



RTC Monthly

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Welcome to the first edition of RTC Monthly for 2007. After a couple of quiet months over the summer, the College is just about back into full swing. Below we again offer news updates, book recommendations and ministry perspectives. We want to thank you for your ongoing interest in the College, and ask that you continue to remember the College community in prayer as we embark on another year of learning and growth.

College News

- The two week intensive Greek course began this week with 14 students attending. Some will just do these two weeks; others will continue for a year of studying the original language of the New Testament.
- The rest of the College courses begin on 20 February. We are thankful for a number of new students from Geelong and further afield – Canberra, Wollongong and Perth.
- The **Fan the Flame** conference is only a month away and promises to be a great weekend of input for those thinking about ministry options in the future. At least seven people are coming from New Zealand as well as people from a number of places in Australia.

Faculty News

- OT lecturer Alastair McEwen has returned from his Long Service Leave which included time in the Middle East as well as Ireland and Italy. It wasn't all sightseeing though. He preached five times in Northern Ireland, and also gave a lecture on preaching from Judges to students, lecturers and ministers at the Reformed Theological College of the RPCI. Alastair also saw the great need for labourers in a number of parts of the harvest field.
- On 10 February College Principal, Dr Henk de Waard, preached at the special service to mark the affiliation of the Indonesian Reformed Church in Sydney with the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia. From 5-13 March he will be in South Africa, having been invited to an enlarged meeting of the Executive of the Reformed Ecumenical Council.
- Stephen Voorwinde spent the final month of last year completing work on a chapter for a book on the Gospels being published by the ACT. Steve's contribution was on the Kingdom theme in the teaching of Jesus.
- Dr Bill Berends has produced another course that has been approved for online delivery. Information on his **Knowledge of God** course, which can be taken for degree or advanced diploma credit, can be found at www.christiancampus.net

Book Corner...

(By Dr. Murray Capill)

Leadership Next by Eddie Gibbs (IVP, 2005) is a book well worth reading for familiarity with where contemporary thinking is at on church leadership. Gibbs, a professor at Fuller Seminary, writes with a strong grasp of and warmth toward the emerging church movement. He describes the kind of leadership that emerging churches are cultivating and encourages the necessary skills and priorities for such leadership. But he also understands where "modernist" pastors come from, and recognises the contribution older leaders have to make to the emerging church scene. More than that, he frequently takes us back to the Scriptures - more than many church leadership books do. Whether you agree with all his views on leadership or not, this is an important and worthwhile read for pastors and elders.

Ministry Spot...

(by Dr. Murray Capill)

Pastors can be bombarded by a host of expectations. Is the pastor chiefly a preacher, or a personal carer, or an evangelist, or a visionary leader, or an administrator, or a change agent, or a youth worker? Different books, different churches, different people lay differing expectations on the pastor. And pastors lay a fair few expectations on themselves.

In thinking this matter through, it is helpful to go back to one of the foundational texts for pastoral ministry – Ephesians 4:11-12. Paul makes it abundantly clear that the central work of pastors and teachers is the work of equipping the saints. They are to be engaged in the work of training God's people for ministry. God has given pastors and teachers not to do the work of ministry for the church, but to equip the members of the church to do the work of ministry.

That is a familiar concept. But we need to examine whether it is reality in our churches. The measure of any pastoral ministry ought to be the extent to which people in the church are trained, encouraged and equipped to serve God. The teaching ministry in a church should have a sharp equipping edge to it, and the pastoral ministry of a church should have a strong training component to it. To fall short of this, so that teaching simply increases knowledge but not service, and pastoral care increases comfort but not ministry, is to fall short of the goal.

If pastors and teachers are focussed on equipping and training people for service, the ministries of the church will grow and diversify. Over time, more people will be engaged in pastoral care – in visiting and encouraging others, and meeting people's physical and spiritual needs. More people will be competent to disciple new Christians. More people will be able to lead Bible studies and home groups. More men will be ready to serve as elders. More people will be sent into mission work and pastoral ministry. More people will be quietly meeting needs, and opening their homes, and befriending visitors at church. There will be more avenues opening up for serving in the community. An increasing number of people will see their workplace as the place where they serve God, and see their neighbourhood as their mission field. More people will be sharing their faith with others. And church members will increasingly understand the world in which they live and how they are to relate to it.

Over time, an effective equipping ministry will not see the church increasingly centred around the pastor. It will see the church increasingly diverse, as ministries are multiplied and new leaders are raised up.

At the start of this new year of church life and activity, maybe it would be worth spending some time thinking about whether your church has this kind of equipping ministry. Ephesians 4:13 is clear that this is the means by which the church is built up to maturity in Christ.

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