

13 June 2026 St Barnabas Parish Dinner talk – Steve Wakefield

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa. Kia ora everyone. Ko Steve Wakefield ahou. Greetings everyone, good evening! And a special welcome to Bishop Peter and Teresa for joining us tonight on this special occasion.

[slide 2] Thanks very much Andrew and the Wardens for your invitation to speak at this important event to mark the 150th anniversary of Anglican worship on the St Barnabas Fendalton site, and the 100th anniversary of the memorial stone church of St Barnabas. When Andrew asked me to reduce 150 years of history into a 2-hour post dinner talk, I knew I'd been given a tough job!

I've been involved with the parish since our family moved to Kahu Road in 1970, so that's over 55 years which is a very long time! You didn't realise that I was that old, did you! As I start out I'd also like to say a huge thankyou to Frieda Looser our honorary historian in the Parish, who assisted me with this talk and these photographs, and I also referred extensively to her book "Fendall's Legacy – A history of Fendalton and Northwest Christchurch" which I was pleased to find in my bookshelf at home and referred to extensively in my preparations.

[slide 3] So! Buckle up your seat belts because I am taking you in my time machine (shown here) that will now travel back in time 176 years to 1850 to join young Walpole Fendall from Yorkshire.

[slide 4] After 3 months on the high seas from England on the Sir George Seymour (one of the first four ships) Walpole Fendall arrived in Dec 1850 aged only 20 years old. He actually had to leave behind his beloved Lucy because she was only 19 and her parents wouldn't let her come until later! [slide 5] here they are here...

Walpole's father had agreed to pay 3 pounds an acre for land in Canterbury, and young Fendall was balloted #18 on the list to be allocated land by the Canterbury Association. Now some of you might ask, wasn't that run by Edward Gibbon Wakefield and wasn't he a rascal, and I'd say I'm not going there and he's no relation!

[map slide 6] The 4 avenues of Christchurch were all surveyed and the street grid pattern established, and Hagley Park set aside along with 50-acre land parcels carved up for the arriving settlers. John and William Deans had already leased land in 1843 from tangata whenua Ngai Tuahuriri, and they called their farm Riccarton. At that time only the Crown could buy land. This was bought out from under them by Kemp's purchase in 1848, and subsequently the 400 acres shown here as RS 163 was negotiated for them by John Robert Godley as compensation in 1850 by the Canterbury Association, along with further sheep station land at Homebush.

The land to the northwest was subdivided, and the road that would later become Fendall Town Road was surveyed, levelled and metalled to provide a common access in and out of the town. This road layout is largely intact 175 years later today. Rural section 18 chosen by Fendall sat between the Waimairi stream bordering Riccarton and the Wairarapa stream bordering Bryndwr, with Ilam and Burnside to the west. From 1851-1858 Anglicans in Fendall Town attended services at St Michael's – the church of Christchurch – and Walpole and Lucy Fendall were married there in 1854. [flip back – here's the happy couple!]

Fendall built a cob cottage on the site of what is now Holly Lea and sold off several blocks along what is now Snowden Road for 6 pounds/acre to generate working capital. Subdivision continued, families moved in, the population grew, but the community had no church, either walking to St Michaels, to St Pauls Papanui (1852) or St Peters Riccarton (1858). Schools and churches were needed for the growing community.

[slide 7] The local miller, Daniel Inwood who had sailed with Fendall on the Sir George Seymour purchased 5 acres from Fendall and he donated a quarter acre as the site for St Barnabas church. The community raised funds and a wooden chapel was erected in 1876. [slide 8 map] Notice the church, school and Riccarton Bush marked on this 1884 map, and Fendalltown still spelt with two "l"s and a "w". [slide 9 original wooden church]

The first wooden chapel was given the name of 'St Barnabas' by Barton Acland of Mt Peel who had the neighbouring property of Willowbrook as his town house.

Basically, the small Anglican community of Fendall Town grew sufficiently by 1876 to build their own wooden chapel to avoid hiking across tussock and streams to St Peter's at Church Corner. But from 1858 to 1883 Fendall Town was still part of the Parish of Riccarton, until in **1883 the Parish of Fendalton** was created. This separate parish was formed when the Bryndwr Farm was subdivided and resident numbers and parish income increased. It was a very large rural parish extending to Russley Road between the Waimairi and Wairarapa Streams. Note that this dinner is therefore not for the 150th celebration of the Parish, you'll have to come back for that dinner in another 7 years in 2033!

[slide 10] The first vicar was Jeremiah Chaffers-Welsh from 1884-88 and then James West Stack from 1888-98. Additional "glebe" land had been set aside for a future church (on the triangle at the corner of Clyde and Fendalton Roads). This was where in 1886 the Vicarage and in 1896 the Sunday School were built. [slide 11] This slide shows the Sunday school. Hamilton Avenue was part of the driveway to the vicarage.

[slide 12] So we have a proud history of 13 vicars over the last 142 years. Sorry I don't have time to talk about all of them, but I'm sure some of the "grey hairs" among us will recognise some of these names, especially the more recent ones.

[slide 13] Here's a picture of Mark Chamberlain (pause...oh, whoops, no its not, sorry Mark). Its actually Thomas Hamilton who served us for 21 years from 1898 to 1919.

During that period, in 1911 the Wroxton Mission Room was also built on Strowan Road – this later became **St Thomas' church** in late 1920s.

So the wooden church at St Barnabas served the congregation well for its first 50 years. But the dream was always for a larger building of permanent materials, and from around 1902 funds were slowly set aside.

[slide 14] Unfortunately at this time World War I (then called the Great War) intervenes and many men from the parish went to war, and **from 1919** the desire to remember the local men who fought provided the community support for a **Memorial Church to be built**. [slide 15] this "Roll of Honour" in the church memorialises the 125 men from Fendalton who fought in this war, and highlights the 34 souls who lost their lives. Just imagine what it would be like if 125 men in our congregation today had to go off to war in the middle east or Europe, and 34 of them didn't come back. A very difficult time for the parish and the whole country!

[slide 16] During the influenza epidemic of 1918, church services were held in the open air and an altar was set up in the porch of St Barnabas church. A bit like what we experienced with Covid 100 years later!

[slide 17] The Vestry (shown here) made the decision in 1919 to build a memorial stone church on the site behind the wooden church. The Vicarage and land at Clyde Road was sold to raise funds. [slide 18] A new house on the corner of **Fendalton Road and Tui Street** (where we now have the car park) was purchased and served from **1919-1958 as the Fendalton Vicarage**.

[slide 19] As you can see here, a big crowd gathered for the laying of the foundation stone for the new church, and progressively the stone church rose up behind the original wooden church (and here you see them both). [slide 20] **The stone memorial church was completed and opened in 1926, 100 years ago**. [slide 21] And the original wooden church (between the stone church and Fendalton Road) was dismantled and is now the lawn and daffodil garden.

The parish continued to grow and attracted many families with young children. [slide 22] To accommodate this growth, a Sunday School and Parish Hall was built in 1941. [slide 23] and this aerial slide shows the church, hall and vicarage.

In the 1950s the parish was also responsible for the financing and organising of the **daughter church of St Aidan's, Bryndwr** out of the Fendalton Parish. From 1961-1966 Revd Michael Underhill was the vicar and he focused on a youth revival.

[slide 24] In the 1960's the growth in families continued and required a new Sunday School building opened in 1966 – called the “St Barnabas Centre” today.

These events illustrate the key aspirations of different vicars, ongoing themes of growth, children, youth, and women's changing roles, as the parish responded to social change that required ongoing flexibility and willingness to change with it and adapt. Raising parish funds was always a perennial concern, as is the generosity to missions and community welfare.

[slide 25] **From 1966-1986 Canon Bob Lowe** was a well-known, larger-than-life, charismatic vicar. Every vicar has preferences, goals or a major challenge; most are on board with the parish for about a decade but Bob Lowe inspired us for 20 years. Bob was the Vicar when I started in the parish in the 1970's and assisted as a server when I was a teenager, and I remember his booming voice, friendly character and ability to captivate church-fulls of congregations with his sermons with no notes.

[slide 26] **In 1976 the 50-year jubilee of the Memorial Church** and 100 years since the building of the wooden church was celebrated with a “Centennial Lunch” at Mona Vale, and you can see here the pictures of the wooden church from 1876 and the stone church from 1926 on the pew sheet next to the invitation to the lunch.

Through the 1970's, 1980's and 1990's the services continued to evolve and adapt. Vicars and many associate priests and curates all contributed fully to life of the parish.

[slide 27] in 1987 the vicar was **Canon Craufurd Murray** and he and his wife Jennifer Murray had a significant focus on youth groups, youth choir, & Celtic music.

[slide 28] 2001 marked the arrival of Revd John Day and Stephanie and their family from the UK, and you can see him looking very young and “ringing in” his arrival here, shown on the cover of the “Mooring Post”.

[slide 29] In 2001 we also celebrated 150 years of Fendall Town/Fendalton, 125 of the wooden church and 75 years of the Memorial Church with an ecumenical service with the speaker here Revd Bob Fendall, the great-grandson of Walpole and Lucy Fendall.

[slide 30] At that time we also named the Fendall Hall and installed the Fendall Rock in the church garden, with the plaque shown here acknowledging Walpole and Lucy Fendall. 2002 marked the publication of the book I mentioned earlier *Fendall's Legacy* by Frieda Looser. There is ongoing interest in heritage and history of the parish.

[slide 31] John Day had the vision and foresight to focus on ‘modernising and growing’ the church for the 21st century. In **2004 the Lifestreams contemporary worship service was initiated, which has now run for 22 years.** Several of you here will remember that innovation beginning. We also improved the church with the reordering of the inside of the Memorial Church which required heritage consent approval. The choir stalls were removed from the chancel, bringing forward the altar and communion. There was some controversy and change is never easy, but we all enjoy the benefits today. We also replaced the rose garden with the children’s playground shown here, and I remember raising the money with doing lots of grant applications and the fun of digging up the old garden with a rented digger, but we had to stop for a while when we found some unmarked ashes! Don’t tell the Council!

[slide 32] 2010 brought the appointment of Revd Mark Chamberlain and he and Pip arriving at our Parish. Unfortunately what also arrived was the series of Canterbury Earthquakes in 2010 & 2011. But don’t blame Mark for that!

The church was badly damaged and had to be propped at both ends to protect it from the many aftershocks. The Diocese had 250 damaged churches, halls and vicarages and it was a very helter-skelter time. We had some services in a marquee but fortunately the hall was able to be used for services by all of our congregations.

[slide 33] We set up the St Barnabas Fendalton Trust and set about fundraising to restore and strengthen the Memorial Church. We initially had to raise \$1m but with cost increases that wasn’t enough so we raised \$1.6m [slide 34] shows the damage inside the church, especially the Oamaru stone around the stained-glass windows.

[slide 35] This slide shows Mark reading to the children at the Anzac service. We had the contribution of many clergy including Revd Philip Robinson shown here and of course Revd Jenny Wilkens and many others. We had many busy staff and volunteers.

[slide 36] In 2011 we also commemorated 100 years of the St Thomas church in Strowan Road, before it was demolished & the site sold because post-EQ repair was not economical. [slide 37] Which brings us to the present in 2026 with this smiling face, Revd Dr Andrew Butcher appointed Vicar after three-year induction into the parish.

[slide 38] so thanks for coming on this 150-year journey with me tonight! I’ll finish here with this beautiful photo of the memorial stone church of St Barnabas that is our taonga and our ongoing responsibility, marking 100 years since it was opened and 150 years of worship on this site.

We have always been blessed with a thriving parish of committed, hardworking and generous Christian congregations. Please continue to support the parish with your time and talents, and also in your wills with bequests, to enable us to continue for another

150 years. Our parish has always been growing, changing, adapting and innovating. That's what we need to continue doing to continue being a successful, thriving parish for the next 150 years ahead...

Thanks for listening and I'll see you back here in 7 years for the 150 years of the Parish ! Now I'll hand back to Kay and no longer hold you back from your dessert!