



# RTC Monthly

NO. 19 13 June 2007

## College News

- First semester lectures have been completed. This week students have been preparing for the exams that will be held over the next two weeks. Please uphold them in prayer as they seek to bring the semester to a successful conclusion.
- We are particularly delighted that there will be seven new students joining us for the second semester. Two are coming to study for future pastoral ministry in the CRCA. One of these students has already completed a theological degree and will be finalising ministry training requirements here over the next year. The other five are people already living in Geelong.
- The College's AGM was held at the end of May and it was good to see that there was a small financial surplus last year. We give thanks to the Lord for his faithful provision year by year.

## Further theological study??

Ministry demands that we give out constantly. After a while we can begin to feel somewhat dry. Further theological study in which you regularly set time aside for reading, research, writing, and advanced coursework can be a great aid to staying fresh. Sessions would do well to encourage ministers with academic ability to pursue further study, making some time and resources available for that.

There is, however, an added reason for some ministers in our denomination to consider further study. Over the next seven years four out of the five full-time faculty members at the RTC will reach retirement age. The College therefore faces some major changes in the years ahead. When looking for new staff the Board will of course look for people with considerable ministry experience, areas of specialist skill and teaching gifts, a passion to see people raised, equipped and trained for ministry, and the necessary character qualities. But in addition to all this, the *Australian College of Theology*, through whom we have accreditation to grant degrees, requires that lecturers have at least a research Masters degree in the field in which they teach.

Given that we will need several lecturers in the years ahead it would be great to see some more ministers pursuing advanced theological degrees. A few years of part-time study towards a Masters may open up possibilities that otherwise would not exist. If you have some interest in this idea and want to talk to us about it, we'd be very glad to hear from you.

## Faculty News

- Murray Capill is just back from speaking at the North West Bible Conference held in Tamworth. About 400 people attended this long weekend of Bible teaching on the theme of God's grace.

- Steve Voorwinde is in NSW to lead another “Classis Challenge” and preach in some of the churches in Sydney.
- Bill Berends heads to New Zealand at the end of the month to attend a conference for theological educators, and also visit a number of our supporting churches there.

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

*(by Rev. Alastair McEwen)*

***Everyday Theology: How to read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends***, Kevin J. Vanhoozer, et al, eds (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007).

Christians need not only to be able to interpret the Bible correctly but also our culture. We need a hermeneutic to do this. Principles for such a hermeneutic are laid down in the opening ‘What is Everyday Theology? How and Why Christians should Read Culture’. Application comes in essays like ‘The Gospel according to Safeway: The Checkout Line and the Good Life’, ‘Welcome to the Blogosphere’, and ‘Fantasy Funerals and Other Designer Ways of Going Out in Style’. The book gives challenging and thought-provoking direction on how to interpret our culture so as to speak to it with biblical prophetic faithfulness. And that’s what Christians are called to do.

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

*(by Dr. Murray Capill)*

One emphasis in ministry that is rightly gaining more attention now than in years past is the importance of team ministry. It’s a great emphasis. New Testament ministry, it seems, was always team ministry. The apostles were a team of twelve, led and disciplined by the Lord himself. Paul is almost never found alone in the Epistles. Dozens of other workers are named, and he repeatedly uses terms like co-worker, co-prisoner, co-slave, co-soldier, co-labourers to describe his ministry colleagues. And in the local church, it is a plurality of elders who shepherd the flock, which is itself likened to a body, where every member has an important part to play.

Team ministry, then, should not be narrowed to the idea of having two or more paid workers. Some churches will be able to pursue that, but all churches must pursue a team approach to ministry.

To cultivate this, people already in leadership need to show that they are committed to being team players. Here are a few suggestions to encourage you in being a team player...

First, make decisions corporately, not individually. That is one of the strengths of being part of an eldership team and should apply to other leadership teams as well. We may not always get it “our way” but that is a blessing! We need to value the input, advice and wisdom of others – and show that we value it. Sometimes we need others to slow us down or speed us up. We need others to sharpen our ideas or force us to think something through more fully. No one can ever afford to become “the boss”.

Second, warmly encourage people to use their gifts and give them opportunities to do so. Paul uses the body metaphor in 1 Corinthians 12 to remind us that every person in the church has an important role to play. We need to create a church culture that recognizes people’s gifts and creates opportunities for them to serve. That means trusting people with ministry. Encourage, resource and trust.

Third, share every ministry area with others. It is generally unhealthy for just one person to be the sole person ministering in any given area of church life. We need to share pastoral work, share the counselling load (e.g. pre-marital counselling), share evangelistic ministry. We do well to share the teaching and preaching ministry too.

Fourth, mentor people you want to work with in the future. Paul did this for Timothy and told him to do so for others (2 Tim 2:2). One of the best ways to do so is to take people with us into the ministry situation we are engaged in. Harry Reeder, in his book, *Embers to a Flame*, says, "If you are a leader, anything you do by yourself is a waste of time. But if you do your ministry with someone else then everything you do becomes discipleship and leadership training." (p126) Perhaps that's a slight overstatement, but it's a principle worth thinking about.

Fifth, acknowledge, encourage and thank your co-workers. Paul does this often (see for example Romans 16). In Philippians 2 we find him honouring Epaphroditus. This man of God didn't have any great roaring success behind him, but he had given his best to the task given him. "Honour men like him" Paul says. We should still do so today.

Finally, make sure you often join in prayer with others for the Lord's work. Raising our voices together in prayer to God is an essential way of joining together in the work of the Lord. As we seek the Lord earnestly together, we develop a deep bond in the work of the gospel.

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