

SUMMARY OF STATE HERITAGE PLACE

REGISTER ENTRY

Entry in the South Australian Heritage Register in accordance with the *Heritage Places Act 1993*

NAME: St Alphonsus' Catholic Church

PLACE NO.: 26544

ADDRESS: Bunganditj Country

87 George Street, Millicent

CT 5767/931 A712 FP192084, Hundred of Mount Muirhead

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

St Alphonsus' Catholic Church demonstrates two important aspects of the evolution of the State's history, namely post-war regional development, which occurred as a result of the Playford government's industrialisation strategy for South Australia, and post-war migration, which supported industrialisation.

St Alphonsus' Catholic Church is one of the largest churches built in regional South Australia after the Second World War. This reflects the rapid growth and prosperity of the town of Millicent as it emerged as a regional service centre for forestry and nearby associated industries during the post-war boom. Industrialisation drew an influx of workers and their families to Millicent. Many were migrants, and those who attended Mass at St Alphonsus' Church swelled the size of the Catholic congregation, leading directly to the construction of the new church in 1965-1966.

St Alphonsus' Church is a pivotal example of a post-war church, as it was the first South Australian church to respond directly to the *Instruction on the Liturgy*, a key document arising from the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican (1962-1965) (Vatican II). Notably, the design achieved this by fanning the pews around the sanctuary by nearly 180 degrees, the first time this was done in a South Australian post-war church. Thus, it demonstrates a key stage in the development of the 'post-war church' class of place.

The church is also an outstanding, critically-recognised example of late twentieth-century ecclesiastical Modern Movement architecture in South Australia. The building is noted for its imposing appearance, structural engineering, use of materials, sense of light, integration of interior design, master planning, and the legible relationship between plan and external form.

RELEVANT CRITERIA (under section 16 of the Heritage Places Act 1993)

(a) it demonstrates important aspects of the evolution or pattern of the State's history

St Alphonsus' Catholic Church demonstrates two important aspects of the state's history, namely post-war regional development and post-war migration.

Post-war regional development was driven by the Playford government's industrialisation strategy for South Australia, and the emergence of non-metropolitan industrial towns was a key feature of the post-war boom. After the Second World War, the town of Millicent developed into a regional service centre for forestry and the associated pulpwood industries due to its proximity to the Mount Burr Forest and the nearby locality of Snuggery, where two large pulp mills were operating by July 1960. These industries drew an influx of workers and their families to Millicent, and the population of greater Millicent grew by 89% between 1947 and 1966.

Population growth in turn led to considerable commercial development and public investment in Millicent. Not only one of the largest and most conspicuous public buildings constructed in Millicent during the post-war decades, St Alphonsus' Church was also one of the largest regional churches constructed in South Australia after the Second World War and among the most architecturally adventurous. The physical fabric of the church demonstrates the rapid growth and rising prosperity that is associated with the post-war industrialisation of regional South Australian towns.

Many of those who moved to Millicent after the Second World War were migrants, including large numbers of British, Italian, Dutch and Polish workers and their families. Migrant families swelled the size of the Millicent Catholic congregation, directly resulting in the construction of the new St Alphonsus' Church. The scale of the church reflects both the large number of migrant worshippers and their collective prosperity, since the church was funded by donations from parishioners.

Post-war migration expanded many Catholic congregations in the years after the Second World War, and sometimes resulted in the construction of new churches. However, St Alphonsus' Catholic Church has particularly strong associations with post-war migration because of the dramatic demographic change that occurred in Millicent after the Second World War, which resulted in the construction of an unusually large regional Catholic church.

(d) it is an outstanding representative of a particular class of place of cultural significance

St Alphonsus' Catholic Church is associated with, and is an outstanding example of, the class of place known as post-war churches.

The construction of new churches after the Second World War is associated with post-war population growth resulting from migration and the baby boom, suburban and regional development, and the evolving role of churches in community life due to liturgical change. Churches constructed during this time played a prominent role in South Australia's physical, cultural and spiritual development.

St Alphonsus' Catholic Church is the first South Australian church to respond directly to the *Instruction on the Liturgy*, a key document arising from the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican (1962-1965) (Vatican II). It did this by fanning the pews around the sanctuary by nearly 180 degrees, in order to bring the congregation as close as possible to the altar and to help the congregation feel a part of a unified family of people. St Alphonsus' is thus a pivotal example of a post-war church as it encapsulates a key evolutionary stage in the development of the class.

St Alphonsus' demonstrates many of the principal characteristics of the class in a way that allows the class to be readily understood and appreciated, including:

- a plan that responded to liturgical change, in this case integrating sanctuary and nave into a single-volume worship space, with pews arranged in a fanned configuration, to bring as many people as close to the sanctuary as possible and foster a sense of community,
- a distinctive roof form, employed to set the church apart from secular buildings, with a clerestory roof and landmark spire,
- adoption of commonplace materials with domestic connotations employed to integrate the church into community, such as face brick, clear-finished timber, and unpainted concrete,
- adoption of newly-available materials, processes and technologies, including prefabricated reinforced concrete, welded structural steel, and a suspended ceiling system,
- expression in a late twentieth-century ecclesiastical style,
- provision of community facilities or amenities, in this instance by locating the church adjacent to the existing St Alphonsus' Hall as part of a larger master plan,
- considered engagement with site and context, in this instance by setting the church well back from the road, raising the church above street level

on a platform and defining circulation space around the church for gathering and procession,

- the presence of bespoke sacred artworks created as an integral part of the church's design, in this case stained and coloured glass Stations of the Cross by Stephen Moor, and a carved crucifix by Hans Knorr, both created concurrently with the design and construction of the church.

St Alphonsus' also retains a high degree of integrity and intactness and displays many of the principal characteristics of the class at a higher quality than many other examples.

(e) it demonstrates a high degree of creative, aesthetic or technical accomplishment or is an outstanding representative of particular construction techniques or design characteristics

St Alphonsus' Catholic Church is an outstanding example of late twentieth-century ecclesiastical Modern Movement architecture in South Australia and demonstrates a high degree of aesthetic, creative and technical accomplishment. The church was constructed during a period of radical experimentation in the plan and form of Catholic places of worship, following the opening of the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican (1962-1965) (Vatican II) but prior to the publication of the new Catholic Mass in 1970. St Alphonsus' was first South Australian Catholic church designed to respond directly to the *Instruction on the Liturgy*, a key document arising from Vatican II that had a profound impact on the design of Catholic churches globally.

C. William Peters' well-resolved design marks a clear break from traditional church architecture by enclosing functional space in a platonic volume, exploiting the available technology of the time, and selectively expressing the framed structural system of the building. St Alphonsus' Catholic Church finely articulates many key attributes of late-twentieth century ecclesiastical architecture, namely:

- a radical plan-shape responding to liturgical change, designed to facilitate active participation in worship by bringing people as close as possible to the altar, in this instance by wrapping the pews in a fanned configuration around the peninsula-like sanctuary,
- unbroken straight lines emphasising verticality, notably in the lines of reinforced concrete columns supporting the front of the church, vertically proportioned window openings on three sides, brick infill panels and deliberately positioned drainpipes extending from ground level to eaves,
- clerestory windows that flood the sanctuary with daylight,

- V-shapes reminiscent of Gothic pointed arches, in this instance expressed in plan through the shape of the rear wall and clerestory,
- an element reminiscent of a Gothic flèche or spire, pointing 'heavenward,' in this case a slender, open-frame steel spire rising above the sanctuary,
- plain wall surfaces of unpainted, unplastered face-brick,
- architectural 'distinctiveness' employed to denote the purpose of the building as a place of worship, achieved through imposing scale, a triangular plan with prominent rounded corners, expansive areas of coloured glass and a flat clerestory roof over the sanctuary, surmounted by a slender, open-frame spire bearing a cross,
- community integration achieved through the use of familiar, 'humble' materials with connotations of domesticity in this instance face-brick, unpainted concrete, and clear-finished timber,
- adoption of new structural materials facilitating dramatic shapes, in this case, a reinforced concrete frame holding aloft a steel structure that spans the vast volume of the worship space and supports a flat roof, clerestory and landmark open-frame steel spire.

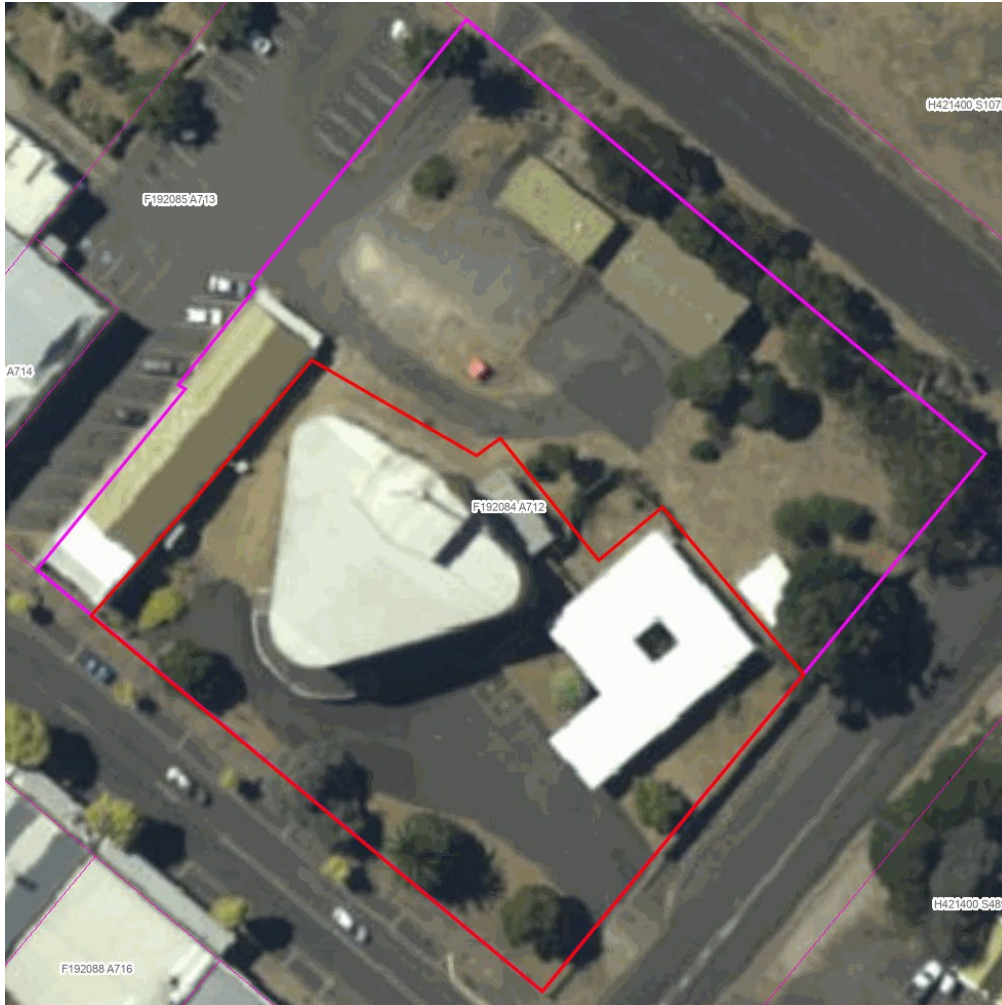
St Alphonsus' Church is one of only a few churches to be featured in the South Australian architectural journal *Building and Architecture* during South Australia's church-building boom. The church was noted for its 'imposing' appearance; orderly and 'up-to-date' plan informed by recent liturgical developments; the legible relationship between plan and external form; structural engineering; use of materials; sense of light; integration of its interior design; and the foresight of its master planning. Subsequently in 2000, the Australian Institute of Architects' South Australian Chapter recognised St Alphonsus' Catholic Church as a significant example of twentieth century South Australian architecture.

St Alphonsus Catholic Church remains highly intact and is an outstanding example of twentieth-century ecclesiastical architecture. It also demonstrates a high degree of creative, aesthetic and technical accomplishment due to its design, choice of materials, and the use of reinforced concrete to support a steel structure that encloses an expansive volume with a flat roof.

SITE PLAN

St Alphonsus' Catholic Church
87 George Street, Millicent

PLACE NO.: 26544



**St Alphonsus' Catholic Church, 87 George Street, Millicent (CT 5767/931 FP192084 A712
Hundred of Mount Muirhead)**

- Significant components of the SHP include the flat-roofed church, original exterior and interior material finishes and fittings, fixed pews in present configuration, and exterior form and material finishes of the parish office.
- The non-significant components of the site include the St Alphonsus' Hall, sheds and landscaping, and interior of the parish office.

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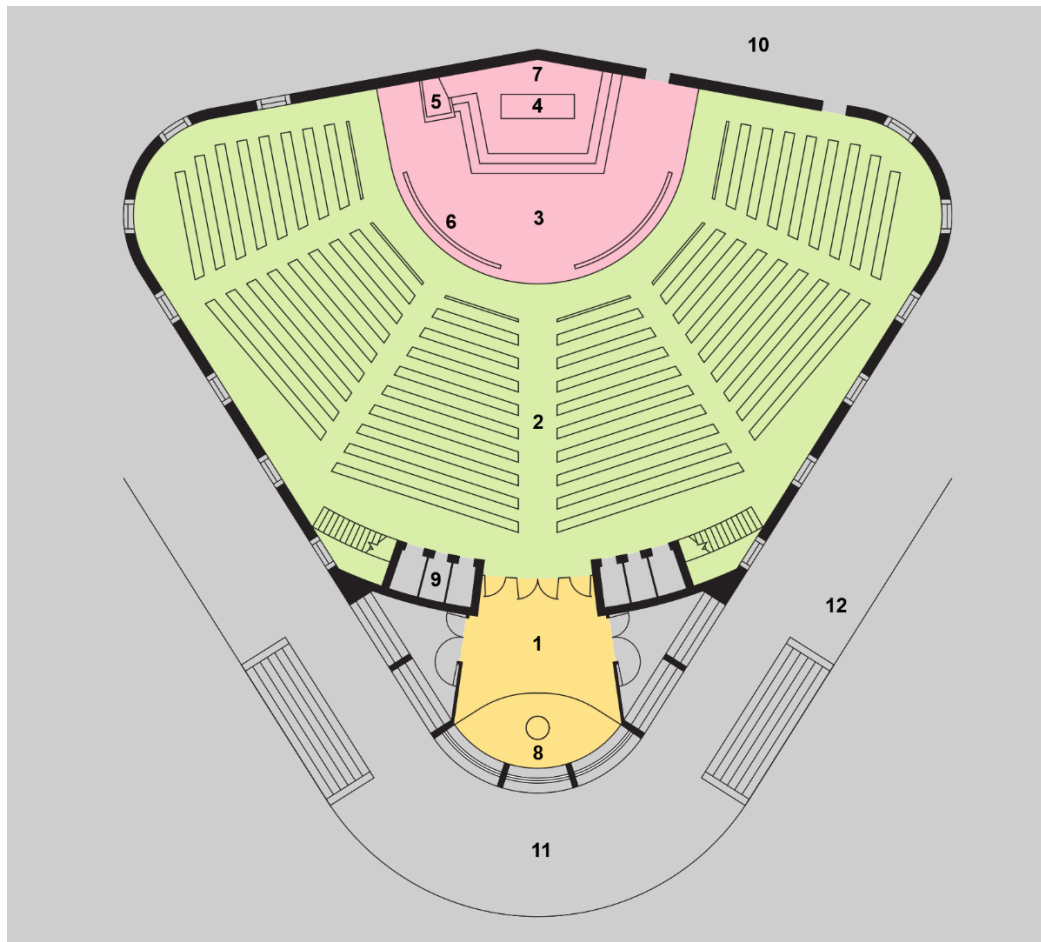
LEGEND

-  Parcel boundaries (Indicates extent of Listing)
-  Outline of Elements of Significance for State Heritage Place

COMMENTARY ON THE LISTING

Description and notes with respect to a place entered in the South Australian Heritage Register in accordance with the *Heritage Places Act 1993*

Physical Description



St Alphonsus' Church indicative floorplan, based on architect's sketch.¹

Source: Chris Burns, *Liturgy, Community, Modernity: Postwar places of worship in South Australia 1945-1990* (2020) p. 25

LEGEND

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Narthex (yellow) with gallery overhead | 7 Position of tabernacle |
| 2 Nave (green) | 8 Baptistery |
| 3 Sanctuary (red) | 9 Confessionals |
| 4 Altar | 10 Position of sacristies (not on plan) |
| 5 Position of lectern | 11 Platform |
| 6 Communion rails (removed) | 12 Position of belfry |

Site and Setting

St Alphonsus' Catholic Church is positioned on a sloping site at George Street, Millicent. Key features of the site include:

- church set back from George Street, with a sloping car park to the south,
- contemporary parish office (presbytery) building to the east,
- extensive retaining walls which create a level platform for the church and office building,
- older church hall located to the north-west,
- two sheds on the northern side,
- random-rubble retaining fence on south-western side.

Exterior

St Alphonsus' Catholic Church is a two-storey brick, steel and reinforced-concrete church with a flat steel roof, flat-roofed clerestory, and a wedge-shaped plan with prominent rounded corners. Precast reinforced concrete columns integrated into a visible in-situ reinforced concrete frame support steel roof trusses and bracing trusses. The roof structure in turn supports a 70 ft (21 metre) open-frame steel spire that passes through the roof and is surmounted by a cross.

Infill wall panels are predominantly cream face brick, however the curved front of the church facing George Street is predominantly comprised of glass with Hardie's Colorboard or similar (asbestos-bearing) spandrels. An additional fourteen tall, narrow window openings are positioned around the envelope of the church between concrete structural columns.

A single-storey sacristy and toilet block with a flat roof is attached to the northern side of the church.

The church exterior displays the following additional features:

- concrete frame rendered with thin screed coat,
- square profile gutters with no eaves,
- aluminium frames to most windows,
- stained or coloured glass to most windows, including six stained glass windows from installed in three bays enclosing the front of the church,
- porches with double entrance doors on western and southern sides, sheltered under structural concrete beams,
- granite foundation stone adjacent to porch on southern side,
- electric exhaust fans adjacent to porches on both sides (original fabric),
- single door on eastern corner with flat roofed verandah,
- flat-roofed porch on western corner (counterpart on opposite corner removed),
- steps from church to carpark level adjacent to porches on both sides,
- welded tubular steel fence guarding drop on south-western side,

- split-face concrete masonry blocks to retaining walls,
- original church foundation stone set in retaining wall on southern side,

The parish office is a single-storey flat-roofed building with wide eaves, an L-shaped plan and cream and chocolate brick walls.

Interior

The main worship space encompasses most of the interior and features a raised choir gallery supported on steel columns and beams, located to the south-west. Double-doors beneath the gallery lead to a narthex (foyer) and baptistery, with six confessional booths under the gallery – three on each side. The narthex is also located under the gallery and has a low ceiling. The lens-shaped baptistery is located one step down from the narthex with a void above, reaching the main ceiling.

The main worship space is comprised of nave, sanctuary and choir gallery in a single vast unified space. The sanctuary occupies a semi-circular peninsula. Fixed fumed (treated with ammonia gas) and clear-finished timber pews are arranged in a fanned configuration around the sanctuary. The sacristy is accessed from a door adjacent to the sanctuary.

The worship space displays the following features:

- cream face brick walls,
- suspended main ceiling with white tiles in stainless steel or aluminium frame,
- fibrous plaster clerestory ceiling to sanctuary,
- exposed steel frame supporting spire in clerestory,
- carpet in nave (not original fabric) covering blue vinyl tiles (original fabric),
- raised parquet floor to sanctuary,
- Hawkesbury River sandstone altar and tabernacle altar,
- vee-fluted oak matchboard reredos,
- hexagonal plywood veneer baldachin (canopy) over altar (some water damage),
- carved timber crucifix by artist Hans Knorr,
- suspended Australian oak and sheet metal fluorescent light enclosures,
- fourteen stained and coloured glass Stations of the Cross by Stephen Moor in window openings,
- steel stairs to gallery on either side,
- tiered gallery floor,
- vee-fluted oak matchboard and steel railing to gallery balustrade wall,
- hollow-core plywood internal doors,
- marble holy water stoups adjacent to entry doors,
- marble consecration stones positioned around worship space,
- bronze war memorial dedication plaque adjacent to sanctuary.

The narthex displays the following features:

- cream face brick walls,
- pine matchboard ceiling,
- crazy-paved slate floor,

The baptistery displays the following features:

- wrought and welded steel gates separating baptistery from narthex,
- white terrazzo floor with inlaid marble slabs,
- marble font and font cover (likely from 1935 rebuild of first church),
- suspended light fitting.

Elements of Significance:

Elements of heritage significance include (but are not necessarily limited to):

- Church building,
- Visibility of church from George and Short Streets, in particular the façade, clerestory and spire,
- Original exterior and interior material finishes, including face-brick walls; aluminium suspended ceiling frame; clear-finished reredos and joinery; terrazzo, slate and parquet floors; aluminium window frames and coloured glass; and Hawkesbury River sandstone altar and tabernacle altar,
- Original fittings including original door hardware and light fittings,
- Original fixed furniture, including pews and rails and configuration of pews and rails,
- Exterior form and original exterior material finishes of parish office.

Elements not considered to contribute to significance of place include (but are not necessarily limited to):

- Rainwater heads,
- Plywood Christmas decoration and lights on southern wall,
- Data projectors and screens,
- Suspended speakers and heating bars,
- Curtain fittings on sanctuary wall,
- Communion stations,
- Carpet to nave,
- New niche with devotional statue of St Anthony of Padua in northern corner,
- Interior or parish office,
- Landscaping.

History of the Place

Please refer to the Assessment Report for the full history.

The first Catholic Masses in the Millicent area were celebrated in private residences, first in the home of Philip Boyle at Snuggery, south of Millicent and later at Gum Park homestead, the residence of W. T. Kealy.² From 1877, the Millicent congregation

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Provisionally entered by the South Australian Heritage Council on 18 August 2022

Confirmed by the South Australian Heritage Council on 30 March 2023

worshipped in a 'miserable'³ weatherboard building, built as a butcher's shop, which stood on the approximate site of the present-day St Alphonsus' Hall.⁴

The first Church of St Alphonsus' was designed by Michael McMullen, a prolific Adelaide architect of the late nineteenth century. The church was designed in a Gothic Revival style and built by G. Giddings⁵ using local stone quarried on-site. McMullen designed a church with a nave seating 350⁶ and a temporary chancel and vestry at the north-eastern end, with plans for a future transept and chancel⁷ that would allow the church to house about 500 worshippers.⁸ The church was dedicated on 1 March 1884,⁹ with a 'good-sized bell' of 'fine tone' presented by local farmer¹⁰ James Dunn.¹¹

Previously part of the Mount Gambier Parish, Millicent was declared a parish in its own right on 20 September 1898. In 1918, the Parish purchased land behind the church on Railway Terrace¹² and built a presbytery. At the same time a skating rink west of the church on George Street was purchased, renovated and reopened as St Alphonsus' Hall.

The first St Alphonsus' Church was gutted in a fire that occurred before dawn on 7 January 1935. The church was rebuilt by contractor H. R. Barber of Woodville, supervised by architect H. H. Jory¹³ and reopened on 26 May 1935, with new stained-glass windows donated by parishioners.¹⁴ The front retaining fence was probably built around this time.

Prior to the Second World War the population of Millicent was small and the Catholic congregation predominantly comprised families of English or Irish ancestry.¹⁵ After the war, the expansion of forestry and associated industrial development in the South East drew a 'steady stream' of new Italian, Dutch, Scottish and English migrants who swelled the size of the Millicent Catholic congregation.¹⁶ It is also likely that most people of Italian and Polish descent living in Millicent in the 1960s were Catholic and attended St Alphonsus' Church on a regular basis.

Design and construction of the new church

Fr James MacSweeney was appointed Millicent Parish Priest in July 1954.¹⁷ By 1965 the first St Alphonsus' Church was 'bursting at the seams'¹⁸ each Sunday, with no standing room available¹⁹ and only able to seat about half the weekly Millicent congregation.²⁰ Meanwhile, Vatican II began in October 1962 with the *Instruction of the Liturgy* issued on 26 September 1964 and coming into effect on 7 March 1965.

Fr MacSweeney recognised that the new liturgy emerging from Vatican II made the first church 'obsolete.'²¹ Despite opposition from some parishioners, who argued the church should be completed along the lines of McMullen's original design with a transept, the Church Council led by Fr MacSweeney chose to replace the first church with a new building.

The new church was designed by C. William (Bill) Peters, with engineering by Kinnaird, Hill, DeRohan & Young.²² Given the timing of its construction, it was probably the first South Australian Catholic church to be designed in direct response to the *Instruction of the Liturgy*.²³ Peters also prepared an earlier scheme for a new St Alphonsus' Church in 1963 that did not proceed.²⁴

During the building project, MacSweeney 'sought much advice and support' from Mount Gambier Parish Priest Mgr Richard Redden.²⁵ Redden acquired considerable practical experience in church-building during his time at Mount Gambier and was 'frequently consulted by brother priests' undertaking building works.²⁶ Redden may have recommended architect C. William Peters for the Millicent project, since Peters had already designed large and architecturally progressive Catholic churches at Burnside (1962), Clearview (1963) and Dulwich (1964). Subsequently, while Parish Priest at Dulwich, Redden served on the Diocesan Sites and Architecture Committee (1967-1974)²⁷ that approved all new churches and renovation work in the Diocese of Adelaide.²⁸

The Millicent church was conceived as an 'imposing' landmark at the eastern end of George Street, elevated above street level and integrated into a 'harmonious'²⁹ master plan for the site including church, presbytery and landscaping, with the church the 'dominant feature.'³⁰ This master plan was in turn one part of an 'extensive'³¹ parish building program under MacSweeney that included renovations and extensions to St Alphonsus' Hall (adjacent to the first St Alphonsus' Church); incorporating a new porch and supper room (1956);³² new classrooms at St Anthony's School, Millicent (1957-8); St Brigid's Church, Beachport (1967);³³ and St Thomas the Apostle Church Interdenominational Church at Greenways (1968).³⁴

While some earlier South Australian Catholic churches of the 1960s were designed with seating fanned around the sanctuary, such as Peters' Church of the Good Shepherd at Clearview, St Alphonsus' possessed the most radical arrangement to date, with pews fanned nearly 180 degrees around the sanctuary. This arrangement was most likely suggested by the *Instruction on the Liturgy* and was intended to instil 'a feeling of closeness of the celebration of Mass' and to help the congregation 'realis[e] that they should be a unified group of family or people.'³⁵ Peters in turn shaped the external envelope of the church to accommodate the fanned arrangement of pews. He also placed a clerestory lantern and spire over the altar, the liturgical focus of the church, so that its position would be expressed in the external shape of the church.³⁶

Two unusual engineering challenges were associated with the design of the church, namely compensating for vibration and deflection in the spire and supporting the 'long external walls ... without the help of internal stiffening walls.' Both problems were solved by employing steel roof trusses and bracing trusses, supported by precast and in-situ concrete columns and beams which together form the structural frame of the church.³⁷ Curved brick corner walls also contribute to lateral stability.³⁸

In contrast with 'the gloom and dimness of older churches,'³⁹ Peters deliberately created a luminous interior environment, achieved through artificial lighting with custom-designed fluorescent light enclosures 'arranged to be an integral part of the interior design'⁴⁰; through material selection, including cream face brick walls, clear finished fumed timber furniture and joinery and white ceiling tiles; and through careful arrangement of fenestration, with a large expanse of glass enclosing the baptistery and gallery and clerestory windows above the sanctuary.

In the nave, Peters employed a suspended tile ceiling, a new, modern product⁴¹ that had not yet become negatively associated with commercial office fit-outs. Regularly employed in institutional and commercial buildings, suspended tile ceilings were also used in numerous private residences in South Australia during the 1960s by notable architectural firms including Cheesman Doley Brabham and Neighbour; Taylor & Navakas; and Berry, Gilbert and Polomka.⁴² As well as being substantially lighter and cheaper than a conventional fibrous plaster or timber matchboard ceiling, suspended ceilings reduced echo and enabled access to services in the roof space from any point in the ceiling.⁴³ In the specific case of St Alphonsus' Church, the white suspended ceiling also contributed to a bright interior.

Six stained-glass windows salvaged from the first St Alphonsus' church were re-used in the baptistery at the front of the new church. Reusing elements of old churches in new ones as a nod to continuity was a commonplace practice during the post-war period.⁴⁴ Given the difficulties⁴⁵ MacSweeney faced in building the new church, the old windows were likely re-used specifically as a way of placating some parishioners, especially the families who had paid for their creation.

Night-time artificial lighting was a feature of St Alphonsus' Church. The coloured glass wrapped around the front of the church was likely a deliberate choice to capitalise on night-time lighting possibilities. A spotlight also illuminated the landmark spire.⁴⁶ Artificial lighting was frequently employed in churches of the post-war period as a means of advertising the presence of the church in the local streetscape,⁴⁷ competing with similarly-illuminated commercial interests⁴⁸ and attracting the attention of passers-by.

The new church was built by Mount Gambier-based⁴⁹ Max Mann Constructions on vacant land between the church and hall, allowing worship to continue in the old church during construction of the new.⁵⁰ The foundation stone was laid on 21 March 1965 and the church was consecrated nearly a year later on 10 March 1966.

The final interior layout evolved through construction, with Peters producing a sketch plan of the sanctuary in August 1965.⁵¹ The total cost of construction was \$98,441, funded in part by a loan of £56,000 (approximately \$112,000) from the Savings Bank of South Australia to build both church and presbytery.⁵² As the church was registered as a war memorial, donations towards its construction were tax-deductible.

The first church was subsequently demolished to enable construction of a new presbytery and parish car park next to the new church, a decision that 'did not meet with universal approval.'⁵³ The new presbytery was built by local contractors Messrs Zanello and Buffon for \$41,497.11 and opened on 30 April 1967.⁵⁴

Prior to demolition, the original St Alphonsus' bell was removed by local resident Tom McCourt for 'safekeeping' and presented to the Beachport National Trust Museum.⁵⁵ The bell was returned for the Parish centenary in 1998⁵⁶ and mounted in a freestanding belfry adjacent to the entrance.

Sacred art

Bespoke sacred art was also a feature of St Alphonsus' Catholic Church. Peters included fourteen windows into the envelope of the nave to accommodate the traditional fourteen Stations of the Cross that were created in stained and coloured glass by Sydney-based Hungarian émigré artist Stephen Moor (1915-2003). At the time of their completion, the Stations were considered 'a departure from tradition.'⁵⁷ Moor created Stations of the Cross and other artworks for numerous Australian churches,⁵⁸ however the Stations at St Alphonsus' represent his only known work in South Australia.

A large carved timber crucifix suspended on the reredos was created by Dandenong Ranges-based German émigré sculptor Hans Knorr (1915-1988).⁵⁹ Knorr designed works for other South Australian churches including Mater Dei Catholic Church at Woodville Park (opened 1963).

A carved timber statue of Mary and the infant Jesus is believed to have been created by Melbourne-based Austrian émigré artist Leopoldine Mimovich (1920-2019) and was installed sometime after the opening of the new church.⁶⁰

Reception

In March 1966, South Australian Catholic newspaper *Southern Cross* hailed the new St Alphonsus' as 'one of the most striking churches in South Australia.'⁶¹ Later that year in August, St Alphonsus' Church was featured in South Australian architectural journal *Building and Architecture*, one of only seven South Australian churches to be so featured over a period of 20 years, from 1962.⁶² The article noted the church's 'imposing' appearance; orderly and 'up-to-date' plan informed by recent liturgical developments; the legible relationship between plan and external form; structural engineering; use of materials; sense of light; integration of its interior design; and the foresight of its master planning.⁶³

In 2000, the Australian Institute of Architects South Australian Chapter recognised St Alphonsus' Catholic Church as a significant example of twentieth century South Australian architecture.

St Alphonsus' Catholic Church was one of the largest regional churches constructed in South Australia after the Second World War, and among the most architecturally

adventurous.⁶⁴ Writing in recent years, the Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide clergy biographies research group described St Alphonsus' as "a rather magnificent church of which parishioners are still proud."⁶⁵

Subsequent History

Fr Jack Boog, who became parish priest in January 1976, found the acoustics of the church 'a great worry.' Assisted by assistant priest Fr Tony Densley, he 'rearranged the microphones and speakers on numerous occasions.' In 1978, the nave was carpeted which dampened echoes and 'also... made the church warmer at the same time.'⁶⁶

The original St Alphonsus' Hall adjoining the church was sold and demolished in 1986 to make way for a commercial carpark, leaving only the 1956 porch and supper room additions, now known as St Alphonsus' Hall.⁶⁷

A Canary Island date palm was planted in front of the church on 9 November 1986 marking 150 years of European settlement in South Australia. A time capsule buried next to the tree is due to be opened in 2036.⁶⁸

Chronology

Year	Event
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- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 1836 | December, first Catholics arrive in South Australia. |
| 1839 | Victorian pastoralists arrive in the South East. |
| 1864 | First drains cut in the vicinity of Mount Muirhead. |
| 1869 | Parts of South East declared Agricultural Areas under <i>Waste Lands Amendment Act 1869</i> (Strangways Act). |
| 1870 | Government town of Millicent surveyed. |
| 1874 | South Australian government establishes Forest Board with power to proclaim forest reserves. |
| 1875 | Forestry commences in South Australia with trial plantings and tree nursery at Mount Gambier. |
| 1877 | Millicent Catholic congregation, part of the Catholic Parish of Mount Gambier, begins worshipping in former butcher's shop on site of current St Alphonsus' Hall. |
| 1882 | <i>Woods and Forests Act 1882</i> , first successful forestry plantings achieved at Mount Burr Forest Reserve. |
| 1883 | April, Woods and Forests Department established. |
| 1884 | 1 March, first St Alphonsus' Church dedicated. |
| 1898 | Millicent is declared a parish in its own right. |
| 1900 | South-East Drainage Act 1900 leads to construction of new drains, including the major K-L and M drains. |

- 1907 Government forestry plantings of *pinus radiata* commenced at Mount Burr and Penola.
- 1920 Commercial plantings of *pinus radiata* commence.
- 1931 May, Mount Burr Sawmill and township established.
- 1935 7 January, first St Alphonsus' Church gutted by fire.**
26 May, first St Alphonsus' Church reopens after fire.
- 1938 Cellulose Australia Limited established and contracted by South Australian government to build a pulp mill at Snuggery south of Millicent.
- 1941 Cellulose Australia Limited Mill completed at Snuggery.
 Sawmill and associated town established at Nangwarry.
- 1943 SAHT builds its second group of country houses (23 timber single units) at Millicent.
- 1947 SAHT expands its country building program.
- 1953 January 30, end of building restrictions heralds beginning of post-war church-building boom.
- 1954 July, Fr James MacSweeney appointed Millicent Parish Priest.**
- 1956 Renovations and extensions to St Alphonsus' Hall completed.**
- 1958 New classrooms opened at St Anthony's Catholic School, Millicent.
- 1959 South Australian church building boom peaks.
 Millicent Glen-Vu Drive-In opens.
- 1960 July, Apcel Limited opens pulp mill at Snuggery.
 July, Expenditure on construction in the urban centre of Millicent peaks at £400,000 pounds.
- 1962 APM acquires Cellulose Australia's interest in Apcel Mill.
 October, Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican (Vatican II) commences in Rome.
- 1963 APM becomes equal partners with United States-based Kimberly Clark Corporation in Kimberly-Clarke (Aust.) Limited.
 C. William Peters prepares scheme for St Alphonsus' Church which does not proceed.
 4 December, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* promulgated.
- 1964 23 August, Catholic Church of the Good Shepherd, designed by C. William Peters opened at Clearview, with a fanned seating plan, foreshadowing the plan of St Alphonsus' Church.
 26 September, *Instruction on the Liturgy* issued.

- 1965 **First St Alphonsus' Church is 'bursting at the seams.'**
 7 March, *Instruction on the Liturgy* comes into effect.
21 March, foundation stone of new St Alphonsus' Church laid.
 Mount Burr Forest comprises one-quarter of the acreage of all State Forests in the South East of South Australia.
- 1966 **10 March, new St Alphonsus' Church consecrated.**
30 October, new presbytery foundation stone laid.
August, St Alphonsus' Church appears in *Building and Architecture*.
 Millicent becomes the second-largest town in the South East after Mount Gambier.
- 1967 **30 April, New St Alphonsus' presbytery opened.**
 St Brigid's Church opens at Beachport.
- 1969 New rite of Catholic baptism issued.
 Millicent swimming lake opens.
- 1970 Millicent Civic and Arts Centre opened.
 Italian mass migration to South Australia ends.
 South Australian State Planning Authority forecasts a population of 10,000 for the urban centre of Millicent by 1991.
 New Catholic Mass is promulgated by Pope Paul VI.
- 1974 South East region of South Australia supports a population of 6000 persons who derive their livelihoods from the forestry industry, including 450 at the Cellulose Mill and 600 at the Apcel Mill.
- 1978 **St Alphonsus' nave is carpeted.**
- 1979 SAHT has built 638 houses at Millicent over nearly 40 years.
- 1986 **9 November, Canary Island date palm planted and time capsule buried in front of St Alphonsus' Church.**
Original St Alphonsus' Hall demolished.
- 1998 **St Alphonsus' Parish centenary original bell installed in freestanding belfry**
- 2036 **St Alphonsus' time capsule due to be opened.**

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SITE DETAILS

St Alphonsus' Catholic Church
87 George Street, Millicent

PLACE NO.: 26544

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:	Two-storey reinforced concrete, steel and brick church
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION:	1965-1966
REGISTER STATUS:	Identified 4 November 2021 [Date of Provisional Entry]
LOCAL HERITAGE STATUS:	Nil
CURRENT USE:	Catholic Church 1966–present
ARCHITECT:	C. William Peters 1965–1966
BUILDER:	Max Mann Constructions 1965–1966
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:	Wattle Range Council
LOCATION:	Street No.: 87 Street Name: George Street Town/Suburb: Millicent Post Code: 5280
LAND DESCRIPTION:	Title Reference: CT 5767/931 Lot No.: A712 Plan No.: FP192084 Hundred: Mount Muirhead

PHOTOS

St Alphonsus' Catholic Church

PLACE NO.: 26544

87 George Street, Millicent

All images in this section are from DEW Files and were taken on 20 April 2022, unless otherwise indicated.



Overall view of St Alphonsus' Church

PHOTOS

St Alphonsus' Catholic Church
87 George Street, Millicent

PLACE NO.: 26544



Overall view church and presbytery



Rear view, showing sacristy block, clerestory section and spire

PHOTOS

St Alphonsus' Catholic Church
87 George Street, Millicent

PLACE NO.: 26544



Overall view of nave towards sanctuary from gallery



Overall view of nave, towards narthex, choir gallery and confessionals

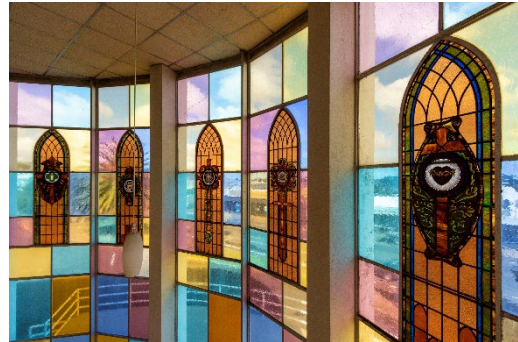
PHOTOS

St Alphonsus' Catholic Church
87 George Street, Millicent

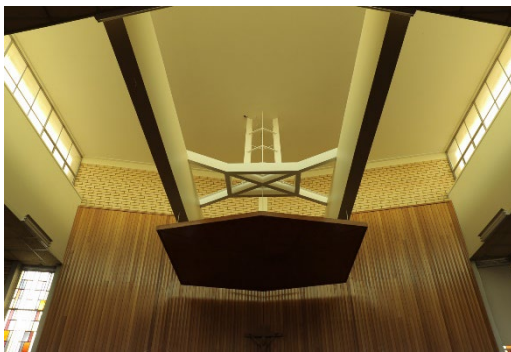
PLACE NO.: 26544



War memorial consecration plaque



Stained glass windows from first church incorporated into baptistery fenestration



Steel structure supporting spire with baldachin below



Underside of baldachin showing water damage



Overall view of sanctuary



Flourescent light enclosure and suspended ceiling

PHOTOS

St Alphonsus' Catholic Church
87 George Street, Millicent

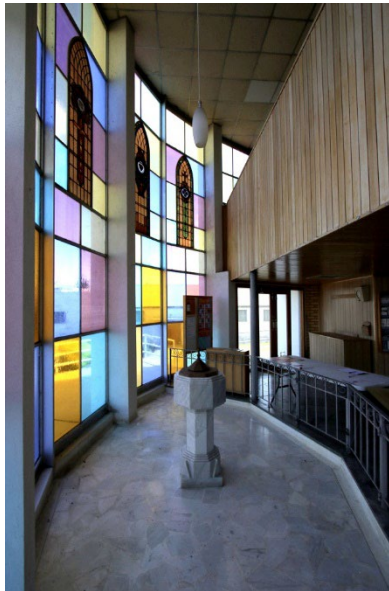
PLACE NO.: 26544



Crucifix by Hans Knorr



Station of the Cross in stained and coloured glass by Stephen Moor (detail)



Baptistery with font



Belfry with bell from first church

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- ¹ "New Church of St Alphonsus, at Millicent South Australia" in *Building and Architecture* v. 5 no. 5 August 1966 p. 22
- ² Glenise Cull (ed), *Towards Christ Together* p. 6
- ³ "Dedication of St. Alphonsus' Roman Catholic Church, Millicent" in *Border Watch* 5 March 1884 p. 2 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article77508706> accessed 19 May 2022
- ⁴ Glenise Cull (ed), *Towards Christ Together* p. 7
- ⁵ Glenise Cull (ed), *Towards Christ Together* p. 14
- ⁶ "Church of St. Alphonsus, Millicent" in *Advertiser* 3 March 1884 p. 5 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article35955192> accessed 1 June 2022
- ⁷ "The New Roman Catholic Church at Millicent. Laying the Foundation Stone." in *Border Watch* 2 May 1883 p. 2 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article78994645> accessed 19 May 2022
- ⁸ A discrepancy exists in figures cited for the capacity of the original church in contemporary newspaper articles. The *Advertiser* (3 March 1884 p. 5) reported a capacity of 350 while the *Border Watch* (5 March 1884 p. 2) reported a capacity of 500. It is presumed that the larger figure corresponds to the projected capacity of the church when planned additions were complete.
- ⁹ "Dedication of St. Alphonsus' Roman Catholic Church, Millicent" in *Border Watch* 5 March 1884 p. 2 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article77508706> accessed 19 May 2022
- ¹⁰ "Obituary. Mr James Dunn." in *South Eastern Times* 5 October 1926 p. 3 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article200998322> accessed 12 July 2022
- ¹¹ "Dedication of St. Alphonsus' Roman Catholic Church, Millicent" in *Border Watch* 5 March 1884 p. 2 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article77508706> accessed 19 May 2022
- ¹² Most likely located on the opposite side of Railway Terrace.
- ¹³ "St Alphonsus' Church Re-opened. Magnificent Edifice. Sunday's Impressive Services." in *Border Watch* 28 May 1935 p. 4 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article77969683> accessed 19 May 2022
- ¹⁴ Glenise Cull (ed), *Towards Christ Together* pp. 12, 16
- ¹⁵ Glenise Cull (ed), *Towards Christ Together* p. 13
- ¹⁶ Glenise Cull (ed), *Towards Christ Together* p. 13
- ¹⁷ Glenise Cull (ed), *Towards Christ Together* p. 14
- ¹⁸ Joy Melano, *Walking Tall* p. 233
- ¹⁹ Joy Melano, *Walking Tall* p. 233
- ²⁰ "New Church of St Alphonsus" p. 21
- ²¹ "New Church of St Alphonsus" p. 21
- ²² "New Church of St Alphonsus" p. 21
- ²³ Chris Burns, "Postwar Places of Worship in South Australia 1945 – 1990" Appendix 1
- ²⁴ Aldo di Santo research files, University of South Australia Architecture Museum
- ²⁵ "Fr James MacSweeney" <https://adelaide.catholic.org.au/view-biography?guid=10816> accessed 12 July 2022
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- ²⁷ "Mgr Richard Michael Isidore Redden"
- ²⁸ Aldo di Santo, "The Changing Face of Worship" p. 53
- ²⁹ "New Church of St Alphonsus" p. 23
- ³⁰ "New Church of St Alphonsus" p. 23
- ³¹ Glenise Cull (ed), *Towards Christ Together* p. 17
- ³² Glenise Cull (ed), *Towards Christ Together* p. 16
- ³³ Glenise Cull (ed), *Towards Christ Together* p. 16
- ³⁴ Glenise Cull (ed), *Towards Christ Together* p. 16
- ³⁵ "New Church of St Alphonsus" p. 22
- ³⁶ "New Church of St Alphonsus" p. 22
- ³⁷ "New Church of St Alphonsus" p. 22
- ³⁸ Michael Queale pers. comm. 23 June 2022
- ³⁹ "New Church of St Alphonsus" p. 23

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- 40 "New Church of St Alphonsus" p. 23
- 41 The modern suspended tile ceiling was introduced from the late 1950s.
- 42 See for example:
<https://collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/resource/BRG+346/28/KEALANDJURY/1/4>;
<https://collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/resource/BRG+346/28/NAVAKASANDTAYLOR/15/2>;
<https://collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/resource/BRG+346/28/BERRYGILBERTANDPOLOMKA/44/4>;
<https://collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/resource/BRG+346/28/CHEESMANANDCO/20/2>
- 43 Kevin O'Sullivan pers. comm. 6 June 2022
- 44 Examples include Holy Cross Catholic Church at Goodwood (SHP 26498), where tabernacle, rose window, wall and altar stone were reused; and Strait Gate Lutheran Church at Light Pass and St Petri Lutheran Church at Nuriootpa, where towers were retained.
- 45 "Fr James MacSweeney"
- 46 Visible in B 64310/65, State Library of South Australia collection
<https://collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/resource/B+64310/65>
- 47 Chris Burns, "Postwar Places of Worship in South Australia 1945 – 1990" p. 88
- 48 Chris Burns, "Postwar Places of Worship in South Australia 1945 – 1990" p. 49; Milo Dunphy, "Aspects of Church Design" in *Architecture in Australia* May-June 1958 vol. 47 no. 2
- 49 *Sands & McDougall's South Australian Directory* 1966 p. MB 63
- 50 "New Church of St Alphonsus" pp. 21-22
- 51 Aldo di Santo research files, University of South Australia Architecture Museum
- 52 Glenise Cull (ed), *Towards Christ Together* p. 16
- 53 "Fr James MacSweeney" <https://adelaide.catholic.org.au/view-biography?guid=10816>
- 54 Glenise Cull (ed), *Towards Christ Together* p. 16
- 55 Glenise Cull (ed), *Towards Christ Together* p. 21
- 56 Glenise Cull (ed), *Towards Christ Together* p. 21
- 57 "New Church of St Alphonsus" p. 23
- 58 Stephen Moor interviewed by Barbara Blackman [sound recording]
<https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-196666200/listen> accessed 1 June 2022
- 59 Glenise Cull (ed), *Towards Christ Together* p. 16
- 60 This statue is not present in photographs taken at the time of opening.
- 61 "Millicent has a New Church" in *Southern Cross* 18 March 1966 p. 2
- 62 *Building and Architecture Index*, University of South Australia Architecture Museum
- 63 "New Church of St Alphonsus" pp. 22-23
- 64 Chris Burns, "Postwar Places of Worship in South Australia 1945 – 1990" Appendix 2
- 65 "Fr James MacSweeney" <https://adelaide.catholic.org.au/view-biography?guid=10816>
- 66 Glenise Cull (ed), *Towards Christ Together* p. 17
- 67 Glenise Cull (ed), *Towards Christ Together* p. 17
- 68 Glenise Cull (ed), *Towards Christ Together* p. 19