



MONTHLY

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The New Face of the RTC

Over the past two years we've been planning and implementing a new model for the RTC so as to expand and improve our ministry. This week three more large steps have been taken with the launching of new RTC branding, a new website and the announcement of our new Melbourne CBD campus location. On Friday 7 October we held a special lunch to celebrate the launch of these new initiatives.

This new era in the RTC's ministry called for a new, fresh look. We want to be known as a College that is accessible, not daunting and institutional.

A New Logo

This new era in the RTC's ministry called for a new, fresh look. We engaged Tanya Deenick, a graphic designer, to find a way of conveying in a logo the values we stand for. Tanya attended Friday's launch and explained that the new logo seeks to bring an inviting feel to our mission. We want to be known as a College that is accessible, not daunting and institutional.



The logo carries the tagline, "Christ-centred training for life and ministry". That is at the heart of our mission as we train men and women of all ages and from many denominations for service in God's church and kingdom. Our Christ-centred training is done in a rich learning environment and so the iconic book (or tablet if you prefer), reflective both of our commitment to God's Word and to great Christian literature, embodies our focus on diligent study of the Scriptures and of theology. The joining of the book and speech bubble implies engagement and conversation. We don't study in isolation, but in constant interaction and conversation with each other and the culture around us. Finally, in the centre of the letters - RTC - there is a cross, indicating the centrality of Jesus and the gospel to our ministry training. This new era in the RTC's ministry called for a new, fresh look.

Tanya explained that the logo can be used in a variety of flexible ways, with a range of colours and design options. The new logo marks what the RTC stands for: reformed evangelical training that is attractive and accessible, and deeply rooted in God's Word as students are equipped for Christ-centred life and ministry.



A New Website

At the Launch we also welcomed Neil Evenden, from Heartburst Digital, the company that has designed our new website. Its fresh, modern design and ease of navigation will enable people wanting to know more about the RTC to access information quickly and easily. It also reflects the culture of our new location in the Melbourne CBD.

The website has been tailored so that prospective students wanting to pursue a particular area of ministry or training can follow links to find out how the RTC can help equip them.

There are also areas for those who want to support the RTC. You'll find a space to register as an

RTC member or supporter. Members have the opportunity to shape the present and future direction of the RTC, while supporters will remain informed about College events, requests for prayer and financial support, and other news made available through our monthly newsletter and bi-annual publication. Anyone may register as a supporter or assist the ministry of the RTC through prayer, financial giving, “liking” our Facebook page, passing on RTC news, or offering feedback about our services and activities.

We owe much thanks to Justin Hill, our Promotions Office, Yolande Vandenberg, our marketing consultant, Tanya Deenick, graphic designer, and Chris Bongers, Business Manager, who have worked tirelessly on this project over the last few months. This website is now live and we encourage you to go and have a look www.rtc.edu.au



A New Campus in the Melbourne CBD

At the heart of the new RTC model is our move to the Melbourne CBD. This is an exciting location for teaching and learning. Melbourne, famously regarded as the world’s most liveable city, is a bustling multicultural city of four million people, known for its café culture, retail, arts and sports precincts.

At Friday’s launch, we announced that the College has acquired premises at Level 3, 221 Queen Street. This places us right in the middle of the CBD grid and in the centre of Melbourne’s train and tram network, making it easily accessible from anywhere in Melbourne, or regional centres like Geelong. It locates us closer to many of our supporting churches as well as other churches looking for reformed evangelical training. It opens up scope for inner city workers and dwellers to study at the RTC, and enables us to network with other Melbourne CBD ministries. It also positions us in an ideal location for students and lecturers flying in from other States or overseas. The CBD is a 20–25 minute bus ride from the airport, and offers a host of attractive accommodation options.

This new campus really is an answer to prayer. Due to the very generous assistance and financial investment of a number of RTC supporters, we have not only been able to secure excellent funding for the Child Care Centre that we are building in Geelong, but have now also had this property in Melbourne purchased specifically with a view to us leasing it for our Melbourne CBD campus. It is an incredible provision.

The new Melbourne CBD campus will allow for two classrooms, faculty offices and reception, a

student common area and a satellite library. The building will be fitted out in the latter part of this year in readiness for classes in February 2017. Our facilities in Geelong will now be known as the RTC Resource Centre, where faculty offices, administration, full library services and other ministries will be located.

Please join us in praising God for this wonderful provision.

An Exciting Future

The new RTC model is about securing a strong and exciting future for the College. We remain dependent on the Lord for our endeavours to succeed. We have already seen his amazing provisions and we continue to look to him to enable us to grow the ministry of the College and train many effective gospel and kingdom workers.

To support the work we are doing, please:

- Praise God for these exciting new developments
- Join us in praying for the Lord to bless this work to his own glory
- Register as an RTC Supporter so we can keep you informed about what we are doing.
- Consider giving a donation to the RTC to help financially with the costs of the new model.



College Life

It was great to welcome about 90 people to our annual Preaching Conference. Over two days, attendees from churches around Australia and New Zealand, were stimulated by input on each part of the book of Genesis, and on the gospel promises that God made then and is fulfilling today.

At the Preaching Conference we were delighted to again welcome Rev Augn Win, Principal of the RTC Myanmar, and their Academic Dean, Rev. Rolin San. We are so pleased to be able to partner with them as a very similar College to ours in a very different setting. Rev. Aung Win also joined us this week to speak at College devotions.

Dr Phillip Scheepers has just returned from a short trip to India where he has been involved in helping train Indian church planters. You can read more about this in Phillip's Ministry Spot below. We now use the RTC's Overseas Student Fund to send our lecturers for short-term teaching blocks in places like this as it is the most strategic way for us to invest equipping pastors for ministry in developing countries.

Regular lectures at RTC have begun again this week. Please pray for the students as they face deadlines for assessments and then the exam period. Our keen desire is that they don't only do well academically, but that their studies challenge and inspire them as they are equipped to serve the Lord for many years to come.



Ministry Spot: Helping without Hurting

by Dr Phillip Scheepers

I am writing this Ministry Spot in India where I was involved in a training seminar for church planters working under the banner of the Christian Reformed Fellowship of India (CRFI). This ministry is strongly supported by GOSPEL (a mission project of the CRCA). It was a wonderful privilege to meet with these brothers and to learn from them about their gospel work in very difficult circumstances. They minister to the poorest of the poor, often in very remote villages, and do so with a zeal and dedication that is humbling to behold. On the last evening of the seminar I attended a celebration marking ten years since the founding of CRFI. About 800 of the 6300 believers associated with this work attended and it was wonderful to rejoice with them in the great things the Lord has done.

As I looked at the faces in the hall I reflected on the fact that the 'centre of gravity' of world Christianity is shifting dramatically. At the beginning of the 20th century, four out of five Christians lived in the West. If current trends continue that ratio will be almost exactly reversed by the middle of this century, with only one out of every five Christians living in the West. The spread of the church to the 'ends of the earth' is obviously a great cause for rejoicing. It does, however, bring with it some challenges for us as Western Christians.

The reality is that while the majority of Christians are now found outside of the Western world the same cannot be said for Christian resources. The vast majority of colleges and seminaries, publishing houses and financial resources, are still under the control of Western Christians. The question about how these resources can best be harnessed to serve the church in the majority

world is, therefore, of critical importance.

In supporting ministries in other countries Western churches can often veer between two equally unhelpful extremes. On the one hand there is the paternalistic approach where an attempt is made to control every aspect of the life of the church that is being supported, in order to make it as much of a clone of the supporting church as possible. The other approach is the Christian equivalent of 'cheque book diplomacy' where the supporting church essentially sends money and hopes for the best.

The problems associated with the two extremes mentioned above are legion and have caused significant damage to the Christian cause in the majority world. A paternalistic approach is likely to entrench dependence since the church that is being supported can rely on constant outside support as long as they adhere to the wishes of those giving the support. In the process such churches can often become culturally estranged from their wider contexts as they attempt to adhere to often culturally inappropriate models of ministry imposed on them by their benefactors.

So is simply sending money and letting the local church get on with things the answer? Unfortunately, this is not the case. Sending large sums of money into often desperately poor settings without proper checks and balances can be a recipe for disaster. There have been far too many instances in the past where such 'assistance' proved anything but helpful as churches had to struggle with the fallout from corruption and misappropriation of funds.

The issues mentioned above cannot simply be ignored by Christians from relatively affluent settings who are involved in partnering with overseas churches. We must remember that we are ultimately all part of the Body of Christ and that the, often well-meaning, actions of one part of the body can have a significant negative impact on another part. I, therefore, strongly advocate that every local church who is involved overseas should constantly and honestly ask themselves a basic question: Are we helping or harming the local church?

In answering the 'hurting or helping' question we should look at specific ways in which we can come alongside churches in the majority world without entrenching culturally inappropriate models and dependence. It should be noted that this can and should never be a one-way street. There is also much that we can learn from churches in the majority world.

The issue of how the relationships between resource-rich and younger (mostly resource poor) churches can best be managed for the sake of the kingdom is not a new one. We would, in fact, be hard pressed to improve on a set of goals formulated towards the end of the 19th century by Henry Venn (Church Missionary Society) and Rufus Anderson (American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions). This is known as the 'Three Selves'. Venn and Anderson strongly campaigned for the adoption of these 'selves' as a way of combatting perpetual dependence and relationships in which one partner (usually the Western church) totally dominate the life and governance of the other. The 'selves' are a way of avoiding this outcome and of helping newer churches to eventually thrive without outside assistance. They are:

Self-Governing: Supporting churches should work towards a time when the newer churches they support will be able to handle their own affairs without any outside involvement. This does not mean that the supporting church will completely cut ties, just that local governance will eventually be the norm with the supporting church taking a more consultative role as a friendly supporting voice. Within the Reformed context this would mean that training and appointing local elders should take a very high priority.

Self-Supporting: It is often necessary to support new churches financially (and with other resources) as they are getting established. Support given in this way should, however, never be seen as something that will continue indefinitely. The younger church should be helped to eventually reach a point where they can sustain their ministry through locally available resources. In some cases, (e.g. extremely impoverished situations) this will quite likely be a

long-term goal but it is still one that should be vigorously pursued. In the process, biblical teaching on Christian stewardship will have to be emphasised.

Self-Propagating: Think plants, not politics in this case! Younger churches should not be dependent on outsiders to come and share the gospel in their communities. Western (or other) outsiders, although essential in the early stages of reaching an unreached people group, will normally be at a significant linguistic and cultural disadvantage when it comes to sharing the gospel in majority world contexts. The emphasis should, therefore, be to equip local believers for the work of evangelism in their own cultures. This is potentially a very fruitful area for Western cross-cultural workers to be involved in.

If I may be so bold, I would like to add a fourth 'self' to Venn and Anderson's original formula. This is 'Self-theologising'. By this I obviously do not mean that non-Western churches have to develop completely new theologies from scratch! What I do mean is that leaders and believers should be helped to do 'theology in context'. In other words, instead of simply training them to answer the theological questions being asked in the West, we should focus on helping them to interpret Scripture so that they can find biblical answers for the big questions of their own society and culture.

To cite but one example, survey after survey has shown that African Christian leaders are very often asked about a Christian view on ancestor veneration and witchcraft. It is probably fair to say that these issues are not near the top of the priority list of Western theological education curricula. However, if African Christians can be well trained to interpret and apply Scripture, half the battle will be won as they will be able to find the answers in God's Word for themselves. I am, therefore, convinced that one of the greatest gifts we as members of resource-rich churches can give the church in the majority world is Scripture, not only in terms of physical copies (although that is vital as well) but in terms of helping them to come to a point where the Word of Christ will dwell richly among them (cf. Colossians 3:16).

I am thankful that the values mentioned above are deeply ingrained in the core convictions and ethos of GOSPEL/CRFI and it was a real privilege to come alongside them, albeit only briefly, as they trained their workers for biblically sound and culturally appropriate witness in the villages of India. Much more needs to be done around the world however. Please pray with me that the Lord will raise up many more such partnerships for the building of healthy churches and the spread of the gospel among every tribe, language, people and nation (cf. Revelation 5:9).



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