Think 2050

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It can be strange to anticipate the future. I remember as a boy working out how old I would be in the year 2000. I realized I would be 36! It seemed so old at the time, yet now it seems so young! I also remember as teen watching the movie 2001: A Space Odyssey and reading George Orwell’s novel, 1984, before 1984! The dates seemed futuristic and iconic, but now they are far behind us. The future comes faster than we expect and, thankfully, it is often not as bad or as weird as we imagine.

At the same time, the future is very different from the present. The world now is a very different place from when I was young. We have lived through vast changes in the last 30 years and these changes are continuing at a rapid rate.

Although it is hard to project ourselves into the future, take a moment to think forward to 2050, which is only 35 years away. How old will you be? How old will your pastor be? How many pastors in your denomination will still be in ministry? If your pastor then is 40 years old, how old is he now?

The reality is, by 2050 most people reading this article will either be retired or will have passed to glory. Most current ministers in our churches will have been replaced. And a pastor aged forty then, is just five years old now. You probably need to look in the Sunday School to find your 2050 pastor!

But whose job is it to look? Whose responsibility is it to raise up new leaders for the church and the work of the gospel? Whose task is it to train and equip them for ministry?

The vision statement of the RTC is “to raise, equip and support a generation of leaders for the advance of the gospel.” It is a vision we cherish. We want to be serious about raising up future leaders, equipping them for lifetime ministries and then doing what we can to support and encourage them with resources and conferences once they are in ministry. We want to see an entire new generation of gospel leaders.

But the question must be asked, is that really the job of a theological college? Is it not primarily the task of the church? Ephesians 4:11-12 says very plainly that the risen Christ has given to the church “pastors and teachers to equip God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up…” Churches are responsible for training and equipping all their members to serve as the Lord has gifted them. And as they train and deploy them in ministry, some will evidence gifts for teaching and preaching, for leadership, for evangelism, and for training and equipping others.

Those with such gifts must be urged to use them. Their gifts must be cultivated. They should be encouraged to engage in ministry opportunities; they should be
mentored; they should be urged to read books that stretch their thinking and deepen their faith; they should be helped to grow in their biblical and theological knowledge.

Local churches are the best places for this kind of growth and cultivation of ministry gifts. But there will often be a point at which leaders in the local church want to outsource some of this training. They would love to see someone stretched further theologically, or given a stronger grounding in church history, or learn the biblical languages so they can dig deeper into God’s Word.

That is where a college like the RTC fits into the picture. We are blessed with lecturers and resources to take the training of ministry leaders further than most local churches can manage. But a theological college is simply a servant of the local church; it is but an extension of the raising, training and supporting of leaders which is the primary responsibility of the church.

So our vision to raise, equip and support a generation of leaders is but a response to the churches’ commission to do this. Every church needs to be watching out for those with ministry gifts that can be cultivated and developed. As you look at the children and young people in your church, watch for those with leadership gifts. Watch for those with gifts of communication. Watch especially for those with a great heart for the church and for God’s Word.

If our churches are to have powerful preachers, strong leaders, gifted church planters, and passionate overseas missionaries in 2050, they need to be identified, encouraged and trained now.

Many sporting codes have scouts who attend junior games, actively looking for young talent. Cirque du Soleil has an international team of scouts on the lookout for acrobats and performing artists. How much more important for churches to be constantly looking for the next generation of pastors and preachers.

The future will come faster than we think. 2050 is not so far away and we need to be raising our next generation of pastors and church leaders now – and they are in the crèche, the Sunday School, the youth club, and also the neighbourhood. There are young people, yet to be led to Jesus, who will be wonderful blessings in the church in the future.

We all need to look forward and look around if we are to raise, equip and support a new generation of gospel workers. And we need to look up. Pray that God would raise up, among our children and young people, a new generation of gospel leaders.
RTC Orientation BBQ

As well as all the usual academic orientation, new RTC students had the chance to get to know the staff and other students at the orientation BBQ. A good time was had by all as we met new people and caught up with each other on how our summer break had gone. And most importantly - lots of sausages were cooked!

Graeme Zuidema took the lead in welcoming the students by passing out ‘Introduction packs’ from the Student Fellowship Committee. Everything necessary for survival at the RTC was included - a table tennis ball, coffee pods, Freddo’s, and most importantly a ‘Know your lecturers’ cheat sheet. After all, it is important to know what’s going to get you into trouble with which lecturers!

From the oldest (Graeme Hamill clocking in at 80+!) to the youngest (Simon & Ansell are expecting a new little one!) - it was a good time for the RTC community to get back into things and encourage each other as we embark on another year of loving and serving God in our study of His word!

New Houseparents for Barkley Hall

At the end of 2014 Michael and Jane Elliott’s term as House Parents came to an end and we want to publicly express our deep thanks to Mick and Jane for the time they devoted to their task in Barkley Hall. It is much appreciated and residents have been greatly blessed through their ministry.

In the meantime the College is thankful for Noel and Dianne Williams who answered the call to the role as houseparents. We are grateful to the Lord that Noel and Dianne have been found willing to serve and the zeal and commitment they have shown in settling in to the task. We hope they will be able to serve for years to come!

To give the RTC community and our readers some insight into who the new houseparents are Noel has contributed the following profile. He writes:

`My wife Dianne tells me that when we married nearly 42 years ago my mum told her, “you do realise you’re marrying a Gipsy.” The truth is my mum was right, although I like to think of it as a wonderful adventure of life which we have been able to share together.

Dianne and I grew up in Tasmania. I grew up in Launceston and Dianne in Georgetown. Dianne loved ballet and danced in many productions and eventually ran her own dance studio. We met at a production as my cousin was her dance teacher. I went on to live and work in Sydney and returned some years later where we met again, fell in love and married.

Our first child, Adam, was born and a year later we both committed our lives to Jesus; I in Sydney, preparing a move for us to live there, and Di in Georgetown at
her mother’s church where we were married. Our life adventure was just beginning as we walked with the Lord together.

We attended an inner city Anglican Church that was growing with the addition of many young couples like us. I worked for Grace Bros. Bondi and later worked with CMS, supporting young people thinking of working in the mission field. Our daughter Emily was born in Sydney, but we returned to Launceston as it was easier to live there while I began my degree in Social Work at the University of Tasmania.

While studying we had our second son Caleb and once graduated I worked as a Medical Social Worker while Dianne began work as the Community Outreach Worker for the Uniting Church. After a time I was asked to start a ministry called Christian Care Ministry and I was supported to attend a 6-months training school at Fuller Seminary in Los Angeles. I lived in a shared mission house just off Hollywood Boulevard where I worked getting kids off the streets and forwarding them to other supporting ministries around the USA. Dianne very graciously allowed me to go and was outstanding in her support and care of our family.

On my return I ran the ministry which had the support of many churches and the local City Mission. However after some time I felt a strong call to Church Ministry and together with my dear wife and children packed up and moved to Melbourne as a candidate for ordination in the Uniting Church to which we had belonged for the past 7 years. Dianne as always, now that the children were at school, worked part time in the Theological Library at Melbourne University and loved it. Later she also worked at the Ridley College Library.

I was ordained in 1990 and pastored several churches in the Bellarine district of Geelong. Some years later I planted an independent church near Portarlington called Church-by-the-Bay. Later, when our children had left home, we helped support inner city ministries in Edinburgh and Hollywood. We continued to pastor several Baptist churches and plant several new ministries and churches in Tasmania and back in Geelong.

We had one more opportunity for ministry overseas, namely to Aberdeen and Edinburgh for 6 months, helping with an international outreach based around the Edinburgh Festival. After our return Dianne very rightly asked for period of settling down. She was right to ask as we were about to become grandparents.

Since that time we are grateful to have bought a house at Drysdale and welcomed three grandchildren and new in-laws. However, I have continued to work in various capacities including Chaplain to the Building and Construction Industry as well as CFA chaplain and running a pre-release program at Port Phillip Prison. The last few years I have undertaken a small business supporting several young adults with mental health issues who are funded by the National Disability Insurance Scheme pilot program based in the Barwon area.

Since the beginning of this year my ever faithful wife has followed me yet again as we take on the House Parents/Chaplain role here at Barkley Hall - part of the RTC. So I believe my mum’s word to Dianne when we married was a little prophetic, but we wouldn’t change a thing. We wonder what’s around the corner for us next!

God has never disappointed us and he never will!
Graduation 2015

Our annual graduation service was held on 27th February and it was a wonderful celebration of God's faithfulness and blessings. Twenty students were eligible for awards that ranged from the Master of Divinity to the Diploma of Theology. Twelve of these were able to join us on the night. Many of those who could not come are already engaged in ministry across Australia and New Zealand. Apologies also came in from as far afield as China and South Sudan. It was indeed a notable feature of this year's graduation that many former students are engaged in, or preparing for, world mission.

Candidates were presented to Mr Tony Deenick (Chairman of the RTC Board) by Dr Murray Capill. Murray gave a brief overview of the life, study and ministry journey of each of the candidates before the awards were presented. It was striking to see how God brought people from a wide variety of backgrounds to the RTC to be immersed in His Word and shaped for ministry.

After the presentation of the awards a word of farewell was addressed to the graduates by Dr Phillip Scheepers.

Mr Nathanael Thierry responded to this on behalf of the students. In his speech he compared the RTC to a ‘cottage industry’ where the emphasis is not on mass production but on personal involvement in the lives of students. He thanked everyone at the RTC for investing in the ministry formation of students in this way.

The address was given by Rev Peter Hastie (Principal of the Presbyterian Theological College in Melbourne). Rev Hastie reminded graduates of the example of Christ in washing the feet of his disciples (John 13:1-17) and held this up as the ultimate model of Christian servanthood. Rev Hastie powerfully brought home the message that this kind of servant leadership is desperately needed in a world where self-centredness and personal aggrandisement so often carry the day.

It was a real blessing to be able to celebrate this milestone in the lives of the graduates and our prayer is that God will use all of them powerfully in the building of His Kingdom.
Can I be sure?

Former Sydney Archbishop, Dr Peter Jensen, speaks at RTC.

On April 28 we had the privilege of listening to Dr Peter Jensen as he spoke on the topic: Can I be sure?.

He was in Geelong to speak at Deakin University at the invitation of the Australian Fellowship of Evangelical students. Dr Jensen has been involved in a number of public events, including the Q&A program on television, where he has been able to give a defence of the Gospel. He has the ability to do that clearly, uncompromisingly, yet graciously.

Being next door to Deakin University, Peter Jensen graciously accepted the invitation to speak at RTC as he spoke on `Christian Assurance', which he defined as a proper confidence in the presence of a holy God. He noted that some Christians have no assurance while others are presumptuous and base their confidence on their performance. `Assurance deficit' in churches has resulted in distorted piety.

Dr Jensen, after a long introduction, spoke on Romans 5 where we find the basis for assurance. He pointed out that until we see our utter sinfulness (we are sinners, ungodly, enemies of God) we cannot have assurance. We are great sinners, but we have a great Saviour! It is the mustard seed of faith in Christ that saves. In Him we see God's face turned toward us (5:1). With God's face toward us we are peaceful, calm, joyful and gracious as we are shaped and moulded to make us more like Jesus.

The basis for assurance is that 'God has poured out his love into our hearts...' vs.5; it is God's love for us that gives assurance, not our love for Him!

It is the Holy Spirit who moves us to turn to the cross of Christ as the ground of our assurance. It is then that we begin to see the signs of God's power and presence everywhere!

In his introduction Dr Jensen illustrated how our western cultural context has robbed many of their Christian assurance. `God has died in the consciousness of the West', he said. Movements that can undermine assurance are Moralism, which bases acceptance with God on performance; Deism which sees God as removed from this world; and Naturalism which holds that there is no God. In the face of these challenges, Christians ask: Is God at work? Do we see signs of His power? To avoid living with an arid spirituality many search for an experience of a living God. This search is a quest for assurance.

However, experience is not the basis for assurance. Dependence on experience will not enable a Christian to withstand the acid of doubt.
Distance Education

Have you ever thought about theological education, but your life stage or location make it difficult? Then the RTC distance programme may be exactly what you are looking for.

The RTC was one of the pioneers of online education within the Australian College of Theology (ACT) and over the years our programme has grown from strength to strength.

We currently have 12 units (in Old Testament, New Testament, Theology, Ethics, Worldview, Evangelism and Mission and Church History) available online.

Prospective students can complete a full Grad Dip of Divinity online, and students who would like to progress to an RTC MDiv or BTh are able to complete a significant portion of their studies online before transitioning to more traditional modes of delivery.

So what are some of the possible benefits associated with studying online with the RTC?

• you will be able to study at your own pace and at times that suit you
• it may be possible to undertake your studies while maintaining your current work and family commitments
• if you are involved in some kind of Christian ministry you will be able to apply what you are learning as you are learning it
• all units offered through our online programme are fully accredited by the ACT and are pitched at the same level as our on-campus units
• units successfully completed can be seamlessly included in ACT accredited qualifications offered by the RTC or other ACT colleges
• a very user friendly system called Moodle is utilised to deliver our online units

• online units are taught by RTC lecturers and you can regularly interact with them through online forums or email
• there is another human on the other side of the computer screen to help guide your learning

While you may be physically separated from other students you’re not studying alone. Online forums, where you can discuss what you are learning with other students, form an integral part of all our distance units.

For any enquiries please contact Phillip Scheepers, or check out www.ecampus.rtc.edu.au

We are convinced that our online units can be of great benefit to those seeking to be equipped to serve the Lord Jesus.
raise...equip...support

For the past 60 years God has faithfully supported the work of the College. Often His instruments have been members and supporters generously providing gifts, small or large.

We continually thank God for His amazing provisions and for the grace with which He sustains the ministry and vision of the RTC: to see God’s Word faithfully taught and applied.

Our greatest desire is to see students, men and women, studying to preach, teach and live the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our greatest need is prayer; supporters who will uphold the board, faculty, staff and students before God, praying for His guidance, wisdom and provision.

Please pray for the RTC:
• that God would send students for training
• that He would support the work He has established at the College
• that He would lead and direct the work of the RTC
• that God would be honoured and glorified through the ongoing ministry of the College

Consider how you could partner with the RTC - training and equipping people for Christian ministry in Australia, New Zealand and around the world.

Soli Deo Gloria

Yes, I would like to help the College...

All donations over $2 are tax-deductible in Australia

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