

CHAPTERS IN TRINITY'S HISTORY  
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CHAPTER VI - A NEW BEGINNING

During the summer of 1833, Peter Shand - a Charleston lawyer, former legislator, and candidate for holy orders - served as lay reader for Trinity. On June 16th he conducted his first service. The next four months were quite busy. In addition to conducting services, he organized a Ladies Working Society similar to the women's benevolent societies that were active in several of Charleston's Episcopal parishes. The principle behind the society was that women of the parish would provide employment for poor women in the community.

Shand returned to Charleston in November to complete his religious studies and on January 19, 1834, was ordained a deacon in St. Paul's, Charleston. At the invitation of the vestry, he was in Columbia a week later. Following his ordination to the priesthood in July 1834, he became Trinity's rector and began a fifty-two year ministry to the congregation and the Columbia community.

The presence of an active young rector energized the congregation. The women of the Ladies Working Society expanded their mission to include funding for a parochial library. They also paid for painting the inside of the little wooden church and the purchase of new red velvet accouterments. And, more importantly, the Society "contributed liberally towards the extinguishment of the balance of the debt owed by the church." Thanks to the assistance of the women of the church, the congregation was able to pay off all of its debts and, in 1835, notified the Society for the Advancement of Christianity that it would no longer need to ask for financial assistance.

By the time the diocesan convention returned to Columbia in 1837 to celebrate Trinity's 25th anniversary, the results of Mr. Shand's efforts were noticeable. Three years earlier, when he had assumed his post, the congregation numbered only about five or six families. Now there were forty-eight. Numbers brought increased giving and not only had all debts been paid, but the congregation generously shared its prosperity with others. It contributed \$225 (\$4,074 in today's dollars) toward the building of Trinity, Edgefield, and \$1,250 (\$22,636) toward the rebuilding of St. Philip's, Charleston.

The Sunday School was designed to provide a rudimentary education for all of the children of the parish (which meant all of the children in the Columbia area, not just children of parishioners). The curriculum included "a plain English education, with instructions in the Bible and Prayer-book and Church Catechism." The women of the church organized the Sunday School, and in 1839 erected a building. In addition, they handled all of its financial operations, something that grated on the new rector: "The Parochial School is in successful operation but the collection and disbursement of funds are attended to by the ladies and are not under my regulation or control."

Pew rentals paid for operating expenses, but it was communion alms that supplied funds for social outreach. Trinity, like most Episcopal churches in the country, had only one communion service a month. It was during this service, held on the first Sunday, that individuals made contributions to the Communion Alms Fund administered by the rector. Peter Shand distributed some of the funds locally, including a monetary gift to a "poor girl of the parish" upon her marriage and a new pair of shoes for a former Sunday School student. He also used this fund to make regular contributions to the Society for the Advancement of Christianity. By 1851, Trinity was the largest contributor to diocesan charities, even though there were Charleston congregations that were two or three times larger.

Under Mr. Shand's leadership, the congregation continued to grow. In 1840, Bishop Christopher E. Gadsden confirmed twenty-six persons at Trinity, a figure significantly larger than that of any other congregation in the diocese. In 1848, the fifteenth year of Shand's ministry, Trinity's communicants numbered more than one hundred, making it the eighth largest parish in the Diocese of South Carolina. The steady increase in church membership led to overcrowding in the small wooden structure on the corner of Sumter and Gervais streets, and the vestry began to consider plans for a larger sanctuary.