

College Dinner

The Friday night of 19 October was a most enjoyable evening for the College community. This is an annual event for students, staff, faculty and their spouses. They enjoy a good meal complete with great entertainment. This year's venue was the RTC auditorium which had never before been used for this purpose.

Usually the College Dinner gives students a grand opportunity to highlight the idiosyncrasies of the lecturers. This time the students were

remarkably merciful, but faculty and staff took the opportunity to take good-natured shots at one another! The main focus of attention, however, was our retiring Principal, Henk DeWaard.

In humorous ways Henk's years at the helm were remembered and celebrated. Warm words of appreciation were spoken by Craig van Echten, chairman of the Students' Representative Council. Henk's response to the numerous skits and sketches at his expense was characteristically kind and gracious.

For him the evening had highlighted the fact that his work at the RTC had always been enjoyable and never a burden. He was thankful to the Lord for the privilege of 27 years of teaching ministry at the College. The whole evening was a wonderful expression of gratitude – to Henk for so many years of faithful and productive service, and to the Lord for having given us a man of Henk's calibre and godliness.

RTC Faculty, Staff & Students 2007



Newsletter

Spring 2007

PRINTED MATTER ONLY



If undeliverable, return to:

Reformed Theological College
125 Pigdons Road
Waurm Ponds Victoria 3216
Australia

POSTAGE

PAID

AUSTRALIA

Reformed Theological College

Newsletter

Spring 2007

2007 Preaching Workshop

The RTC's sixth annual Preaching Workshop was held on Thursday and Friday, 27-28 September. This year's theme was *Preaching the Kingdom*. Once again it was gratifying to welcome participants from far and wide. Most Australian states were well represented, as were both islands of New Zealand. This year we were also pleased to welcome a delegation of half a dozen participants from Indonesia. All came from the Bethel Church in Jakarta. On the Friday morning they were given the opportunity to bring greetings to the conference. The international make-up of the conferees underscored the global nature of the topic at hand.

Another unique feature of this conference was the fact that all the speakers were RTC faculty members. As the Reformed tradition is known for its strong kingdom emphasis, each speaker was able to approach this rich and varied topic from his own perspective.

The opening lectures by Alastair McEwen and Steve Voorwinde focussed on the Kingdom of God in the Old and New Testament

respectively. By the first morning of the conference it was evident to all that the doctrine of the kingdom permeates all of Scripture. In the Old Testament Yahweh is the Great King who rules with absolute power. His rule extends over the world and indeed the universe, and it lasts forever. Nevertheless, the day is yet to come when it reaches its prophesied fullness (Isaiah 11:1-10; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Micah 4:1-4). This prophecy begins to be fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus (Mark 1:15). Now the long-expected kingdom is finally at hand. His ministry begins to roll back the effects of the fall. With each of Jesus' miracles and exorcisms Satan is forced to yield more and more ground to the advancing kingdom of God. The resurrection of Jesus is a decisive kingdom victory.

By the afternoon of the first day some of the practical implications of these majestic truths began to be unpacked. Bill Berends addressed the conference with the challenge of *"Preaching a Kingdom Mindset"*. Often our preaching and church life can capitulate to a reigning secular worldview such as materialism, individualism and post-modernism. In recent years our culture has witnessed a shift from a naturalistic worldview (modernism) to a pantheistic worldview (post-



Some Preaching Workshop participants

modernism). Over against these we need to place a Christian theistic worldview. Such a worldview begins with an acknowledgement of the lordship of Christ over all of life. Through Christ the dominion that humanity lost at the fall is restored. This involves the restoration of three sets of relationships – with God (worship), with other human beings (fellowship) and with nature (stewardship). Preaching the kingdom means proclaiming restoration in all three of these areas.

Reformed Theological College

125 Pigdons Road
Waurm Ponds Victoria 3216
Australia

Tel: + 61 (03) 5244 2955
Eml: admin@rtc.vic.edu.au



preachingthekingdom

The Thursday evening has traditionally been a worship service open to the public. This year was no exception. A good number of Christians from the surrounding community attended. The RTC auditorium was filled to capacity. Worship was rousing as we sang Psalms and hymns that again focussed on the kingdom theme. RTC students read relevant Scriptures and led in prayer. Steve Voorwinde preached on Jesus' parable of the yeast (Matthew 13:33). Just as a small amount of yeast transforms a large batch of dough, so the kingdom exerts a powerful influence in the world. Our King not only changes lives but transforms societies. Examples included the British Empire at the time of William Wilberforce, Holland under the leadership of Abraham Kuyper, and the significant role that the small church of Japan has had in shaping some of the social institutions of that country.

The Friday sessions began with Henk DeWaard's lecture on *"The Kingdom of God and Mission"*. Henk opened with the strong emphasis that mission and theology belong together: "To study the Bible without noticing its missionary focus is like studying the Mona Lisa without noticing that it is the portrait of a woman." The Bible's entire message is mission-focussed. At the same time the Bible has its roots in specific cultures. Hence preachers will have to bridge the gap between the biblical text and our situation today.

Although the Kingdom has come in Christ, the present age is marked by conflict. In our time God's rule will always be disputed and opposed, but the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom is a sign of impending consummation (Matthew 24:14). All of creation is crying out for redemption (Romans 8:22).

Murray Capill gave an address with the tantalizing title, *"Confessions of a Pietistic Preacher"*. He identified five tendencies in contemporary Reformed and Evangelical preaching:

- to preach the gospel of individual salvation rather than the gospel of the Kingdom,
- to address sin in the individual, but not in society,
- to gravitate toward texts about personal spirituality but not texts about social justice,
- to set forth a vision for the church but not a vision for the world, and
- to preach a narrow view of worship and ministry, rather than an "all of life" view.

Judging by the responses of those present, Murray's confessions obviously struck a nerve. It is sadly possible to have a well-developed kingdom theology that does not inform our preaching. For many this was the conference's greatest challenge.

Bill Berends' second lecture, *"Preaching a Kingdom Lifestyle"*, highlighted the fact that Kingdom people must live with a distinctive ethic that will make them salt and light in this decaying and dark world. Taking his cue from the Sermon on the Mount, Bill was careful to point out that biblical ethics is based on virtue and not just on deeds. Living in the Kingdom is first and foremost a matter of the heart. Jesus is interested in a person's character rather than in outward conformity to a legal code. Bill is developing his lecture further for publication in the forthcoming issue of *Vox Reformata*.

The conference closed with a sermon by Murray Capill on Jesus' Kingdom manifesto in Luke 4:18-21. In Luke's Gospel this message of Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth opens his public ministry. Jesus declares that the Spirit of the Lord is upon him. He has been anointed "to preach good news to the poor . . . to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to

release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." From this passage Murray drew two major points:

- The gospel is exceptionally good news for those who usually get bad news. Hence our preaching needs to sound like good news for the lonely and the alienated, and those who are usually at the bottom of the heap in our society.
- Jesus' proclamation is not just a message but also sets an agenda. He not only preached it, he also did it. He therefore sets an agenda both for the gospel and for the church. He challenges us to bring the Kingdom into people's lives.

All the lectures and sermons delivered at the Preaching Conference were recorded in MP3 format. This allows the entire proceedings to be captured on one CD! (MP3 is compatible with most PCs and modern DVDs, but not with ordinary CD players.) A CD of the 2007 conference is available at \$25.00. CDs of the previous conferences (2002-2006) may be purchased for \$15.00 each. Payment may be made by cash, cheque (payable to the RTC) or credit card. Please contact us by phone (03 5244 2955), fax (03 5243 6055), or via the address on the back of this newsletter. If you wish to correspond with us by email, please contact the office on admin@rtc.vic.edu.au.



Please continue to pray for all the students and the faculty at the College.

2008 Courses

A wide variety of courses is available from the RTC – full-time and part-time; on campus and online; day and evening; and at degree, diploma and certificate levels.

The RTC seeks to train students not only for ordained ministry but also for a range of ministries in the church, in the community and on the mission field. Recent graduates have become pastors, preachers, chaplains, teachers, youth workers and missionaries. With these goals in mind the RTC is offering the following courses in the coming year:

1. Diploma of Theology/Ministry

This two-year, full-time course is open to all candidates who have completed Year 12 or the equivalent. The course is designed to prepare students for non-ordained ministries in the church. Students will be required to complete basic subjects in Bible, theology and church history, as well as in areas of pastoral practice. After an added year of full-time study candidates are eligible for the Advanced Diploma of Theology/Ministry.

2. Bachelor of Ministries

This is a three-year course open as a first degree to those qualified for admission to an Australian university. Students are taught to interpret the Scriptures within their historical context, become familiar with the major theological tenets of the Christian faith, and gain an appreciation for the major developments in the history of the church. They will also acquire skills appropriate to ministry in one or more areas of pastoral practice.

3. Bachelor of Theology

Entry qualifications are the same as for the Bachelor of Ministries. There is much overlap between the two degrees, but the Bachelor of Theology has a stronger academic emphasis with requirements in the biblical languages. For the supporting denominations of the RTC this is the degree required for ordained ministry.

4. Bachelor of Christian Studies

This is a three-year course. Normally two years are completed at the RTC and one year at an Australian university. As the RTC is close to Deakin University, we are particularly well placed to offer this degree. The aim of the degree is to enable students to apply a Christian perspective and commitment to their life in the world, including their professional and vocational life.

5. Associate Degree in Theology

This two-year course enables students to major in the foundational subjects in biblical studies, church history and theology. Students can expect to gain a well-informed outlook on Christian life and ministry. This course can also provide the groundwork for more specialised study.

6. Graduate Diploma of Divinity

This one-year, full-time course is open to those who already have a primary, non-theological degree (or equivalent). In recent years it has proved to be particularly popular with university graduates. Students are generally required to complete eight subjects. Usually these are in the core areas of Bible, theology and church history,

although some students have also been known to take the biblical languages and pastoral care subjects.

7. Online Courses

For the first semester of 2008 the following two subjects are available: The Knowledge of God (TH401/601) and The Church to 1550 (CH301/501). Both subjects may be taken at either degree or graduate diploma level.

8. Evening Courses

The two Certificates being offered in 2008 are the Certificate in Bible Ministry and the Certificate in Missions and Evangelism. The first semester will again be divided into two terms of five weeks each. The subjects to be taught during Term 1 are Story of the Bible (Alastair McEwen) and Worldviews (Bill Berends). In addition to these two subjects we will also be offering a new and very practical elective - Public Speaking for Christians. This subject will be taught by Jack Stewart, the Victorian State Chairman of Christian Business Men-Australia. In Term 2 the two subjects on offer will be Reading the Old Testament for All Its Worth (Alastair McEwen) and Missions - God's Heart (Henk DeWaard).

Important Dates for 2008

Lord willing, the following events are planned at the RTC for 2008:

Friday 15 February

Installation of Murray Capill as the new Principal

Monday 18 February

Orientation Day for new students

Tuesday 19 February

Lectures begin (inc. evening classes)

Saturday-Monday 8-10 March

Fan the Flame Conference for potential students

Thursday-Friday 25-26 Sept

7th Annual Preaching Conference
Preaching Hebrews

