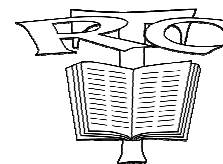


RTC Monthly

No. 29 1 December 2008



College News

- Our annual Graduation ceremony was held on 21 November. Nine students graduated or valedicted with diplomas or degrees and a further six students received certificates for completion of one of our evening courses.
- Lecturers have just completed the marking process and have sent off grades for approval by the Australian College of Theology. Students can expect results just before Christmas.
- Please join us in praying for a good intake of students at the start of 2009. At the very least we would love to see more new students than the number who completed at the end of this year so that the College community grows. Long term we are praying for a student body of at least 60 students so that there is a dynamic community at the College and a sufficient number of workers being trained for our supporting churches.

Fan the flame

Early next year we will hold our third annual *Fan the Flame* conference – 7-9 March. Designed for people thinking about future ministry and mission opportunities or people interested in doing some theological study, the weekend will again address key questions: What is pastoral ministry like? What does it mean to be called to the ministry? What gifts are required? What training is needed? What is it like to spend time at a theological college? What mission opportunities exist and what training is required?

We hope churches will again send young and not so young people who show potential for ministry. The past two conferences have been very inspiring and helpful. Please pray this one will be just as useful for those who come.

News from the Board

The RTC Board of Directors met on Friday 21 November 2008. This meeting brought to a conclusion a year of planning and strategising. Highlights of the meeting were. . .

1. The adoption of a new statement of **Core Values** with an accompanying action plan to ensure that these values are not just statements on paper but are actually shaping the culture of the College.
2. A report on the **Overseas Trip** undertaken by the Chairman, Bill Bosker, Principal, Murray Capill, and Vice-Principal, Alastair McEwen. Among many lessons learnt the Board noted:
 - the vital place of prayer in raising students
 - the value of developing the College's focus on spiritual formation

- ways of reviewing our approach to language teaching so as to maximise the computer tools now available
- the value of recognising that we don't have to try to teach students everything there is to know, but we must teach them how to become life-long learners
- the importance of clarifying our Reformed distinctives so that they are not in any way lost or minimised
- the value of looking at student workloads so that the College encourages a balance in their academic, ministry and spiritual formation
- the value of introducing some inter-disciplinary studies
- the desirability of establishing a scholarship so that select students could be sent to undertake a short-course at Jerusalem University College

Many other perspectives on ministry training were gained during the trip and have helped inform our planning process.

3. A paper presenting a **new Ministry Training model** that will be developed at the RTC over the next few years.

The paper considered both the strengths and weaknesses of the two dominant models used for training church workers – the theological college (or seminary) model and the church-based/apprenticeship model. The new model proposed still offers a four year theological training course as we have at present, but it seeks to integrate the two approaches, maximising the strengths of each. The model proposes 2+ years of Church-based training (focussing on ministry skills, assessment of gifts and character, church planting, evangelism, leadership etc.) during which students would also begin degree level studies via RTC intensives, distance courses and language studies. This would then be followed by 2 years of RTC-based training (focussing on exegesis, theology, preaching, Reformed distinctives etc.) for the completion of a B.Th. The College would work hard at integration of the two phases so that the content, theology and emphases of both are fully compatible. Material from BILD University in the United States will be trialled as possible material for some of the church-based subjects.

In the year ahead this model will be discussed in detail with churches, and the College will work toward developing the courses necessary to make it effective from 2010 onwards. The College will look to appoint a part-time staff member to help in the delivery of the new model.

The existing model of 4 years on-campus training will continue to be available in the future.

4. **Staffing matters were considered.** The position of Lecturer in Missions has been advertised and our prayer is that we will have a short list of candidates to be interviewed at the next Board meeting in April '09. It was also noted that the College could do with further assistance in academic administration. The Board will investigate funding a part-time position from later in 2009.

5. The Executive presented the Board with three options for developing a more focused ministry of the College toward **churches in Geelong**. Already half of our students come from the local area and there is potential to build that ministry. The Board decided to adopt the option of a Geelong Bible college venture being established as a division of the RTC.

6. The **Treasurer's Report** indicated that it has been a good year financially ending with a small surplus. The Budget for 2009 (a balanced budget) was approved, though additional funding must be found if the part-time positions of Academic Registrar and Church-based training co-ordinator are to be established.

It was, in summary, a very full and profitable meeting in which strategic decisions for the future were made. As the Chairman said in his report, "We really sense the Lord is up to something in dealing with us and in directing us." We realize that in the year to come much work and prayer will be needed to implement these plans, but we proceed with a sense of excitement and purpose.

New Core Values

The new core values adopted by the Board are as follows...

1. The Word of God must be central in ministry

We are committed to the centrality of Word ministries in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. We therefore place high value on the importance of training people to know God's Word well, love it with all their heart, submit their lives to it, exegete it accurately and minister it boldly, faithfully and skilfully.

We believe effective Word ministry is built on a strong biblical theology. The Bible is the unfolding story of God's redemptive purposes in this world. We therefore value Bible training that exposes people to the whole story of the Bible, enabling them to see all the parts in the light of the whole, and teaching them to see themselves, the world and the work of the church today in the light of the biblical narrative.

2. Mission is at the heart of the church's calling

The gospel is the power of God for the salvation of all who believe. It is to be spread throughout the world so that disciples are made of all nations and the church is built up to the full number of the elect. That is God's mission and it must be ours as well.

We therefore value ministry training that imparts to people a profound grasp of the gospel, models for them

a passionate commitment to live and minister the gospel in every part of life, and equips them to live as missionaries. Our post-Christendom, post-modern context demands that churches and church leaders must think and operate as missionaries. We value training that creates in people a mission mindset and gives them the tools to be effective leaders of mission-driven churches.

3. Theology must speak to the culture of the day

We are committed to our theology speaking to the issues of our day, as it did at the time of the Reformation. Our commitment to the system of doctrine set out in the Reformed confessions must be a commitment not only to uphold the historic Reformed faith but also to address the issues of our culture. We therefore value the development of a distinctively Reformed apologetic for post-modern culture and the cultivation of a Reformed world and life view for the 21st century.

4. The local church must be integrally involved in all ministry training

We believe the local church is primarily responsible for the training and equipping of its members for ministry. Insofar as the church uses the special skills and resources of a theological college to assist in such training, the training must remain integrated with the local church context.

We therefore value training that is structured so that students remain strongly involved in local church ministry, theoretical studies are interfaced with extensive ministry experience, and local church ministry is the prime context for developing skills, shaping character and assessing competence.

We are committed to the College working closely with churches to equip a broad range of ministry leaders for local churches: teachers, preachers, pastors, leaders, evangelists, missionaries, church planters, home group leaders, disciplers, etc.

5. Ministry training must shape people's hearts and minds

We believe theological education must be both spiritually and academically formative. It should form people spiritually so that they are committed to growing in devotion to Christ, to passion for the gospel, to prayerful dependence on the Holy Spirit and to seriousness about personal holiness. It should form them academically so that they are committed to studying, researching, analysing, evaluating, critiquing and writing with acumen in the fields of theology and ministry.

We therefore value theological education that combines these emphases and in this way helps students develop their full potential in Christ and enables them to serve God with all their heart, mind, soul and strength.

This formation must take place in the context of a spiritually vibrant community where there is constant encouragement and modelling of spiritual character, godly passion and rigorous study.