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College News

- We are currently in the middle of our two week holiday period before the last burst for this year. Students face a large number of assignments due in the next few weeks, followed by exams in early November. Please remember them in prayer, asking not only that they might be successful in their studies, but that what they study and learn would equip them well for future ministry.
- Ads for a new faculty member will go out during October and we would value the prayers of all our supporters as we look to the Lord to provide the right man. We are seeking a person who will particularly help strengthen the missions and evangelism teaching of the College. We require someone with considerable ministry experience as well as good academic qualifications and a strong Reformed theological commitment. Ads will be placed strategically in Australia, New Zealand and other parts of the world.

Faculty News

- In August Dr Murray Capill spoke at a one day seminar in Box Hill, opening up some dimensions of a Christian view of work and the interface of our faith with our everyday jobs.
- Dr Steve Voorwinde and Rev. Alastair McEwen spoke at the CRCA Ministers and Wives' Conference in Sydney expounding passages on the theme, "building God's temple".
- In early September Murray Capill and Henk de Waard attended the RCNZ Synod. The Reformed Churches of New Zealand are major supporters of the College and we are thankful that the Synod again voted in favour of significant financial support for the next three years.
- Late October, the Principal, Vice-principal and Chairman of the Board head overseas for just over three weeks to look at models of theological education. They will be visiting several seminaries in the USA, attending a conference and training event on church-based theological education, checking out a couple of Bible training institutions in London and concluding with three days in Jerusalem (where Alastair McEwen will play personal tour guide for

Murray Capill and Bill Bosker). They hope the trip will help them gain perspective and ideas on current trends in theological education and ways in which other Colleges are facing the challenges of raising up leaders and training pastors for our changing cultural context, interfacing with church-based and apprenticeship models, making use of distance and intensive modes, using technology in language teaching, and so on. They will also be on the look out for potential faculty members. Your prayers for this venture would be much appreciated.

- From 2–5 October Henk de Waard will attend a missions conference in Canberra. The topic is "Christian Mission in the Public Square". This Conference is organized by the Australian Association of Mission Studies.

Preaching Workshop

Last week 100 people attended our 7th annual preaching workshop. Coming from all the Australian States and New Zealand, and representing at least eight different denominations, the attendees spent two days immersed in the book of Hebrews. Alastair McEwen opened up the Old Testament background, "talking up" the old covenant so as to show how great the fulfilment in Christ really is. Steve Voorwinde took us in to the heart of the book, showing that Hebrews is really a sermon with five major sections. Steve also had a session in which he showed us how Hebrews uses the Old Testament. Often the quotations seem hard to understand, but they make much more sense when you know the writer/preacher is quoting from the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament). Murray Capill led a session looking at ways in which preachers today can learn from the brilliant preaching style of the preacher of Hebrews; he also preached a message from Heb 12:18-25. Our guest speaker, Rev. Mike Raiter from BCV, preached from Hebrews 2 and also opened up the difficult but vital issue of how the warning passages in Hebrews work.

Together with a panel discussion, small group processing, great food and good singing, this was a most edifying couple of days. We thank the Lord for the ministry he has given us and pray it may help

strengthen and encourage biblical preaching in many churches.

If you'd like to order a copy of the CD with all the talks on it (bar one which was disrupted by a major power outage in the area), please contact the RTC office.

Ministry Spot...

Ten Commandments for Christian Leaders

(by Dr. Stephen Voorwinde)

In 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9 Paul gives a list of 36 different qualifications for Christian leaders. Most of these have to do with the leader's character. Very little is said about gifting. Perhaps the only exception is the requirement that elders should be able to teach. So whenever a church appoints, elects or calls a new leader, it is imperative that its members are good judges of character. It is also important to correctly understand the character traits that Paul emphasizes in these passages. To make things a little easier, I have boiled all the required qualities down to "ten commandments".

1. A Christian leader must have the desire to lead.

This is Paul's basic premise for everything that follows: "If anyone *sets his heart* on being an overseer, he *desires* a noble task" (1 Tim 3:1). Obviously it is unwise to force anyone into Christian leadership against their will. If you are to be leader in the church – whether a minister, elder or deacon – it is because you want to do it, because it is your God-given desire. You dare not become a leader because someone else has twisted your arm or talked you into it.

2. A leader must have a good reputation.

Again and again in the above lists Paul uses terms such as "above reproach", "respectable" and "blameless." This is not the counsel of perfection. Rather these words describe the leader's outward, observable behaviour. A blameless person is not perfect, but will not be found doing what he plainly knows to be wrong. His reputation will be so good that it extends beyond the walls of the church (1 Tim 3:7).

3. A leader must display a holy, gentle and self-controlled Christian character.

Because of the nature of their work leaders must be people of a gentle disposition. They must not be violent, quarrelsome or overbearing. This means that anyone who cannot control their temper is not yet fit for Christian leadership. Life doesn't get any easier in leadership. Stress, frustration and fatigue come with the territory. In leadership situations outbursts of anger can only be destructive to the life of the church.

4. A leader must have a healthy family life.

Like charity, leadership begins at home: "If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?" (1 Tim 3:5). But this qualification raises some interesting questions. Of both

elders and deacons Paul says that "he must be the husband of one wife." This clearly does not mean that single people are ineligible for office. After all, Paul was single – and so was Timothy. Even a divorced man is not disqualified, so long as his divorce was on biblical grounds. If children are involved, Paul says they must be "faithful children not accused of riot or unruly" (Titus 1:6 KJV). It is sadly true that the children of some very godly men grow to an adulthood of unbelief and rebellion against God. This does not necessarily disqualify their fathers from holding office. What Paul has in mind is the home situation where children are submissive to their father and do not behave in the community in such a way as to bring scandal against the name of Christ.

5. A leader must not abuse alcohol.

Neither elders nor deacons (for obvious reasons) can afford to indulge in alcoholic beverages. Paul is not telling them to be total abstainers, although complete abstinence can certainly be regarded as a viable Christian option. If there are those who like the occasional drop, they had best leave it at that – the occasional drop.

6. A leader must have a proper attitude towards money.

Elders and deacons must not be lovers of money or pursue dishonest gain. Financial integrity and accountability are ever so important. More often than not it's financial sins and sexual sins that scandals are made of.

7. A leader must be able to teach.

This applies especially to elders who should be able to "encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it" (Titus 1:9). This does not necessarily imply that the elder has to be a gifted public speaker. It does mean that he has such a practical knowledge of Scripture that he can apply it to the life of the individual on a one-to-one basis.

8. A leader must know how to control his tongue.

Leaders with loose lips can be a disaster. A leaking session is detrimental to any church. People must know that sensitive information is safe with their leaders.

9. A leader must not be a new convert.

We all know that new converts can be a sheer delight. They are fresh, keen and enthusiastic. For any church it's always a temptation to give them more responsibility than they can handle. But Paul warns that that could be playing right into the devil's hands (1 Tim 3:6). It runs the real danger of swell-headedness.

10. A leader must be trustworthy and dependable.

This really sums up all the other qualifications. It applies to all the main areas of life – family, money, language, teaching and behaviour.

All of this raises the question whether in real life such people can actually be found. When carefully considered, most of these qualities describe mature Christian character. They are largely character-based and not gift-based. As churches we are in the business of producing mature Christians. So at any given point in time there should be ample people to choose from. Paul is not setting unrealistic targets. In writing to Timothy and Titus he is at his most practical and pastoral. He is setting minimum and not maximum requirements. Hence when it comes to calling a minister or voting for new elders and deacons, we should not be looking for those who meet most of the requirements but for those who meet all of the requirements. Anything less and we're asking for trouble.