

A small history of Holy Trinity, Fortitude Valley

Bricks and mortar

The Church

Holy Trinity Church in Fortitude Valley was completed in 1877 and is a fine example of an early Anglican Church (then Church of England) in Brisbane.

Holy Trinity Parish was formed in 1856 and encompassed the areas of Fortitude Valley, Bowen Hills and New Farm. It extended west to Enoggera and north to Sandgate. The present church land was granted to the parish in 1857 and the first Trinity Church, a small stone building was built that same year. During the 1870s, as Fortitude Valley's population boomed, the decision was made to construct a new, larger church on the site to accommodate the growing congregation.

Architect FDG Stanley (serving as Queensland Colonial Architect at the time) was engaged to design the church. The completed church (minus the chancel) was formally opened by Bishop Mathew Hale on 21 July 1877. The style of the building was early English Gothic, with a gable roof, arched doorways, lancet windows and stained glass. On the interior an arcade of cast iron pillars define the edges of the nave and support the clerestory walls and roof. the ceiling structure of hammer beam roof trusses is exposed and the ceiling is lined with diagonal timber boards.

In 1921 the chancel, modified from Stanley's original design, was completed, enlarging the church to its present size. A pipe organ was installed in 1924 and in 1929 a stone reredos, designed by architect Lange Powell and carved by AL Petrie, was added.

The rectory

A substantial two-storied brick rectory with wide timber verandahs was constructed next to the church in 1889, also designed by Stanley.

The hall

In 1891 the original church building was demolished and a new brick Sunday School/hall constructed in its place. Designed by diocesan architect JH Buckeridge, it featured a timber framed spire with louvered ventilator openings.

The buildings today

Today, the church complex remains intact, surrounded by mature trees and provides a peaceful oasis in the heart of the Valley.

Ministry at Trinity

Trinity Parish Community's ministry with many and various from earliest establishment has taken on numerous hues.

From 1856, the education and well being of children was a major function of the infant parish. Weekday school was provided for the children of new arrivals into a colony that didn't really welcome them (original boat people). Excluded from the town settlement, they occupied the area beyond the boundary that became changed its name from Rosetta Swamp to Fortitude Valley. Extension to the original settlement brought others of both high and low reputation, but whoever, there was a principle of inclusion. Regular parish picnics and cultural activities gave entertainment and a social life for the people who had need of gladness and celebration.

The first World War emptied the parish of men, as the parish war memorial attests, the sadness and grief at so many lost was the overwhelming concern for families without fathers and sons. For the new generation following and then depression, the emphasis was the vulnerable was instigated by Fr Samuel Watkin. Scouts and Girl Guides were first established around Trinity, and a gym for young men and boys. Concerned for the economic welfare of families, a Credit Co-operative was founded, the first ever registered in Queensland.

The Co-op was also a social club for families and not just a financial outfit. Generations have been assisted and options were enhanced. To again avoid the post-depression fears of the banks, a Parish Savings Scheme enabled people to have a passbook of deposits safely squirreled away by the Parish.

World War 2 brought hosts of people into the Valley, encampments, the Navy base and the submarine pool on the river nearby, the US Provost across the road mixed with the locals and all similarly climbed aboard the trams beginning to approach an antique age, and housed in the Light St Depot one block away. Until the Depot's demise, tram and bus workers used to come to Trinity for their own prayer group.

The sixties brought the Valley, always a shopping mecca, into the wilder years. The '64 Club opened in Trinity Hall (in 1964!) with a Carnaby St bent which soon developed into battle of the bands competition, and a safe place in the Valley for those under age. The welfare initiatives were brought into the Trinity caring ministry as more and more unhoused or poorly housed and boarding house tenants required friendship and food. They were joined gradually by the young and maybe disaffected. Trinity Welfare and later Anglicare began as a small volunteer and remains a larger but still volunteer compassion ministry. A childcare centre was established from elsewhere into the Parish, friendship group (Trinitarians) brought the older people into closer community. The formal establishment of an Arts Council complemented a Social and Functions group and together morphed into the Hospitality and Arts consortium. Hospitality extends to welcoming occasions and parish community functions and Arts patronage of various especially music and performance is a ministry to the wider community.

Now part of the CBD, Trinity has modelled its ministry as an oasis with park like churchyard, heritage buildings, hosting rehabilitation and respite groups, garden seating for office workers and a church open every day and well visited and used. Given its prominence, Trinity Church continues to be a place of resort in difficulty or grief, of celebration of the plateau events in life and which is accessed because if it looks like a real church it may just be one!

Priests over all this time have usually been a stability being resident up to 33 years and occupying the onsite Rectory with a very obvious front door. Once on the edge of the early Brisbane town but now incorporated into the CBD and amidst hundreds of apartments, the ministry outlook looks daunting. The oasis realignment of Trinity has been accepted as a good start.