



# RTC Monthly

NO. 17 23 March 2007

## College News

- Kylie Stewart, who has been our administrative secretary for almost three years, finished her work with us last week. She and her husband Andrew are expecting their first child in a few weeks time. We are thankful for her good work during her time with us. She is being replaced in the office by Angie Almond, who was previously the RTC cook and Residential Supervisor. Angie, in turn, has been replaced as cook by a new member of the team - Bronwyn Hale. We are deeply thankful for the great contribution of these RTC staff members.
- In February the RTC Board announced that at the end of this year Dr Henk DeWaard will step down as Principal. He will continue to be active in ministry, including teaching part-time at the College and continuing to help with administration. The Board has called Dr Murray Capill to be the next College Principal, beginning in January 2008.

## The Flame has been Fanned

Two weeks ago 21 people converged on the RTC for the **Fan the Flame** conference. We were delighted to host an enthusiastic group of people, ranging in age from mid teens to mid 40s. Ten came from New Zealand, and eleven from Australia (WA, SA, Tasmania, NSW, ACT and Victoria). All came with a desire to think about areas of pastoral and church ministry the Lord may be calling them to.

Over the three-day weekend the RTC faculty presented sessions on pastoral ministry and calling, Bible study approaches, preaching, missions and evangelism, and ministry training models. The Saturday evening meal was hosted in the homes of RTC lecturers and a local pastor, and the Sunday lunch was "African style" out at Bill and Henny Berends' farm. On the Monday we were joined by Rev. Leo Douma of the Sydney congregation and Jonathan Vandenberg, the CRCA National Youth Worker, who both gave valuable input about apprenticeships and internships. Participants were also interviewed one to one in order to discuss further their thoughts about future ministry possibilities.

We trust the Lord will use the input that was given to fan into flame the gifts God has given each one of these people. We pray, too, that some will return here in the future for ministry training.

## Faculty News

- Dr Henk DeWaard is back safely from his brief trip to South Africa where he was involved in discussions regarding the future of the REC.
- Recently Dr Bill Berends spoke at a *Talking Theology* session of the Evangelical Alliance in Melbourne. His address was on *A Case for Cessationism Based on an*

*Understanding of Apostolic Authority.* Last weekend he was away in Perth, leading a retreat on evangelism for the Perth congregation.

### **Book Corner...**

(By Dr. Stephen Voorwinde)

Peter Barnes' latest book, ***A Study Commentary on Galatians*** (Evangelical Press, 2006), is a very timely volume that deserves a place in every preacher's library.

Peter Barnes is a preacher himself as well as a lecturer in Church History at the Presbyterian Theological Centre in Sydney. From the commentary it is immediately obvious that Barnes himself has preached on Galatians. As a church historian he also draws deeply from the wells of the past. He was obviously inspired particularly by Luther's commentary on Galatians. The message that comes through loud and clear is that Galatians is just as important a letter for the church today as it was in Luther's day. As the doctrine of justification is under attack as much now as it was in the time of the Reformation, it is imperative that it be clearly expounded from Scripture. This commentary helps the preacher to do exactly that. In the introduction to the work Barnes helpfully lays out the challenge posed by the "New Perspective" on Paul. For those who are unaware of the issues raised by this recent take on Pauline studies, the eighteen pages that Barnes devotes to this debate will be a very enlightening read. The main body of the commentary is in effect a refutation of this current trend.

This commentary is designed particularly with the preacher in mind. Bite size portions of the text are carefully expounded and applied. This makes it a very practical commentary. Barnes' exposition is always clear, never loses the reader in technical detail, and explains the Greek text only where differing interpretations are possible. The application sections are penetrating to the point of being piercing. Comments are anchored in history but also tellingly contemporary. The relevance of the text is clearly demonstrated, often in forceful ways.

Galatians is not an easy epistle to preach through. Yet in a day when its central doctrine of justification by faith is being subtly undermined, it is imperative that the church reacquaint itself with this epistle and know it well. In many ways the Reformation was a rediscovery of Galatians. If the church today is to rediscover the spiritual dynamite of this epistle, it needs preachers who can expound it well. For that crucial task they will find Barnes' commentary to be an invaluable resource.

### **Ministry Spot...**

(by Dr. Bill Berends)

One of the tasks of a church leader is to protect God's flock from false teaching and worthless speculation. A leader proclaims the truth and exposes error for the well-being of the flock. Some of the errors that need refutation come up again and again in different form.

Thus I had a real sense of *déjà vu* when I attended a recent talk by Chuck Missler, a self-styled Bible expositor who worked with guided missiles and led business enterprises before starting a popular radio Bible program. I was reminded of Hal Lindsey's book *The Late Great Planet Earth*, which confidently predicted a nuclear war with Russia and China, representing Gog and Magog. Lindsey's interpretation fell into disuse when, beginning with the demolition of the Berlin wall, the *iron* and *bamboo*

*curtains* disappeared. But now this teaching is back in a modified form, centred on Jerusalem and Babylon against the background of the war in Iraq.

Missler began his presentation with the claims that the Bible speaks of guided missiles, smart bombs, nuclear bombs and other modern weapons. (Lindsey found similar references to attack helicopters, tanks and weapons of the sixties and seventies). Thus we were told that the arrows likened to "skilled warriors who do not return empty-handed" refer to smart weapons, while Zech. 14:6 was said to picture the aftermath of a neutron bomb explosion. These claims were substantiated with references to the Hebrew text, which very few in the audience would have understood, but which appeared to give his teaching authenticity and authority. If you missed these references to modern weapons in your own Bible readings don't feel too bad about it, you will be hard pressed to find serious Bible scholars or commentators who agree with such interpretations.

The problem with this kind of teaching is not so much that it offers at best a very questionable interpretation of certain Bible passages, but that it takes the listeners away from the real purpose of the Bible. That purpose is not to provide cryptic clues about the future history of the world, but to lead us to Christ in faith and repentance. Missler's claim that "five-sixths" of the Bible is concerned with the fate of Israel is to misunderstand the purpose of God's dealing with Israel, which was to provide the promised seed through whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 3:15; 12:3). While Israel remains the focus of God's promises, Israel is identified with all who respond to the Gospel, and who can therefore claim Abraham as their father (Rom. 9-11; Gal. 3:7). Hence Christians are to focus on the Jerusalem that is above, where Christ is (Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:2; 22f.).

No doubt this teaching will pass, like that of Hal Lindsey. But meanwhile let us be on our guard that our people do not become preoccupied with "godless myths and old wives' tales" (1 Tim. 4:7; 2 Tim. 4:4). Speculation on the role of nations is interesting, but not very edifying. All we really need to know is that history is under God's control, and that we can leave the details to him. The Kingdom of Christ to which we belong will replace all earthly powers so that Christ alone may reign. Therefore let us take care that Christ our King is the focus of all our Kingdom proclamation

---

**Reformed Theological College**  
**125 Pigdons Rd, Waurin Ponds, 3216**  
**Ph. 5244 2955, email: [admin@rtc.vic.edu.au](mailto:admin@rtc.vic.edu.au)**

---