rivers. These are based on early topographical maps from various State archives. Uniting it all is the Tree of Life and the Cross which will transverse all three sections of the window.

This magnificent work of art will be completed by early next year, and we will have another celebration to dedicate these windows when the time comes. We also hope to have an open day later in the year. Please let us know by signing our visitors' book if you wish to be informed about these events.

I also want to recognise those who have made donations already and who have sent letters of congratulations:

Once again, thank you all for being here this afternoon and for celebrating with us.