

To Know God and to Make Him Known 1980–1993

Reg Piper was thirty-eight when appointed to Trinity, where he was inducted on 16 January 1980. He grew up in the Wollongong district, took a BSc degree at the Australian National University and then studied at Moore College. Ordained in 1967, he served a formative curacy under Alan Begbie at Willoughby in suburban Sydney, another at Lalor Park, then was curate-in-charge at Hurstville Grove before becoming rector of Kiama for four years. Again, like his friend Paul Barnett, he and his wife Dorothy brought young children to the rectory at Prospect.

Truth and love

Piper's concerns and those of many of the congregation matched closely. He brought with him a strong sense of the evangelical tradition, to which he was committed to expressing through a sustained preaching ministry. Although he had a BD from the Melbourne College of Divinity and a ThSchol from the Australian College of Theology, Piper did not claim to be a scholar. He sought to achieve close and friendly rapport with his congregation, building on the foundations of mutual responsibility which Barnett had laid.

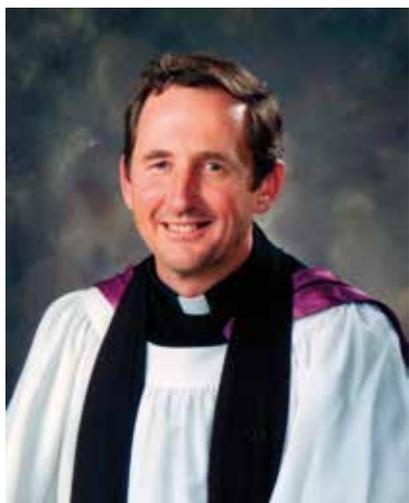
At his first annual vestry (March 1980) he issued a clear manifesto:

It is my desire that truth should reign in our congregation. It is my firm conviction that the Bible is God's Word. We will aim to have all our preaching, our exhortations, our encouragements, our prayers, our discussions, our singing come under the authority of the Scripture. I care little for style or aesthetics or spontaneity or anything else if it is not found right by this measure. We do not seek success before men but favour before God ... Secondly ... love should reign in our congregation ... I care little for winning battles or scoring points if such are not gained by love ... Thirdly, it is my desire that we should grow together like Christ. I do not want truth to be harsh or to have truth for truth's sake. I do not want our love to be sentimental or to show love for love's sake. I want us to be truly human

as was Christ human ... a divine community wherein the Spirit of the living God dwells.

It was to be a program which informed his ministry over the next decade, and one which satisfied the majority of his congregation.

Thus, even more than Barnett, Piper launched himself into expository preaching with sets of sermons that typically ran for five or six weeks presenting gospel, epistle or Old Testament passages in a clear style that his congregation found convincing. For example, in his first two years, Piper (aided sometimes by his curates) preached several blocks on the whole of Romans, more than thirty sermons in all. In 1983 there were six on Ephesians and another six on Galatians: these latter were widely regarded as an outstanding series combining perception, clarity and impact of a high order. His sermons were commentaries on the texts based on close preparation, combined with positive, straightforward exhortations to believe and respond to the Word of God so clearly presented. The Bible was to speak in its own terms: Piper resisted the temptation to preach to specific issues with the danger of incoherence, or even worse, of determining what the Bible would be allowed to say. Sometimes he was criticised



Reg Piper, rector 1980-1993.

for a want of direct doctrinal instruction relating to the ethical issues that confronted his middle-class congregation in family and work situations. His response was to continue systematic exposition of the Bible in the expectation that such instruction would eventually furnish the needs of his congregation.

Linked with the preaching program was an extension of the activities of the home fellowships. Each year three series of Bible studies were produced for use by these groups, each lasting five or six sessions. Sometimes the topics were thematic, as in 1981 'Seek First the Kingdom' or 'The Communion of Faith'. Sometimes they were based on one principal text, as in October 1986, 'And the Word of God Increased', a study of evangelism based on Acts 6–8. These studies were supported by sermons at all services during the period, addressing the same topics: the idea was to combine and reinforce the two sorts of teaching. It proved to be an effective method which became central to the teaching ministry offered by Trinity.¹

An issue that had arisen during the later years of Barnett's ministry required a prompt and determined response from Piper.² It was the expanding influence of Christians who had been influenced by the charismatic movement. A new surge of Neo-Pentecostal movements came to Australia in the 1960s. Not only within Pentecostal churches such as the Assemblies of God, but now also within the older-established congregations, there were those who claimed to have experienced a special baptism in the Holy Spirit. It was the accompanying gifts that often caused

friction and division – speaking in tongues, prophecy, healing. A few went so far as to assert that only those who had received this experience could be Christians and hope for salvation. Others merely sought recognition for their special endowments and some, accommodation in services. Let worship be less formal, let there be more extempore prayer, more active participation by the congregation, let hymns be replaced by the choruses and songs favoured by charismatic Christians.



Thursday fellowship, 1987 (now Thursday Meet).

The evangelical tradition of Trinity which Piper sought to maintain insisted on the universal reception of the Holy Spirit by all Christian believers, all who put their faith in Christ and Him crucified. Piper resisted some intense pressure to give special recognition to charismatic styles of worship. Like his congregation, he was slow to change established practices. True, the freer pattern of the evening service, using *Songs of Praise* and its companion, *Songs of the Kingdom*, already gave considerable room for free worship and the ready inclusion of those who claimed special leading by the Spirit. But a concerted effort to press the congregation beyond that failed. Most members of the congregation simply shrugged their shoulders. One or two families chose to leave because their charismatic convictions were not supported adequately by the rest of the congregation and the pastor. Others remained, encouraged to work for renewal rather than special experiences from the Holy Spirit.

Nevertheless, Piper and many of the leaders of the congregation continued to emphasise the need for better personal relationships. ‘When we gather’, Piper remarked to the 1981 annual vestry, ‘we should be aware of each other, we should acknowledge God’s holiness and grace, we should have a high standard of preaching’. It meant more name-tag wearing, and continued support for home Bible studies. Training sessions were developed for home Bible study leaders as a way of easing people into leadership of such gatherings. One of the clergy was given oversight of home

groups as his principal pastoral responsibility. Some groups extended their ministry to special prayer and financial support for missionaries sent out from Trinity. Others offered support to young Christians training for future service. All were encouraged to develop and extend pastoral concern for their members, and to share the gathering with interested outsiders who might be brought to accept Christ through this route.

While expansion through the home groups was a conscious goal, it was not the only one aimed at gaining new members. When Ron Bundy was appointed as a curate in 1981, Piper specifically commissioned him to carry on and expand the 'Evangelism Explosion' program. This involved organised courses, visiting instructors, prayer partners, and activities all designed to contact people so that the Christian gospel could be shared with them. While Bundy was at Trinity, several 'EE' courses were conducted, which some eighty people completed. Certainly there was a heightened interest in evangelism, whether through chance encounters in the city or through formal enquiries followed up in suburban homes. Yet many of the EE graduates did nothing more than complete the course. It was an experience in itself, and a demanding one at that. Was it too 'canned', too American? Or was it that Trinity did not contain all that many people with the social skills and will to engage in evangelism with relative strangers? By 1986, despite his satisfaction with the program, Piper had decided not to continue it. There were new faces in the congregation as a result of the



Club 5-7, 1980: lining up by colours ready for an outing. Tim and Karen Hawkins and Margaret Kidney in rear. *Photo Janet Dickey.*

visits and the conversations, but the effort was not yielding continuing results.

Meanwhile, the congregation continued to expand. The membership figures reported to the diocese (as expressed in the number of regular communicants) dropped to 550 in 1978, but jumped to 800 the next year, possibly a more accurate figure based on the more conscientious efforts of a new staff member who compiled the annual statistical report. During the next five years that figure rose by a further twenty per cent to 1000. As always these figures captured a sense of the regular membership of the church, not tallies on any particular Sunday, which were, of course, lower. These probably more accurate, measures of participation, based on attendance at services had been possible since the 1960s, when Shilton instituted regular counts of attendance at every service. Piper himself developed some techniques to sample that data by averaging the figures for four Sundays (one for each quarter) and allowing for the Sunday school. Again, the slip and recovery of the late 1970s was apparent. The average total attendance, including Sunday school children and those who came twice, fell from 786 in 1975 to 667 in 1978, and 689 in 1979. From that base, the averages climbed again: from 721 in 1980 to 851 in 1985, with a small falling off in 1986–7. But whatever measure was used, the growth and strength of the Trinity congregation was plain to see.

The meaning of membership

Such solid, if not spectacular, growth certainly raised the question of the meaning of membership of this city church. Many people were coming in the front door, and no doubt many others were leaving, as they moved interstate again, or as they found a congenial suburban church closer at hand, as well as those who dropped out through dissatisfaction or loss of faith. Piper and the parish council spent several hard sessions trying to define what membership of Trinity ought to mean, and how, if at all, that could be expressed. They found the notions of minimal membership traditionally offered by the Anglican Church, communion twice or thrice annually and attendance at the annual vestry, weak, to say the least.³ Their preferred alternative measures focussed, first, on mutual responsibility, best expressed by the attendance of about three hundred people at home Bible studies. Another measure was the commitment to contribute regularly through the weekly envelopes: again more than three hundred of these were in use. These were solid-core, habitual commitments. To these expressions of membership Piper added his own emphasis on people getting to know one another when they gathered as God's church in worship on Sundays: the more fellowship, the more sharing, the more mutual commitment, the best sort of membership. But there was a potential problem. Some came to hear the preaching, while others came for mutual interaction. As the September 1982 parish council minute put it: 'we can expect that the lack of consensus [in what coming to church means] will assist the drift of people to other churches where they see clearer goals'.

One response from Piper was just that: his annual vestry reports were now supported by a charge from the pulpit specifically designed to define goals and to bind the congregation together in commitment to them. In his 1983 address he coined the phrase 'to grow in knowing God together



Sanctuary flowers: a work brilliantly executed under Pauline Crompton's leadership from the 1960s to the 1990s, and carried on by other devoted helpers subsequently. Those shown commemorated Flo Billinghurst.

Photo by Bruce Stocks,



During the 1980s Ron Bundy (centre, under blanket) convened a series of well-supported parish family camps. Here participants sing around the campfire in 1984. They have continued in various forms ever since: in 2012, three of the Sunday gatherings went away on such weekend camps.

and to grow in making God known together'. It was a conscious effort to combine learning and sharing. The shortened version of his phrase, 'to know God and to make Him known', became a catchword in the congregation. It served for some time as a useful summary of the emphasis Piper sought to develop during his ministry at Trinity.

Welcoming and assimilating new members took more than small-talk

in the church grounds on Sunday mornings. Continuing attention was also given to Sunday front-door contact, to invitations to week-night home meetings, to pastoral visits, and to formal invitations to be placed on the parish roll. Sometimes the whole process climaxed in the joyful experience of baptism for adults in the presence of the congregation, complete with a personal statement from the new members about their new-found faith. In his previous parishes Piper had been concerned about non-participating members, especially men. At Trinity, on the other hand, he was



Alongside youth and family activities, the rebadged 'Friendship Service' maintains fellowship and encouragement on Thursdays monthly, with rostered drivers bringing the frail and disabled to church, where they could join in the communion service and then enjoy a convivial meal together. *Photo ca 1990 courtesy Jill Phillips.*

quickly impressed with the solid core of committed, long-serving and well-instructed members, both women and men. For these people the problem of membership was not one of becoming or even remaining members of Trinity, for they had long since crossed that bridge. For some the problem was the reverse: how to express their Christian commitment without exhaustion or risk to the quality of their family life. For others, it was a matter of providing guidance about ways they could express their intense Christian commitment in service.

For the former group, often key parish workers, it meant for Piper some hard decision about counselling them to take a rest from some parish duty, or perhaps gentle advice that business success was already achieved and that community leadership was a proper way of expressing Christian commitment, for example in the leadership of a profession. For the latter group, it meant constant processes of encouragement and an awareness of how people might help one another in the congregation.

There was nothing unusual about this: it was all textbook leadership material. But the practical emphasis on releasing the ministries of members of the congregation continued to be a strength of Trinity's life.

An alertness to new possibilities among the congregation was apparent, together with an expanding notion of what ways people could serve. New opportunities were created. One example was the performance of instrumental music, flute, recorder, violin, piano, trombone and more, before the main morning Sunday service. The skills revealed were diverse and impressive. Another was the extension of responsibility for ministry among youth to an expanding circle of younger but highly competent people. This less authoritarian procedure took some of the burden from the staff involved in these areas and engaged the teenagers themselves more closely in being responsible for the programs. A third example was public commissioning of leaders, of home groups, parish council and so on, in the presence of the congregation.

Similarly, Piper kept in view the possibility of taking the whole congregation out of the North Terrace building and into the city. Vigorous letterboxing campaigns in the nearby residential areas of Adelaide and North Adelaide were conducted. The annual Christmas carol service was held in the Adelaide Town Hall in 1985: it was an opportunity to celebrate Christianity in a secular setting, a challenge to look outward. In 1986 the venue was a nearby cinema, in 1987 Adelaide High School, in 1988 the Town Hall again, where it has continued for the next twenty plus years and more, subsequently occupying not one but two sessions, so well attended did it become. Membership and ministry were to flow into the secular world, both individually and corporately.

More missionaries

One specific achievement in recognising ministries was a surge in the number of missionaries commissioned by the congregation. While there was a flow of men and women from the congregation departing for full-time training and service since the 1920s at least, in 1983–4 it became a flood. Dr Bryan Hardman, who had been principal of the Bible College of South Australia, after some months of deliberation, set out for Pakistan to head a theological college in Karachi. He insisted that he go with the active approval and prayer support of Trinity, his home congregation. What is more, he and his wife Gwen could go only if they were funded from Australia. The main source of the \$18 000 per annum that was needed was quickly promised from among the Trinity family and administered by the wardens. In addition, the Hardmans' three young adult children were commended to the care of the congregation. Then in quick succession Tom and Liz Moncreiff (with two small children) were accepted by the Bible and Medical Missionary Fellowship for service in Nepal, and Peter and Jill Williams by the Far East Broadcasting Company Australia for work in the Seychelles.

Again, the Trinity congregation accepted the financial responsibility for these two young couples. In amazingly quick time, six weeks for the Williams, not the six to nine months the society predicted, roughly \$35 000 per annum was promised for their support in Nepal and the Seychelles. Since then others came forward for consideration by the parish council, the wardens and the rector for missionary service. Sometimes they have sought merely authorisation and fellowship in prayer, because, as in the case of Neville and Meredith Carlier, they were to be government



Tom and Liz Moncreiff with James and Emily, who served in Nepal. Tom was subsequently killed in a car crash.



Peter and Jill Williams, who served in the Seychelles.

Bryan and Gwen Hardman, who served in Singapore, South Korea and elsewhere.

employees in Venda (one of the Bantustans created by the government of South Africa under apartheid). Another couple searched carefully with the council and eventually accepted the judgement they should not undertake missionary service. A third couple, Bob and Rosy Brady, built their own support group, 'Bridges', for their work among homeless and disturbed youth in Adelaide, but they were commissioned and sustained in fellowship from the Trinity congregation for a period of years before dropping out of recognition. Many others offered through more formal channels for training and sending overseas by CMS, or to become ordained clergy, and some will be noticed in later chapters.

To sustain such an upward surge in contributions required much ongoing encouragement. The willingness of people to offer, and of the congregation to stand with them directly, remained an important extension of the life of the congregation. It built on Trinity's long-sustained

financial support for CMS and BCA and the extensive participation of Trinity members in executive roles in these and several other evangelical organisations such as Scripture Union and the Bible College of South Australia. The congregation continued to respond to clearly defined calls.

Most of the subsequent missionary commitments for overseas service were all handled by CMS. It would seem that the Trinity leadership judged that this arrangement spread the financial burden more widely and ensured the people offering were well supported and well guided on the field. The next such missionary was Maggie Crewes. Her biography illustrated the developing way missionaries were prepared, deployed and sustained, including further training through her career. She was a nursing sister who became a Christian as an adult, joining Trinity in 1984. Having completed midwifery training, she undertook a Missions Diploma at BCSA 1989–90 and then a Diploma in Tropical Medicine at the University of Liverpool. Having completed this arduous preparation she was accepted by CMS in 1991. She set out for Butembo in Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo) to serve as a community health worker. She continued to serve there, amidst some increasingly dangerous situations as civil war engulfed eastern Zaire, then shifted to street kid rescue in urban settings (with a stint 2003–04 completing a masters degree in public and primary health care at Flinders University), becoming by 2012 regional director of the British youth-rescue organisation Retrak, based in Addis Ababa. She also came to guide the field work of this major care agency in three countries, all the time cared for by CMS SA and its supporters. She was joyously welcomed to Trinity on each of her return trips, short or long, over those twenty years.

Running costs and capital works

Expenditure demands came too in the growth of the staff and a desire to improve the capital plant on the city acre. In simple terms, the budget for parish activities in 1980–81 of \$112 000 grew to \$212 000 for 1987–88. This was an increase of close to eighty per cent and markedly ahead of inflation. The growth of the central budget attracted further grumbles about the rate and size of the synodal assessment at successive vestry meetings, on the familiar grounds that the parish contributed much for little return. It should be noted, however, that specific and grateful mention was made on these occasions of the work of the diocese's social welfare services, which the Trinity clergy found an important aid in coping with appeals for assistance made to them by day and by night at North Terrace. One response to the general financial question was the increasing acceptance of the Friends of Trinity Trust, which had been so controversial in its early years in the 1970s. Members now more readily directed their contributions to this fund to pay for 'lay' ministries without adding to the burden of the synodal assessment. Overall, Trinity members contributed well over \$350 000 to sustain Christian causes at home and overseas in 1987.

On the capital side, two more houses were bought to accommodate staff, making four scattered through the suburbs. The most recent purchase, in 1987, was planned to release further space on the church site for parish activities. The 'Old Rectory' became the Graham Delbridge Parish

House. It provided meeting rooms for the Sunday school and fellowship meetings, as well as offices for the off-site staff. This shift (including the departure of the last on-site resident clergy family) continued the trend to more meeting spaces that has long been evident.

Another plan which was given some attention was one focussed on the church building itself. The existing furniture in the transept-crossing which house the clergy and prayer desks often left little space for special events, mimes, special singing: even augmented Christmas music proved increasingly difficult. The question of where to place a grand piano which might replace the tired upright tucked in against a side wall of the transept tested the minds of all involved. Consequently, some support was given by the annual vestry and parish council to making the furniture in that area mobile for special events, and even to raising the whole area to the same level as the chancel, in order to provide a larger, more visible stage area. Tentative experiments were not, however, encouraging. The music group became used to its cramped conditions, especially since the loan of a small grand piano which did, after all, fit without embarrassment in to the chancel. The piano gave the musicians immense satisfaction as a much wanted musical instrument. In addition, a much improved sound system capable of supporting the increasingly sophisticated electronic musical instruments being used was eventually installed during the early 1990s. The installation of a thrust stage to replace the choir pews would have to wait a little longer.

A third site issue focussed on seating in the church. During 1986 the ushers on several occasions had to provide extra temporary seats at the morning service, so large was the attendance, probably in breach of the licence for the building issued by the Fire Service. Since all church growth theorists asserted that an uncomfortable crush of seating imposed a limit on numbers attending, with a preferred occupancy of no more than about eighty per cent full, attention was given to expanding the permanent capacity of the church building. It quickly became apparent that the only physical possibility, adding another aisle and gallery on the western side, would be at great expense, and might not be justified except on a few occasions. But the problem remained, especially for Reg Piper, who then began to turn his thoughts in other directions.

For him and some others, site redevelopment could possibly mean reconsidering the role of the parish hall. It was argued in vestry and parish council that when the funds were available the hall should be demolished and replaced by a structure more appropriate to the technology of the twenty-first century equipped for sound, video and media events. Others promptly pointed out that the hall was listed as part of a city heritage site, along with the rectory and church altogether as an ensemble. Overturning that listing by the City Council would involve some very serious argument indeed, and might prove to be counter-productive. The rector and the trustees meanwhile were not unaware of the desires of the neighbouring developers to negotiate benefits from Trinity by way of improved appearance and access to the land to the south of the church acre. In return there might be substantial financial compensation, which would fund the sort of improved facility which was being suggested in place of the parish hall. It too was a matter to which subsequent leaders would return.

Concurrently, the problem of where to park remained. As North Terrace

became the scene for increased activity, focussed on the casino housed in the former Adelaide railway station, and on the Adelaide Station Environs Redevelopment, which came to contain a five-star hotel, convention centre and office block, the easily secured car parking of the 1960s was gone forever. The neighbouring Hindley Street developers were generous with temporary Sunday space, for it was in their interests to be helpful. But neither major redevelopment of the site nor real growth in membership



The parish in conference, 1987. Similar large conferences, with over 300 attending, were convened over the next decade. *Photo Brett Cowell.*

made any sense without a permanent solution to this problem, now the central physical difficulty for any city church. The congregation would have to learn to pay a little more for the privilege of being members of this special city church, and indeed, as we shall see, be willing to fund the purchase of land to the south of the church for a dedicated car park.

A sesquicentennial survey

Even if it can only be a brief and constrained view, what follows is a survey of the activities of the Trinity congregation as it experienced the second of its sesquicentennial years: 1986 saw the celebration of 150 years of worship together in Adelaide with appropriate rejoicing and a certain amount of dressing up; 1988 saw 150 years in the building on North Terrace, however much it has been amended. This survey will permit us to watch the rapid sequence of changes that followed in the next twenty-five to thirty years. Another such survey will conclude this edition of the book, written more than twenty-five years after the first.

So then, to begin with Sunday worship: there were four Sunday services in 1986. At 8am and 11am *The Book of Common Prayer* was still being used. At eight it was Holy Communion every Sunday. Both congregations

were small and static in numbers. Even then it was unlikely that *The Book of Common Prayer* could be retained for much longer at 11 a.m.: the need to spread the load of attendance from 9.30 a.m. would in the next decade see that change. At 9.30, over 450 people, counting children, worshipped regularly, using *An Australian Prayer Book*. The sermon was usually thirty minutes long, the choir leading in four or five hymns from both *The Anglican Hymn Book* and *Songs of Praise/Songs of the Kingdom*, while members of the congregation were regularly involved in reading and prayer. The service was supported by a busy Sunday school of about one hundred children and twenty teachers, a youth fellowship for junior high-schoolers and a crèche caring for sometimes twenty babies. There was coffee in the grounds after the service, a library for people to borrow from, and a bookstall for browsing and buying. There was a parish notice board colloquially known as the 'Parish Pump' and a great deal of informal communication both before and after the service among the congregation as people stood about talking. It continued to be one of the points of growth at Trinity, providing a welcoming environment for newcomers, especially those with some idea of what to expect in a family-oriented Anglican environment. As at all the services, a regular roster of ushers welcomed worshippers and maintained order during the services.

At 7pm, a much more informal style was apparent, one which attracted many unattached enquirers; average attendance was climbing towards 300. Singing was led by the music group, which used a variety of instruments, usually a guitar and vocalist group with electronic enhancement. It was a popular and widely supported element of the evening service.



Sunday morning in the yard, 1987. The scene is largely unchanged twenty-five years later.

Photo Brian Dickey.

After this service there was much talk in the church, often followed by coffee and cake in the C.B. Howard Hall.

During the week, some members of the congregation gathered monthly on Thursdays for the 'Aged and Confirm Communion Service', now officially the 'Friendship Service' which, until 2012, continued to use the 1662 Book of Common Prayer service. Others came to weekly lunchtime Bible expositions in the city, for lunchtime or evening prayer, and for men and women's fellowships on the site, which also included a significant element of group prayer. These meetings attracted from fifteen to forty each. In addition there were about twenty-five home Bible study groups scattered around the suburbs, most meeting at night and some during the day, attracting perhaps 300 people, not all of whom were members of the regular congregation.

The leadership structure to sustain this effort was made up of the paid staff, headed by the rector, Reg Piper. He now saw his role as one of facilitating the ministries of the members of the congregation, not of having a separate and independent ministry of his own. To Piper it was a matter of being involved with the other members of the congregation in the same Christian process of knowing God and making Him known. His special task was to preach and to preside.

He was supported by two full-time clergymen: David Wallace concentrated on the home Bible studies, on helping students on the University of Adelaide campus, guiding the young adults group, and in visiting and encouraging people. Jason Page encouraged evangelism and shared in the visiting. Jill Phillips was now supported full time by Lyn Sarah in working among women, especially those unable to attend because of infirmity. Lyn, formerly a trained social worker employed by the prison service, in addition, employed her social work skills in the difficult counselling cases that a large congregation produced. She also led the 'Trinity School of Ministries', the re-vivified Sunday afternoon training program.

For five years till the end of 1987, when he went to Moore College for formal theological studies, Paul Hunt was responsible for most of the youth work in the parish, although the groups were encouraged to find leaders from their own number. As in all churches, the problem of retaining the loyalty of the younger members was crucial. Some drifted off, but others emerged as the leaders of the next generation. Hunt encouraged one of the young possible future leaders to aid him with the young adults fellowship: they called it 'Fungus', because, they said, it was always growing. They were a large, noisy, eager group of senior teens. 'D', that is David, Smith was their young leader, aided by his wife Annie. They met in the Smith's home until they grew too many for anywhere but the church halls. There was also a more peripatetic gathering of students, 'Cell Group'. Max Hart spent time visiting older members, people of his own generation. Jeff Parkin, as verger, was responsible for maintenance and property security, a persistent problem for a city church. He, his wife and their four children occupied the cottage.

Carolyn Leverenz and Loretta Shepherd between them provided secretarial services in the office. They were supported by a band of relief typists, computer operators (from at least the mid-1980s), and a folding team that saw to printing and folding the weekly pew. Trinity was and



Left: Lyn Sarah
Above: Jeff Parkin, verger

remained an early adopter of new office technology, even if it cost significant amounts of money. It was applied to office work, to the weekly services by PowerPoint, to the management of the membership and financial records, to the production of numerous in-house study guides and promotional material, and eventually, to a substantial intra-net of terminals serving the staff. By 2012, the whole congregation was linked by email and website to the weekly roster diary as well as having access to the church's website which offered downloads of all the previous week's sermons and much else beside. Ken Sarkies, a member of the congregation and a long-time member Computer Science staff at the University of Adelaide, gave long-term support to the development and maintenance of this large electronic system. The effort has undoubtedly yielded significant dividends to the parish.

Vestry, parish council and trustees have already been described. Their responsibilities were well understood by the parish. The basic administration of resources was handled by the wardens (four since the 1960s) and the Finance and Administration Committee. Other support functions included the library, the bookstall, the envelope system, tape recording of services for loan and purchase, Scripture Union notes, the provision of flowers and the polishing of the church brass. A small team sent much of Trinity's printed output to pastors in Africa and Asia. The Public Relations Committee looked out for opportunities for publicity for the church, and managed the larger annual events.



Caroline Leverenz, Loretta Shepherd and Lorraine Hobart, the late 1980s office team. It is possible that this photo marked the installation of a new computer.

In all of these activities Piper emphasised the need for truth and love and Christ-likeness. Of love, compassion and truth he had strong words to say in his 1987 address: 'Let's work hard at taking each other seriously ... do it with wisdom, in time ... let's be patient with each other ... let's work at sincere truthfulness. Let's make sure this church will tolerate no nonsense.' Combined with these qualities he never ceased to demand that the congregation declare God's glory. Time and business had to be managed to release people to be able and confident in sharing the gospel with others. Church structures were held lean but efficient. Individuals had to remember their responsibility to God for the way they behave in the everyday world.

Trinity's prospects in the later 1980s

For Piper the central problem for Trinity was how to permit the full capacity of members to engage with the world around them, and not just be consumed by it in their business or even their families. The future must be one in which individual members could fulfill their ministries effectively. That future must be one of growth, or else the congregation would wither away. The Christian life is never static, and Piper sought to challenge the congregation consistently with goals, often measurable. This goal-setting might have distressed some, but it was a necessary challenge to call people out of complacency and forward to new opportunities.

On the other hand, the demands of the secular world were always there to shape and twist Christians, when they should have been seeking conformity to Christ. The threats and demands on successful middle-class Anglicans, fairly conservative socially for the most part and therefore fairly uncritical of the values current around them, were a danger and a problem.

For the most part relations with the diocese were satisfactory and mutually respectful. Piper, like Shilton and Delbridge before him, had been co-opted to the Diocesan Council, recognition of his standing among his fellow clergymen. There were strong links with several other parishes such as St Matthew's, Kensington and St George's, Magill. There were less formal links with a number of clergymen. For all the annual grumbling the parish always paid its synodal assessment. There were continuing discussions with the archbishop and his staff about ways in which Trinity could exercise a significant ministry within the diocese. Archbishop Rayner's ordination of Paul Harrington at the annual diocesan ordination service in December 1987 was the most recent fruit of such discussions in these years. Harrington, converted while a university student, was a member of the Trinity congregation before proceeding to Moore College for theological training. His appointment as youthworker to succeed Paul Hunt and curate at Trinity would prove to be the beginning of his clerical career in the diocese of Adelaide. Such events were all positive and healthy signs. At other times there were moments of tension, perhaps some sharp remarks at a synod meeting or some other difficulty. From Trinity's perspective, the efforts at cooperation were never at the cost of the evangelical tradition of the parish, nor for that matter as a result of the weakening of the different traditions found elsewhere in the diocese. It was at that matter of creative cooperation based upon a mutual recognition of strengths.

Celebrating the sesquicentenary of the state and the church

As part of the State's sesquicentennial celebrations, the Trinity morning congregation dressed in period garb on 9 March 1986, and led by Reg Piper, celebrated one hundred and fifty years of worship as a congregation, looking back to those first services Howard led



Reg Piper, channelling C.B. Howard, preached using Howard's Bible.

on the *Buffalo* and to the early years in Adelaide under canvas and in the newly-built church on North Terrace. They gave thanks for the faithful labours of their predecessors, and remembered the succession of faithful clergy who had led them. There were various contributions including a brief exhortation on the church's history from the author of this study. In the March 1986 *Trinity Times*, Piper reiterated the original challenge of 1838 captured on the foundation plaque: he emphasised the need for a commitment to be building the true church of God with an unshakeable confidence in God and fierce determination to press on. He warned, however that:

Building a church has its hazards. Mockery, suspicion, tension and downright hostility all will arise. Let's however have that same tenacious attitude [as Nehemiah].

The pictures tell the story of the day.



The choir plainly entered into the spirit of the occasion.



Brian and Janet Dickey. The author of this book, channelling Colin Firth perhaps, may have had Jane Austen in mind.



Reg and Dorothy Piper look the part, although Mrs Howard tended to wear black bombazine.



John Court went for the impish style, with a touch of the Warden from Barchester Chronicles.



Eleanor Cabrera went for the big hat solution.

Reg Piper develops his thinking about the future

As the sesquicentennial party subsided, Piper's concerns about the health of the congregation and its future prospects remained acutely attuned. At the 1986 annual vestry he called for measurable evidence of growth in the congregation. He was worried, he said, that our 'earnestness' made us 'introspective' and vulnerable to the onslaughts of the charismatic movement. He later confided that he had experienced significant trouble of this sort with one lady in the congregation who claimed that she was a 'prophetess', and with a more senior male member whose strong personality, combined with charismatic views, made him difficult to work with. There had even been some tensions with a couple of the curates in the early 1980s on this same issue. The lady faded away and the man modified his behaviour: few others maintained their intensity of conviction and thankfully the challenge subsided.⁴

At that 1986 meeting he convened a series of small discussion groups to grapple with components of the search for measurable goals. Each reported back and the substance of their discussions on that busy occasion were summarised in a report.⁵ Overall, he suggested that the 1985 average attendance of about 850 ought to grow to 1075 by 1988. Each gathering group was provided with carefully tabulated figures all pointing to hoped-for increases. The exercise obviously challenged everyone to be clearer about their goals; it certainly produced vigorous conversations all around the property that night.

But overall, the congregation signalled that such an emphasis on numbers was not acceptable. As a result Piper, while still carefully reporting and assessing attendances at all services to the weekly staff meeting, no longer canvassed these figures in public. He acknowledged at the 1987 annual vestry that there had been some conflict over the issue and there were diverse views about the matter. In all truth, Trinity like other big Adelaide churches, such as the Assemblies of God church at Paradise, experienced something of a plateauing in attendances in the later 1980s. As yet the causes of this hiatus in church growth in Adelaide have not been carefully examined.

More imaginatively, and flowing from the work he was now doing towards his Fuller Theological Seminary dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Ministry,⁶ at the 1989 vestry meeting, Reg Piper enunciated a 'dream' he had for Trinity: it would, he prayed, be a supernatural, apostolic, Anglican and twenty-first century community focussed on growth. He looked for clearer leadership arrangements and more sharply focussed administrative structures. He committed to improving his preaching skills and called upon



Paul Harrington at the beginning of his career at Trinity in the early 1980s. In those days, his hair was auburn-red.

the individual Sunday gatherings to focus more on growth and less on mere maintenance. He announced that Paul Harrington would be asked to focus most of his time working on the University of Adelaide campus in cooperation with the work of AFES. Piper also announced that he had asked Roger Harris (a member of the congregation) and Ted Sandercock, who were both members of the Centre for Human Resource Studies at the Underdale College of Advanced Education, to develop an assessment of Trinity's strengths and weaknesses and to aid in developing a plan for the parish. Piper wanted everyone to share in the goal-setting that was so dominant in his own thinking.

Harris and Sandercock busily gathered information, consulted leaders and convened a parish discussion day. They developed a five year plan in fifty pages which came to the rector and the trustees in April 1990. Much would flow from this report, in effect setting the agenda beyond Piper's time at Trinity. Piper began to enunciate the first outcomes of that report, obviously much influenced by his own developing ideas, at the 1990 annual vestry meeting. He made a significant observation about the place of the worshipping Sunday gatherings that eventually would have a major impact on the total life of the congregation. He indicated that he wanted to treat each gathering, now his preferred term, to become a discrete entity with nominated staff and supporting leadership teams. The idea took some time to work out, especially to find the funds and staff to make it work. But it was to prove the way forward. He also wanted the parish council to be more of a consultative body for policy issues, while the rector and wardens addressed management issues, supported by strong working committees in fields such as finance and property. He also announced the appointment of Lorraine Hobart as his administrative assistant. Her task would be to implement the rector's plans from an organisational perspective. She would obviously have some authority over the management of the daily working of the office, and would therefore release the pastoral staff to be more effective in their core duties. She led the further application of computers to the work of the parish.

Another way Piper and his colleagues sought to promote growth was to call in trusted evangelists to conduct week-long 'missions'. John Chapman came in 1990, Philip Jensen in mid-1992, and then Stephen Abbott in 1994. All three were leading evangelical clergy from Sydney. They had proven track records in public evangelism, speaking effectively to contemporary audiences. In all truth, for all the effort invested into these successive events, little tangible benefit came of them. Evidence was accumulating that such concerted event-driven, personality-led exercises were less and less relevant to the society of Adelaide in the 1990s and beyond.

The other major concern that began to show in Piper's thinking, and one which engaged the efforts of many in the congregation, was the question of acquiring more physical space that might eventually permit the erection of a large (1200-seat) auditorium that would permit the coming together of the dispersed morning congregations and yield all manner of efficiencies, especially for the clergy. To the south of the Trinity site lay a derelict petrol station, owned by Leighton Holdings. Buying it would yield the desired space, even if the site was tightly constrained to the

west by single-lane southbound Morphett Street carriageway and to the south by the narrow Crippen Lane. By 1992 or earlier, the trustees were in close negotiations with Leightons. An initial asking price perhaps as high as \$4,000,000 met with counter-offers from the trustees based on careful consideration of the current nearby land valuations of the city council. Not for nothing was Peter Smith an experienced land-surveyor and Skip Tonkin the principal of a civil engineering firm that concentrated on environmental design issues. But as the negotiations dragged on and the hint of a reduced price from Leightons became a possibility, Reg Piper had decided to move on. The land was for him a major bit of unfinished business.

Some practical developments

While Piper grappled with these major issues of policy and leadership, members of the staff and the parish got on vigorously with their daily tasks. Paul Harrington came in 1988, as we saw above, at first to replace Paul Hunt as youth worker and leader of the 7 pm gathering,⁷ then to spend more time on the University of Adelaide campus, working alongside the AFES ministry there. It took some sorting out, but soon Harrington was granted status by the AFES as a staff worker for the North Terrace campuses. It represented a vigorous return to this dedicated focus that Robert Forsyth had pursued so successfully. This time the commitment would not falter. In 1990 Andrew Cohen was appointed to join Harrington as a trainee student worker and an assistant for the 7pm congregation (where of course many students worshipped Sunday by Sunday). This more considered arrangement recognised that university students were



Philip Jensen speaks during his 1992 parish mission to an evening dinner group.

Changing neighbours



Left: the end of the Eudunda building, long Trinity's neighbour to the east on North Terrace, to be replaced by the Embassy Apartments. Right: The picture theatre complex to the south-east of acre 9 being erected. Trinity was to use a theatre in this complex as a worship place 2001–2012.

an important source of new members for Trinity, members moreover possessing important skills and potential for leadership. Harrington himself had been the fruit of such work by Robert Forsyth, and this new dedicated focus would produce many more. It has become a permanent and powerful linkage.

Jill Phillips continued her work among women and other specific groups in the congregation. She inaugurated a 'crafties group' in 1989, aimed at generating fellowship through shared practical creative interests.⁸ This group met monthly for a number of years. More significantly, she found she had to come to terms with an initiative arising from a younger cohort of married women that, in 1989, created another weekly fellowship. Jo Cowell, wife of Brett Cowell and daughter of Peter Smith, encouraged by a number of other women, notably Dorothy Piper, Lyn Sarah and Lorraine Hobart, developed and introduced what they called 'Terrace Studies' in 1989. It was a women's only daytime fellowship to be conducted on the Trinity site: 'Sorry, guys, you are not invited', she remarked to a somewhat shocked 9.30 congregation when outlining her plans. After two decades of urgent effort in the community at large, and at Trinity too, gender-neutral language and gender-neutral practices had become normative. To propose such a gender-specific ministry was for some (myself included) a challenging new departure.

The format that was settled on included a major lecture/talk to start the morning. Some senior and highly competent women gave the talks: Glenys McBride and Lesley Woodley, both former missionaries with a BTh, and Lyn Sarah, who also held a BTh and who became the responsible staff member, were among the roster of speakers. A talk-filled morning tea was followed by small group discussion on the morning's lecture topic. Crucial to the success of Terrace Studies was the crèche for the morning, staffed by the mothers and volunteers. The original age-range of those

who came (maybe forty women, on occasion as many as ninety) was predominantly in the thirties and early forties, though gradually that spread, until Caroline Litchfield, the women's worker in 2012, could report an age-profile from 20 to 80 years among the sixty or seventy who now attended.⁹ Any initial unease that might have been felt at seeing a competitor to the existing women's Bible studies held on site quickly dissipated. Soon everyone realised that a new and successful weekday congregation had been established. Caroline Litchfield later called it 'Women's Church': certainly it was gender specific, but it was crucial in ensuring women with young children should not lose touch with appropriate Christian teaching in critical years of their lives.

During 1989 Reg Piper canvassed the idea that at 7pm the clergy would not robe, despite the existing diocesan rules on the matter, but he did not press it.¹⁰ He was more concerned at connecting with his congregation. It was a move long advocated by John Chapman, seen as the guru of effective communication with contemporary Australia. That same year the 11am gathering moved from *The Book of Common Prayer* to *An Australian Prayer Book*. The widely shared view among the mature 11am congregation was that if such a change might make it easier for others to attend that gathering, well then the change from the long-familiar to something still thought of as new was worthwhile.

Another change in worship arrangements was executed in early 1993, after some planning over the previous year or so. The choir stalls, located in the crossing between the congregation in the nave and the chancel, and reaching back in various forms to 1838, were removed. They were replaced by an extension of the floor level of the chancel, in effect a thrust stage, with one step down to the nave level. Removable brass railings were provided for communion services. A new prayer desk and movable holy table were commissioned, each in the lighter oak already used in the panelling behind the original table. The effect was to open up the whole chancel area and thus permit much freer use of the space. Communion could at last be celebrated by a clergyman facing the congregation and from a much more central position. Removing the rails and the table it gave the option for large occasional choirs to perform facing the congregation, along with the emergence of varied music groups, supported by microphones, and controlled by sound boards, to lead worship at the various gatherings. The whole was carpeted in rich blue wool. It provided an even greater opportunity for each of the gatherings to develop its own worship style, showing a willingness to use practices developed in many other churches over the previous generation.

By contrast, the congregation experienced a black month in October 1991. Airlie Kirkham was reduced to a long-term coma and quadriplegia after a car accident.¹¹ The congregation soon after learnt of the car crash in outback South Australia in which Tom Moncreiff was killed. His wife Liz had been driving, with the children aboard, on the way to another speaking engagement in support of their missionary endeavours. Then a suicide of one member of the congregation was reported, and the death of an 87-year-old regular.¹² Such tragedies reminded everyone that 'growth' and 'planning' and the like were not the only imperatives of their lives together. Pain, suffering, love and care also featured.

A year later the rector, trustees and wardens met with Ian George, the new archbishop of Adelaide, installed in 1991. The note of the meeting recorded that they found Archbishop Ian George very pragmatic, and much taken up with the application of the Christian message to social issues. While accepting that he had the right to license clergy, and that he had the final say in the appointment of most rectors (if not to Trinity itself), the group hoped he would let Trinity get on with its preferred activities.¹³ Unfortunately, it did not work out that way. While the archbishop made a low-key visit to the 8 am congregation on 31 January 1993, when he preached at 9.30am later that year (on texts advised by Reg Piper to conform to the current sermon series, which seems to have surprised the archbishop), his address was not well received. I can recall Skip Tonkin remarking to me after the service, as it were through gritted teeth: ‘that man will never preach at Trinity again’. Worse would follow later in the decade.¹⁴

Reg Piper moves on

Piper kept laying out the options year after year. In a paper of 29 May 1992¹⁵ (which was embodied in his DMin thesis submitted about the same time) he offered the congregation (through the Parish Council and the trustees) four options. One was ‘to remain as we are’, never a popular option for an activist evangelical leader. A second was to ‘multiply congregations’ on site. Piper suggested that the organisational problems would be great. A third was ‘to become a large church’. It was his ‘immediately preferred option’. He aimed to press on with the purchase of the land to the south and erect a large auditorium to house a morning gathering of



The re-ordered crossing space prepared for Communion, 2 Sep 2012, with Mark Peterson rehearsing. The pulpit was at this point out of bounds because of the danger of falling plaster from the arch above. *Photo Brian Dickey.*



Left: Reg and Dorothy Piper at their parish farewell, 18 September 1993. Above: A parishioner farewells a much loved rector, 19 September 1993. *Photos Brian Dickey*

1000 and a similar-sized group in the evening. The fourth was to ‘seed other churches’. His model was to carve 150 people off the morning 1000, perhaps using existing diocesan church buildings effectively without congregations, given the agreement of the archbishop.

To carry out this plan he suggested three stages of development into the future based on his long-term presence, eventually as ‘rector-emeritus’. It would also require continued numerical and financial growth. He issued similar exhortations at the 1993 annual vestry meeting.

In April 1993 the trustees learnt that Reg Piper had accepted the invitation of the newly-elected Archbishop Harry Goodhew of Sydney to be the regional bishop of Wollongong. In a crowded parish hall on Saturday 18 September 1993 generous expressions of gratitude were poured out upon the Pipers, and a similarly crowded congregation the next day saw their farewell service.

Reg Piper had given much thought and energy to his leadership of Trinity over these thirteen years. He saw the church grow in numbers, confidence and its sense of purpose. Communicant members had grown from around 850 in 1980 to more than 1000 by the time of his departure, while annual expenditure had multiplied roughly three times, well ahead of inflation. He chose his staff well, and mentored them carefully. Paul Harrington was later to acknowledge the significance of a shared back fence with the Pipers in Prospect in shaping his understanding of ministry.¹⁶ Piper pointed the parish in the direction of committed growth well beyond a sense of ‘maintenance-mode’ existence. His preaching had blossomed. Responding to a challenge from Skip Tonkin he abandoned notes in the pulpit in favour of a fully memorised address. It had yielded significantly increased impact.¹⁷ The options for the future would grasp the attention of his successor from day one.

- 1 Most details recorded in this chapter are reported in successive vestry reports or reports by the rector to parish council.
- 2 Piper's handling of this difficulty is drawn from the interview by Brian Dickey with him 19 Mar 2008.
- 3 For long, those attending the annual vestry were required to make such a declaration.
- 4 Interview 19 Mar 2008.
- 5 *Trinity Goals 1986. A report on the group discussion re goals and means held during the vestry meeting on 30 April, 1986.*
- 6 Reg Piper, 'The growth of Holy Trinity Church, Adelaide', DMin thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1991 (copy held at Trinity). Many of Piper's ruminations to vestry and parish council meetings later found their way verbatim into the dissertation.
- 7 Rector's report, annual vestry, 27 Apr 1988.
- 8 Interview with Jill Phillips, 11 May 2009.
- 9 In an address to the Men's Shed fellowship on 17 Mar 2012.
- 10 Parish Council, minutes, 25 Jul 1989.
- 11 Airlie Kirkham's story has been remarkable. Her devoted parents never gave up hope of some recovery, and some years later they discovered she could actually communicate with them using a keyboard. All the while paralysed, and needing constant care, she began writing poetry, then completed first her BMus at the Elder Conservatorium, and then an MA in musicology. She remains a regular worshipper with her parents.
- 12 Rector's report to Parish Council, 22 Oct 1991, SRG 94/A2/20.
- 13 Parish Council, minutes 8 Sep 1992, SRG 94/A2/20.
- 14 Archbishop Ian George, Appointment Diary, 1993: 31 Jan, 11 Jul. I am grateful for the assistance of Robin Radford, diocesan archivist, in accessing these diaries, now held in the Adelaide Diocese Archives. The archbishop subsequently presided over Paul Harrington's induction, 7 Oct 1993, and was present at special services on 2 Jul 1993 (St Peter's Prep School), and 27 Dec 1997 (with the primate, Archbishop Keith Rayner, to celebrate the sesquicentenary of the diocese).
- 15 'Rector's proposal for Trinity's future', 29 May 1992, presented to Parish Council, SRG 94/A2/20.
- 16 *Pew Bulletin* 31 Jul 2011, on the occasion of a visit to Trinity by the now-retired Pipers.
- 17 <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/obrien-louisa-11276/text20119> One minor negative outcome the author observed lay in the location of the Trinity pulpit, off to one side, which of course demanded of the preacher a slight twist of his body to catch the eye of the majority of his congregation in the nave. When I attended the CMS Convention at Katoomba the January following Reg Piper's appointment to Wollongong, I enjoyed the morning Bible expositions he gave from the centre front of the large auditorium. Unfortunately he addressed most of his remarks to his left front, just as he had necessarily to do in the Trinity pulpit.