

**Speech by Mayor Logan K Howlett JP**  
**Commissioning Service for Father Brett Gibson**  
**Saint Michael's Anglican Church**  
**Mell Road, Spearwood**  
**Wednesday, 28 January 2026**

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I am delighted to be here this evening at Saint Michael's Anglican Church, with my wife Patricia, on the occasion of the Commissioning Service for Father Brett Gibson.

It is always pleasing to see parishioners coming together to celebrate occasions such as tonight's Commissioning Service.

I acknowledge the Nyungar People who are the custodians of the land on which we are gathered tonight; and I pay respect to their Elders both past and present and I extend that respect to First Nations people here tonight.

As we know, life presents many challenges for us all. It sends us down unexplored pathways that test our will power, our resilience, our focus on life; such are the dynamics of the complex and ever-changing world we live in.

Churches have long been the very essence of communities ensuring a safe place of worship, community gatherings, support for one another and importantly spreading God's message.

St Michael's has had an interesting and varied history.

As some of you may well know that by the end of 1915 Coogee lime burners Briggs & Rowland had offered to donate the stone from their local quarry to build a hall; a meeting place for the growing community of Spearwood.

Several local market gardeners, business owners, and lime burners stood as guarantors for the loan from the Anglican diocese trustees, and in March 1916 the foundation stone was laid.

A large group gathered to witness Archbishop Riley lay the first stone, and his comments that he felt sure that they would 'one day witness the laying of a foundation stone for a church and rectory of their own' demonstrated that this was only the first step in a larger plan for

Anglican buildings in Spearwood.

In two months the hall was completed, and became a centre for social activity in the district.

It was officially dedicated and granted a license by the Archbishop of Perth, but it was never consecrated, since the hope was that soon a full church would be built to house religious services.

This never came to pass, however, and services began to be held once a month in the hall instead - whether Spearwood families travelled to St Pauls in Beaconsfield for other services or continued worshipping at home is unknown.

Throughout the next few decades the hall remained a social meeting space, a place for Sunday Schools, dances, political rallies, birthdays, and the meetings of many local clubs and societies.

The loan from the Diocese was paid off in 1933, by which time the Spearwood Fruitgrowers and Market Gardeners Association had successfully raised the funds to build what is now known as the South Coogee Agricultural Hall which took over many of these social activities.

The 1930s and 40s saw a decline in membership in the Anglican parish at Spearwood as older members died and the area's demographic shifted.

After the Second World War many of the new migrants to the Cockburn area were Italian and Croatian, and the vast majority of them followed the Catholic faith.

In 1947 the lands that had once been intended for a church and rectory were sold off to local market gardeners, and in 1953 the Parish Hall, condemned as unfit for habitation and sold to George Brenzi, who used it for storage.

For over 30 years the hall lay vacant and in poor condition.

George Brenzi's wife, Elvi, and her daughter, had lived next door to it all that time, and had become known as the guardians of the building, despite the Brenzis having sold it on to local plumbers Messrs Murphy and Dobie some years previously.

In 1987 members of the Reformed Baptist Church of Western Australia (Spearwood) were seeking a place to hold their services, and on tracking down Murphy and Dobie they made a successful offer of purchase on the building.

A church member recalls that, upon gaining entry to the building, 'the floorboards were missing, the roofing barely there, and cobwebs decorated the walls.'

The church was granted permission to restore the building to heritage standards, and this was completed in 1990.

The Baptist Church held services there for three years, but their membership was dwindling and they eventually sold the church back to the Anglican Diocese in 1993, where they have worshipped ever since.

From a short conversation with Father Brett Gibson earlier tonight I can say that he is full of energy and excitement and brings with him a rich and diverse history of strength of community well-being, respect and understanding.

On behalf of the City of Cockburn I extend best wishes to Father Brett Gibson and his family all that they do to fulfil this new and exciting role.

Thank you.