

Inner West Courier

St Barnabas' to rise from ashes

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THE Bishop of South Sydney took a deep breath and wielded the sledgehammer with his finest golf swing, sending bricks clattering.

The Rev Robert Forsyth made the first dent in the demolition of St Barnabas' Anglican Church, Broadway, on Friday in preparation for its rebuilding in April.

"I always wanted to make an impact on the church," he joked.

Mr Forsyth spent 17 years as rector at the church, affectionately known as Barney's, and was hit hard when it burned down in May 2006.

But he said: "The building is like the scaffolding over the real building (the congregation)."

He loved the new building's design, which will seat up to 600 in its auditorium and have meeting rooms, a hall and basement parking. "It's fundamentally a very simple design. It was all about understanding how to use the site well," he said.

"They wanted something that would always say: 'this is a place for a special purpose'.

"More people care about this church than actually go to it."

The \$15 million church will have a commemorative wall with remnants from the old building, including the church's bell cover, plaques and stone memorials.

Construction will take between 12 and 18 months and the church still needs to raise \$3.5 million to cover re-construction costs.

Mike Paget, executive pastor at Barney's, said: "It looks like nothing has been happening for a long time, even though frenetic work has been happening behind the scenes."

He was looking forward to a permanent home for the church, which has been meeting in Moore College in Newtown since the fire.

"It's a really good space that's a platform for our contribution to the community," he said. "We had a massive baby boom in the church and we've seen that in the Inner West. The new building will offer resources for families that we have never seen before."

Mario Falchoni, from the church, said police ruled out arson and said that faulty wiring was the most likely cause of the 2006 fire.

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