

Mary's Chapel

An Ode to Mary

As told by her husband Brian Phelan

Mary was diagnosed with a cancerous prognosis early in 2004. She required radiation and chemotherapy treatment in Palmerston North.

Over a period of six weeks travelling back and forth through September, I remember Mary saying to me that our school could do with a place of worship; a chapel, being the fine catholic college it is. This started a train of thought and conversation between us and we kept an eye open for a church that could be for sale and uplifted.

Amazingly, one morning in March 2005 we read in our local paper a church was for sale...in Govett Avenue, so this started a round of negotiation and how to or could we buy it, and buy it with what? Mary and I chatted about this piece of news and she commented to me that her brother John was a wealthy farmer who may be able to offer assistance with this. Perhaps he may be able to assist Mary and I with the purchase? Yes was the word, a deal was done and a purchase was made about 05 May 2005.

Mary received the keys to the church in her hand four days before she died on 19 May. A tearful acceptance that someone had heard a prayer.

So now the work really started, how to get a church to Fitzroy from Frankleigh Park. Grounds had to be prepared and levelled for the church to sit on, and the church needed to be divided as it had a supper room adjoining it. The removal of the church went well, no damage was done. The task was then to prepare it and make it a church again. We were very fortunate in having a fellow, George Tamati, father of a staff member who was prepared to restore and paint it. He did a remarkable job.

The chapel was finally blessed and opened nearly 12 months later in April 2006.

Mary and I had five children and the youngest, Kelly, was married there in 2006. We have had grandchildren baptised in the chapel over the ensuing years. It is lovely to see that this year my three grandchildren, Alex Carr, Ally and Madi Fleming, are attending Sacred Heart Girls' College and I am sure they will appreciate and love the efforts that went into making our dream work.

RIP Mary Phelan 1985 - 2005