

# FROM A DONATED TIN SHED TO OUR OWN PURPOSE-BUILT FACILITY:

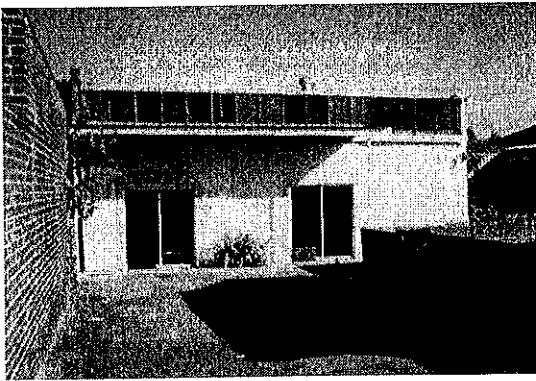
## THE GROWTH OF TRINITY THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

Rosemary Watts

At my first ANZTLA Conference last year in Canberra, several people expressed that they had never heard of Trinity Theological College in W.A., and asked whether it was a denominational college, how long it had been in existence, etc, so I have put together a brief history of Trinity, and then I want to discuss the plans for our new building as an example of an interesting design concept.

Our Conference theme of "Nurturing Theological Education" is quite appropriate when looking at the growth of Trinity Theological College. Trinity actually commenced as two very small training facilities which struggled to grow, and both at various stages nearly died, but after some struggling, and being grafted together, are now growing into a healthy and vigorous College. The following presentation gives a brief overview of how Trinity Theological College came into being and is continuing to grow.

The first training institution was called Perth Centre for Applied Christian Studies, otherwise known by its acronym of PCACS. It commenced in a spare bedroom and then was offered a tin shed in the backyard of a house in Shenton Park. The shed was divided into the Reading Room and the Lecture Room. The surroundings were improved, but basically it was still a tin shed!



The renovated tin shed which PCACS used – one side was the Reading Room, the other the Lecture Room.

The first group of full time students numbered seven, with Dr Allan Chapple, the founder of PCACS, as the only lecturer. His major interest was in New Testament studies.

The other training institution was Westminster Institute of Biblical Studies, set up to be a training facility for Presbyterian pastors. It commenced in a room in a church building, and then in 1990 moved to the lounge room of a house in Yokine.

Their numbers fluctuated from two/three to up to ten students, with one lecturer, Steve Rarig, whose major interest was in Old Testament studies.

In 1996, PCACS had grown sufficiently to require a second lecturer, Don West, who came over from Sydney. His major teaching area was Biblical Studies. PCACS had outgrown their shed and was desperately in need of new premises.

After some preliminary discussions through 1996, the two small training institutions combined to become Trinity Theological College in November 1997, with three faculty members.

The College operated above Westminster Presbyterian Church, Bull Creek, where it



(L. to R.): Steve Rarig (Vice Principal), Allan Chapple (Founding Principal), Don West

occupied the first floor above the Church and used the Church auditorium as a lecture theatre. Fortunately the church architect had planned sufficiently well so that the first floor would bear the load of a Library.



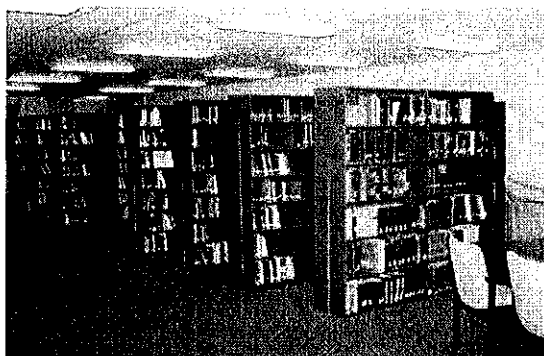
This was the first group of students of Trinity Theological College in 1998. The college had accreditation with the Australian College of Theology and only offered a Diploma of Theology and an Advanced Diploma of Theology at that stage.

In the early days of Trinity Theological College, The Library was very small with voluntary staff. In 1999, Kerriann Lock, now the Librarian of the W.A. Baptist Theological College, was

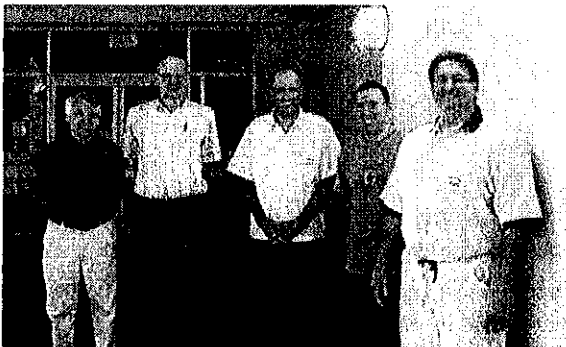
appointed. She was responsible for the automation of the Library and, when she left at the end of 2000 to go to Japan, I was appointed to take her place. Trinity Theological College Library has now grown to approximately 13,500 books

Lectures run in the church auditorium and a couple of small Conference rooms.

During 1999, Marty Foord joined us as a Systematic Theology Lecturer, and in 2000 Dr Karl Stevens came from a German Theological Seminary to lecture in Church History and Biblical Languages.



By now we were running out of space. Time to move on yet again. The serious search for our own premises commenced.



(L.to R.): Allan Chapple, Karl Stevens, Don West, Marty Foord, Steve Rarig

Now in 2003 we have five faculty members and 65 students who study in our Bachelor of Ministry, Bachelor of Theology and Master of Divinity courses. The Library space is no longer big enough to house our collection, with many books still in boxes – including the 2500 donated last week!

A block of land in Leederville, just outside the Central Business District (and most importantly, only 200 metres from the Leederville Café strip!) and just 300 metres from a train station, has been purchased. It is also very close to where three of Perth's major freeways – the Mitchell

Freeway, the Kwinana Freeway and the Graham Farmer Freeway intersect; so that all roads lead to Trinity, so to speak!

The Trinity Theological Council set down four critical factors to guide the search for new premises. These were:

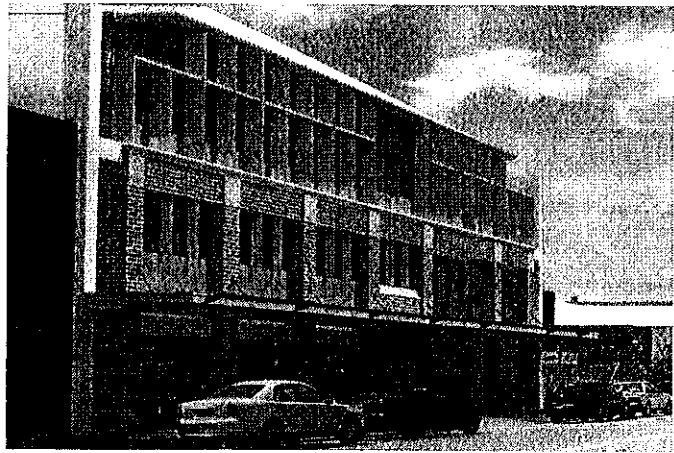
- Ample room for growth
- Designed to function as a College
- Centrally located in Perth
- Accessible by all means of transport.

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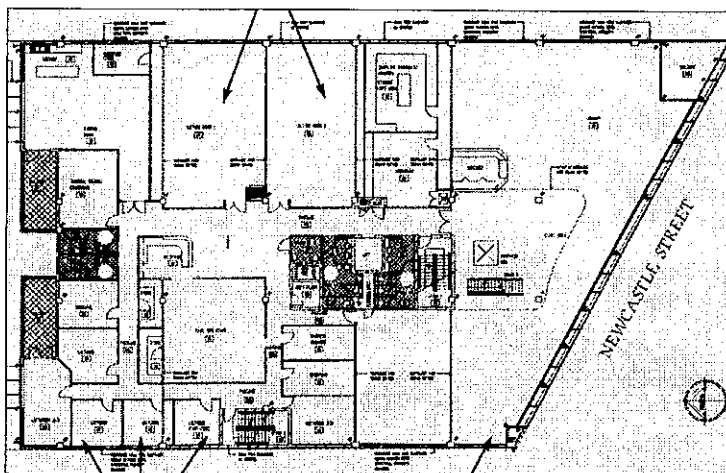
All four criteria have been met. We held our building launch in March 2003, and building commenced in May .

The picture on the right is a computer-generated image of what the College building will look like when completed.

The college consists of four floors. At ground floor level is one shop front, to be used for something like a Book Café. Behind this shop front will be parking for 43 cars, plus motorbikes and bicycle racks.



Initially, the first floor will be completely leased out for commercial offices, and will allow for future expansion of the College. Already we have some expressions of interest, because we are so centrally located and because we have good access for people with disabilities



The second floor (shown left) will house the lecture theatres, the library, staff offices plus one kitchen/common room.

The top floor will have a student kitchen/common room, a library mezzanine reading room, and a timber-decked large rooftop alfresco area which opens up from the common room/ kitchen to allow for College social events.

The second floor will have offices, two lecture theatres, and the library

which will occupy the front half of this floor. Also included on this level is a creche, so that students can study while their pre-school children are cared for on site.

The whole building has been designed so that most of the internal walls are non-load bearing and the areas are separated by movable soundproofed partitions. This allows for a great degree of flexibility. It will also allow us to expand to accommodate over 200 students. For example, as the College expands, the two initial lecture theatres (which can be opened up into one area) along with any additional lecture theatres will move down onto the second floor, and the Library will expand back into the area currently taken up by the lecture theatres. Additional faculty members' offices can also relocate to the second floor or, alternatively, administration and reception. The whole concept is that the building can be very flexible.

I hope that those of you from large libraries have found this presentation interesting. For those from small libraries who experience the frustrations of limited funding, cramped and inadequate quarters, etc, I would encourage you not to be dismayed but to nurture your dreams and plans. We have seen at Trinity that when you are prepared to keep focussed on the task of nurturing theological education, God opens doors and provides in some amazing ways.

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