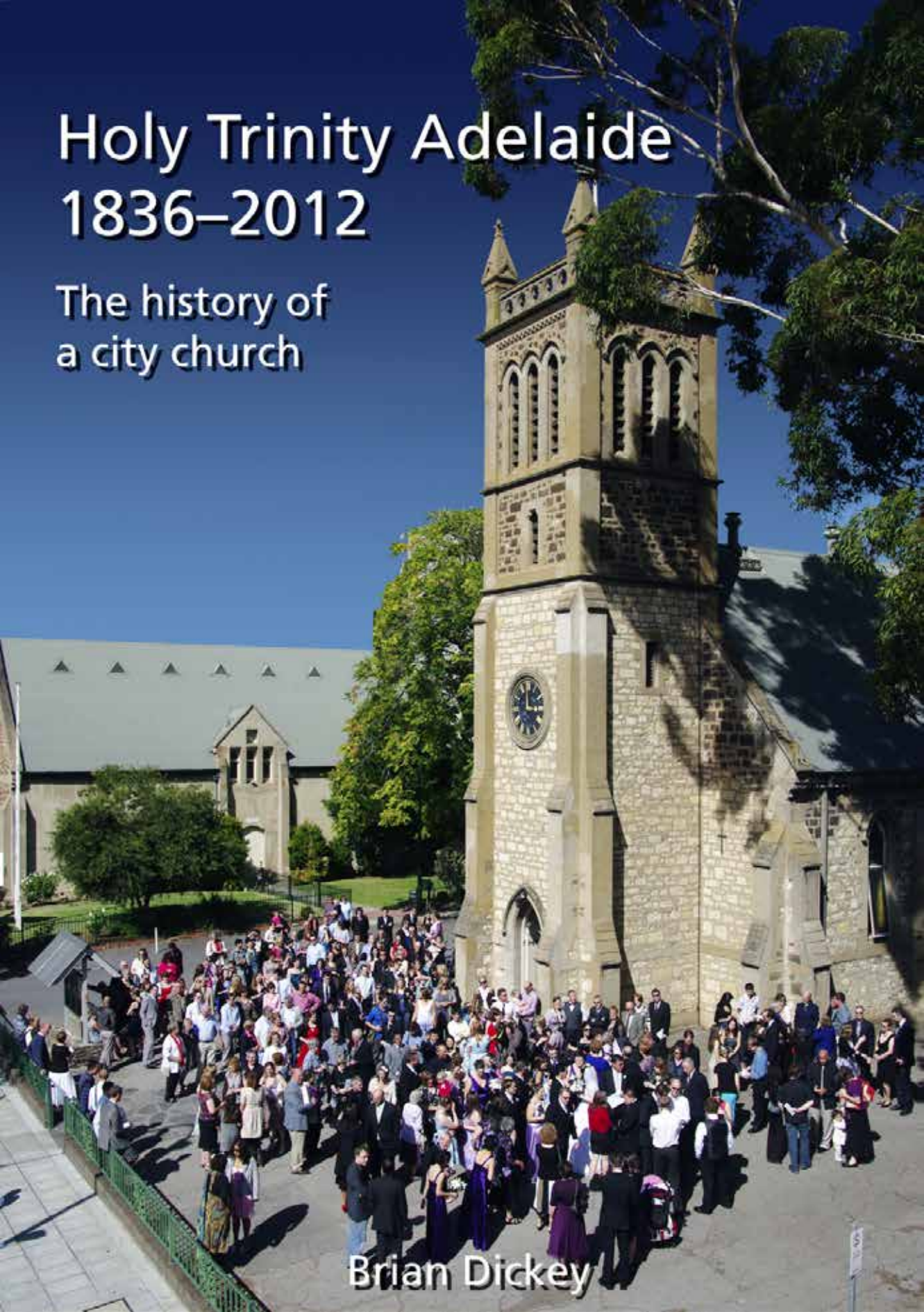


Holy Trinity Adelaide 1836–2012

The history of
a city church



Brian Dickey

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Front cover: guests and the wedding party mingle after the marriage of Matthew John Earle and Emma Margaret Sporne, 2 April 2011.

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Forewords

To the 1986 first edition

The original Trust Deed was an act of faith and foresight. It was written in England during 1836 to enable a church, based on the tenets of the Church of England, to be established in the new colony of South Australia. There was much that was unknown about this part of Australia especially in relation to its climate. The lack of amenities, the strange flora and fauna and the need to create and build all of those things that the settlers were unable to transport from England must have been both a spur and a burden. The granting of the town acre for the establishment of Trinity Church and the enabling powers of a Trust Deed to establish a building and also the appointment of Charles Beaumont Howard as first rector was indeed an act of providence.

The church was established and maintained with great difficulty in its early years. But out of that struggle it became not only a place of worship but also a replanting of a cultural facet of life from England, a facet which provided not only continuity but a sense of security in a strange and harsh land.

The present Church Trustees asked Dr Brian Dickey to write a pamphlet which would, in essence be a précis of the important historical facts of Holy Trinity Church. Instead Dr Dickey has assembled a history of the church which provides a background to its establishment and the details of its life since 1836.

The history was written whilst many of the congregation interviewed can still remember details of activities, experiences and occasions up to sixty years ago. This places much credence on the information presented and provides as well for the transmission of the atmosphere in which those things occurred. The importance of keeping adequate church records is further confirmed by Dr Dickey's research.

Dr Dickey has brought to bear on his task, not only his skills as an historian, but also his lively Christian faith and an understanding of the principles on which the original Church Trustees intended the Church to subscribe to and act on. Faithfulness to the scriptures and the Thirty Nine Articles has been a hallmark of the congregation and rectors since 1836 and should remain so.

This history reveals how Holy Trinity Church (the congregation) has become an important and integral part of the life of this city and through God's providence will continue in that role. The inscription on the foundation stone chosen by C.B. Howard 'The Lord of heaven he will prosper us, therefore we his servants will arise and build' Neh. 2:20 is as appropriate today as it was on 26 January 1838.

Reflection on the history of Holy Trinity, as Dr Dickey has presented it, teaches us that challenges must be met.

For many years our people have travelled from the suburbs and worshipped on the Trinity site, not because of its situation, but in spite

of it. They have mostly done so in pursuit of simplicity of worship and, more importantly, for sound scriptural teaching for themselves and their families.

An immediate and important challenge that faces both the church administrators and the congregation is the fact of new building development immediately adjacent to the church site and the changes that will accompany that development particularly in relation to parking and ready access of the congregation to the church grounds.

On the positive side, the possibility of many more people being in the locality both during the week and the weekends provides many more opportunities for promoting the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Our geographical location is still as important as it was in 1837, it being central and recognised as a place where the Evangelical tradition prevails.

The congregation owes a special debt to Dr Dickey for his work in researching and writing this book.

We all owe a debt of gratitude to those who came before us and acknowledge our thankfulness to God for all his provisions.

A.M. Hart, P.A. Smith, B.C. Tonkin
Trustees, 1988

Foreword to the revised 2013 edition

In *Holy Trinity Adelaide 1836–1988: the history of a city church*, Dr Brian Dickey set out to record the history of the first church established in the colony of South Australia and its first 150 years of existence in Adelaide. In this revised edition of his book, Dr Dickey has added a record of the ensuing 25 years, coinciding with the celebration of the 175th anniversary of the establishment of Holy Trinity, Adelaide.

A great deal indeed has occurred in the life of Holy Trinity in those 25 years. The North Terrace congregation has continued to grow across the age range, from infants to our most senior members. The ministry to young people, including university students, has flourished and has brought with it a particular ministry to international students. The number of our staff has increased accordingly.

Holy Trinity's strong growth has brought with it some issues, most notably the need to manage the accommodation of our congregations on Sundays and for the many mid-week meetings and the provision of facilities for our staff. Much effort had gone into considering how the North Terrace site might be developed to cater for these and future needs, but to date no perfect solution, in terms of buildings and facilities, has been found.

Perhaps the most striking feature of Holy Trinity's recent history has been the establishment of the Trinity Network of Churches. Holy Trinity's first church plant was at Aldgate in the Adelaide Hills, in 2001. Since that time, four more Trinity churches have been planted around Adelaide. The planting of new churches helps to alleviate accommodation problems at the parent church, since each time a plant occurs, on average approximately seventy to eighty congregation members will leave to form the nucleus of the new congregation. Our experience has been that those numbers are replaced and that becomes one spur to plant another church.

However, the key to Trinity's life and growth and the overwhelming

motivation for Trinity’s church planting is exactly the same desire that motivated its first rector and all rectors and their congregations since, namely that “Christ and Him crucified” be declared to people and that they find friendship and peace with God through faith in Christ. The fact that people across Adelaide and beyond continue to respond to that message, is testimony to God calling people to Himself through the faithful proclaiming of the gospel of Jesus. For that reason, the vision of Trinity’s leadership is that many, many more churches will be planted in the years to come.

Trinity’s members and those interested in the history of a church that has grown from difficult beginnings in an infant colony through both prosperous and difficult times, owe great thanks to Dr Dickey for his diligent and faithful work in recording the history of Holy Trinity, including the updating in this revised edition.

Above all, we give thanks to God for His unfailing faithfulness to all His people.

I.F. Bartlett, P.D. Crawley, B.M. Cowell
Trustees, February 2013.

Preface

This preface marks the appearance of the second, much revised edition of *Holy Trinity Adelaide*. The new datez range (1836-2012) speaks of my ambition to capture the story of this dynamic church over the last generation as well as updating, expanding and correcting the original text. It also serves as a marker to celebrate 175 years of occupancy of the current North Terrace building, from 1838 to 2013, the year in which this revision is published. I have added five new chapters, and what I hope will be a number of new documents and contributions from others. The use of electronic publication has allowed colour in the images, which I trust adds to the impact of the story. The text mainly focusses on the life of the people and the leaders of the parish of Holy Trinity Adelaide and the various gatherings which have come to comprise it, both on North Terrace and in the network of churches linked to it around Adelaide. I have also included many new images and lengthy captions designed to interpret the places and things that have become associated with and expressions of the life of this congregation, to aid the reader in visualizing the story.

I began this investigation in the early 1980s, having worshipped at Holy Trinity on North Terrace since 1967. I had only limited experience in writing 'church history', but I wanted to find out how the city church of which I was such a willing member had come into being, and how it had grown, changed even, since its beginnings in the 1830s. I personally valued the strength and resilience of the Evangelical tradition within the Anglican Church, but I wondered if this was truly characteristic of this church, and if so, why it was so. The outcome was the book published in 1988, and contained here in the first ten chapters, carefully revised.

The sources I used then were at once rich and frustrating. Key series of records remained; others had totally disappeared or have never been kept. Essentially, the vestry, that is the meeting of the whole congregation, and, less completely, the trustees, retained a sparse record of their deliberations. More personal and more informal deposits were rare till the 1960s: few records of the first seven incumbents survive. Press reports of a relatively predictable and not very important parish church were rare after the first few years. Other forms of congregational record came and went with the organisation and the efficiency of the officials involved. Once again, with the greater complexity of the church structure since the 1960s, more was to hand of such material.

There were, too, diocesan records, though rarely does a parish impact on the diocese, especially under the tolerant rule of the consensual compact binding the parts of the diocese of Adelaide together. Little that the parish does requires the bishop's cognizance or permission. Again, parishioners whose papers survived, and which bear on their life of faith rather than their life of affairs, are even rarer, and come to the author as manna from heaven. Others have agreed to talk: their reminiscences yielded remarkably valuable and consistent data about much of the twentieth century: from life in the rectory before World War I to smooching on

Pinky's Flat in the 1930s, from bringing up a family and getting to church in the 1950s, to the hopes and problems of the three most recent rectors. Finally, I had worshipped with my wife as part of this congregation since 1967.

For the 1980s project and again now in 2012, I wish to thank my fellow parishioners first and last for their encouragement in the Christian life and their tolerance of my enquiries among them. Trinity Church Trust Incorporated, in 1986-88 made up of B.C. ('Skip') Tonkin, Peter Smith and Max Hart, together with the trust's secretary in the 1980s, Alan Brunt, greatly assisted this project, especially by underwriting its original publication. They granted me unrestricted access to their records and offered helpful comments on the manuscript. Lance Shilton, Paul Barnett, and Reg Piper, former rectors and good friends, gave time and hospitality to talk and comment. Lance Shilton (now deceased) also provided some important records. Paul Harrington patiently answered my many queries with helpful replies, some of which appear in the pages below.

A number of people were interviewed for this project by Wendy Lacon or me, and I thank them all and her for their contributions, although sadly some have since died. These tapes have been deposited in the State Library's oral history collection. More recently, I have conducted further interviews, mainly with various members of staff: these are cited at the relevant points. Some academic colleagues have offered their customary incisive critiques and encouragement. It has been a great help to consult and work alongside David Hilliard, the author of *Godliness and Good Order: a history of the Anglican Church in South Australia*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 1986, which provides an excellent account of the Anglican setting within which Trinity has existed. He has generously read and commented on many of the drafts of this work, both for the first edition and for this revised version. I wish to acknowledge the wonderful cooperative fellowship we have had now over many years in the study of Christianity in South Australia. In addition, Stuart Piggin has for many years been leading a team working on a major historical study of evangelical Christianity in Australia: this book is an outwork, a case study within that larger project. His example has been an important stimulus and challenge to me. Interested readers can also consult Brian Dickey (ed), *The Australian Dictionary of Evangelical Biography*, Evangelical History Association, Sydney, 1994, (<http://webjournals.alphacrucis.edu.au/journals/adeb/>); the publications of the Centre for the Study of Christianity (CSAC), from 1991; Stuart Piggin, *Spirit, Word and World: Evangelical Christianity in Australia*, 3rd ed, Acorn, Melbourne, 2012, and Lucas: an evangelical history review, Sydney, from 1987.

My wife Janet has been a participant too, and has offered useful comments, especially about women's activities since 1967. She has provided assiduous proofreading and much needed encouragement, for which I will always be grateful. Others in the congregation and community of Adelaide have offered manuscripts, snippets of information, a judgement, or a memory, even if sometimes flawed. I am especially grateful to Len Abbott in this regard. The diaries of William Shakespeare from the 1870s and 1880s were a marvellous find from his daughter, Mrs Shirley Adam. Mrs Joyce Swan, Mr F. Schubert and Mrs Joyce Hann also assisted.

The records of Holy Trinity church have been deposited, in the State Library of South Australia, where they are available for all to consult after brilliant conservation by the State Conservation Centre. I am grateful for the unfailing good manners and helpfulness of the staff of the State Library. The library maintains a detailed holding list of this collection, by far the best guide to the resources available for this and future histories.

Various learned societies and other gatherings have listened to versions of parts of this work, and I am grateful to them all for a hearing: the Australian and New Zealand Association for Theological Studies, the Australian Association for the Study of Religions, the congregation of Holy Trinity church, the Historical Society of South Australia, and the Australian Historical Association.

Turning now to the second edition, after another thirty years, essentially the questions remain the same: a search for understanding the evolving character of this church, except that what was a city church has now become a metropolitan network of, at last count, twelve congregations, meeting on six separate sites. The dynamism of the last fifteen years in particular has been breathtaking, a matter for personal and congregational thankfulness at the continuing mercies of God. That story of God's people doing God's work in this particular space in Adelaide is what the whole book is about, and I count it the greatest privilege of my career to have written the story.

In the 1988 preface I should have acknowledged the fine work done by Don Gee as Trinity's photographer from the 1950s to the 1980s. I do that now in memory of this fine professional and dedicated member of Trinity's family. There are in the collection some of the finest congregational portraits available anywhere. They possess independent value in their own right alongside my narratives. Trinity has been fortunate to have maintained a working image collection that reaches back into the mid-nineteenth century. All of these have now been digitised and are available in the Trinity collection in the State Library. To them have been added many more images, mainly of events, but also of people linked with Trinity. I am grateful to all these contributors too. All the images in this book are from the collection of images held at Trinity unless otherwise acknowledged.

I have been fortunate to be able again to consult Paul Barnett and Reg Piper, the two surviving former rectors, about their tenures at Trinity. Both have re-read and commented on the chapters covering their times in Adelaide, and I am very grateful for their mature wisdom. Paul Harrington, the present rector, has been extremely generous with his time in commenting on drafts and answering a stream of questions.

In the additional chapters written for this second edition, once more I have had access to the accumulated hard-copy records of the church, which have subsequently been transferred to the State Library. The chapter on the establishment of the Hills congregation had an independent writing history which is explained at the relevant place. I have reused it here with amendments. With the onset of electronic record keeping, from around 2000, the potential data have expanded enormously, but the key record groups have remained the same (vestry, trustees, wardens). As always there are gaps, but I am confident enough has been examined

to permit a reasonable story to be told. Even more valuable has been the willing and ready participation of Paul Harrington, the present rector. Not only has he allowed me to record and use the contents of several interviews, he has also been generous with well-turned comments on my drafts, which have often been incorporated into the final text.

Once more I must acknowledge the support of the trustees, who in 2012 are Brett Cowell, Ian Bartlett and Phil Crawley. The much enlarged staff at Trinity have contributed from their particular perspectives, and some have recorded interviews with me (again listed in the appendix) or have contributed brief essays of their own, some of which appear in the text below. Many members of the congregation have contributed images for the collection held in the church's electronic files (and also copied to the State Library), upon which I have freely drawn. I am also grateful for aid from Robin Radford, Ian Tulloch, Glen Ralph and Len Woodley.

With the availability of the internet and electronic publishing, this book now appears in three guises: as an on demand printed volume, as pdf files for download from the Trinity website, and as an ebook. Details for accessing each version can be found on the Holy Trinity, Adelaide website: <http://www.trinitycity.org.au/>. Tables of office bearers are now available from the Trinity website.

As a Christian, I acknowledge the mercy and goodness of God in permitting me to complete this project, however flawed it might be. I remain responsible for it, and its authority derives from my observations and the history I have fashioned out of them. That history I dedicate to the congregation of Trinity, past, present and future, that cloud of witnesses to Christ and Him crucified.

Almighty and everlasting God, you have given us your servants grace by the confession of a true faith to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and by your divine power to worship you as One: we humbly pray that you would keep us steadfast in this faith and evermore defend us from all adversities: through Christ our Lord.

(Collect for Trinity Sunday, *Book of Common Prayer*).