



RTC Monthly

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This will be the final RTC Monthly for this year. Thank you for the interest you've taken in the College this year. We greatly value your partnership in this gospel ministry.

College News

There's plenty taking place at College this week even though lectures and exams are now behind us...

- On Thursday evening a special Retirement Dinner is being held for Dr Henk de Waard. Having served as Principal for 11 years and lecturer for 27, we want to make sure we mark his official retirement in a suitable way. Not that Henk is fading from the College scene altogether. Next year he will still be working part-time for the College, both teaching and assisting the new Principal, Murray Capill.
- On Friday the College Board meets. A key matter for discussion is a strategy paper on the College's directions for the next five years.
- Friday night will see the annual graduation ceremony take place. This year we have a good number of students graduating including a large number from the Tuesday evening Certificate courses held for local Geelong people. Details of other Graduates will appear in the College newsletter at a later date.
- We're thankful for the good track record of recent graduates in CRCA and RCNZ Classis and Presbytery exams. Four RTC graduates have completed vicariates, passed their exams and have been made available for call this year. Colin Grant has accepted a call to Wollongong; Simon Vanderwel, Jonathan Deenick and David Waldron are waiting to see what the Lord opens up for them.

Next Year

There are a few things on the horizon for next year...

- At 7.30pm on 15 February a special Induction Service will be held at the College for the new Principal, Dr Murray Capill. The guest speaker will be Rev. Michael Raiter, Principal of the Bible College of Victoria. You are warmly invited to join us for this occasion.
- Two distance education courses will be available in the first semester next year: a Church History course - The Church to 1550 (CH301/501) and a Theology course - The Knowledge of God (TH401/601). Please contact the RTC office for more information.
- The College will be running another **Fan the Flame** conference from 8 – 10 March 2008. The conference is designed for people who are thinking about the call to ministry and/or theological training. Two streams will operate this year – one for first timers and the other for those who came last year and want to come again. We hope they'll bring some friends along too! Brochures are being sent to all local churches. Please encourage suitable people to come along.

Faculty News

- The day after graduation Dr Henk de Waard will be heading west for a week of ministry amongst supporting churches in Perth, and Dr Murray Capill heads east for 9 days traveling through the North Island of New Zealand to spend time with supporting churches there. In Perth, Henk will be conducting a short course on 'The Gospel and World Religion'.
- At the end of the year Murray will be one of the main speakers at the Tasmanian Christian Convention held at Camp Clayton near Devonport. From 27 Dec to 2 Jan he'll be giving a number of messages from the book of Hebrews.

Book Corner...

(A recommendation from Alistair McEwen)

Mark D. Futato, *Interpreting the Psalms: An Exegetical Handbook*, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007.

Part of a developing series of six exegetical handbooks, Futato's volume on the Psalms, in six chapters, covers all you need to know to move from text to sermon on these songs of Zion. Clear and practical, without being simplistic or shallow, text, context, history and genre are all explained so that those following his methods will be faithful to the Word of God. Yet here are also wise and pastoral directions for putting it all together for exposition, ensuring that the "cookies are put down where the children can get them." Read this and you'll want to read, teach and preach the psalms with new zeal.

Ministry Spot...

(by Dr. Murray Capill)

In the previous two editions of *RTC Monthly* I have offered some suggestions for the shepherding work of elders. But elders are not only shepherds of God's flock, they are also stewards of God's house. They are responsible for oversight of the local church. They safeguard its doctrine, set its directions, oversee its ministries and manage its resources. Elders are leaders - and leadership is a gift (Rom 12:8, cf. 1 Tim 3:5, 5:17).

There is always the danger that this leadership role of the elders is reduced to something less than it ought to be. It may be reduced to a policing role, seeing that people are acting properly. It may be reduced to an administrative role, seeing that rules and records are being properly kept and things are run smoothly. It may be reduced to a reactive role, responding only to problems and difficulties but seldom taking new initiatives.

The role should be far more than that. Elders are responsible for the health of the church - health in all aspects of its divine calling. They are responsible for healthy teaching and sound doctrine, healthy worship that is God-centred and edifying, healthy relationships between people in the church, healthy training of the members for service, healthy use of people's gifts, healthy outreach ministries so that the church is a blessing to the community, healthy evangelism so that the gospel is spread, and healthy ministries of care and mercy so that the poor, the alienated and the marginalised experience something of the love of Christ. Other areas of spiritual health could easily be added.

Clearly, the elders cannot do all this ministry themselves and they are not meant to. But they are to be the kind of leaders who see that such ministries are developed. They are to resource, encourage, train and equip people to develop these many areas of ministry. They are to encourage initiatives. They are to spur people on in the use of their gifts. They are to set before the congregation a biblical vision of what the church is to be in this world.

In giving such a lead they will need to be people who read, pray, think, dream, plan and strategize. They will not be content with the status quo. They will not be satisfied with orthodoxy alone. They will want to see the church grow and develop. They will want to see people grow in Christ. They will want to see gospel fruit.

If they are to do all this there are at least two base-line requirements. First, the elders will need time to invest in this kind of leadership. If they are snowed under with pastoral work, behind on home-visits and drowning in problems, this work will never happen. That's why developing this kind of leadership goes hand in hand with changing the elder's shepherding role.

Secondly, the eldership will need to include people with a range of gifts. Some will need to be good at big picture thinking, some at managing and strategising, some at inspiring and mobilizing others. People with these kinds of gifts are needed in addition to those with gifts for pastoral work and for preaching and teaching. In nominating future elders a church needs to look not only for those who will be good shepherds but also those who will be good stewards.

It is a mistake to assume that the pastor himself has this full mix of gifts. Those who are gifted to teach and preach are not necessarily gifted as visionary leaders. The pastor needs alongside him elders who have gifts he doesn't have. The eldership needs to work as a team. Not all elders will have the same role on the team. They will play in different positions, but all work toward the same overall goal.

These perspectives need to shape the way the Session/Council operates. It will shape who is nominated for office as required gifts on the eldership team are considered. It will shape the role each elder plays on the team. It will shape the way time is spent at Session/Council meetings as these various aspects of stewardship are given time and micro-management is avoided. It will shape what is and what is not expected of the pastor.

When both the shepherding and stewardship aspects of eldership are taken seriously, we can expect to see increasingly healthy churches, active in the work God has called us to do.

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