Reputation

Murray Capill
Principal

Consciously or otherwise, we build a reputation over time. Some people build a reputation for being reliable, dependable, competent, friendly or wise. Others build a reputation for always being late, or difficult, or erratic, or unreliable. Unfortunately, it is easier to build a bad reputation than a good one because, as President Benjamin Franklin said, “It takes many good deeds to build a good reputation, and only one bad one to lose it.”

Significantly, one of the biblical qualifications of an elder in the church is that they must have a good reputation with outsiders (1 Tim 3:7). To be a leader in the church, even those outside the church should recognize you to be a person of good character. No doubt this is partly because a great test of character is what others, who do not share your faith, think of you. But it is also because the entire church will develop a reputation based, at least in part, on the kind of leaders they have. They will also develop a reputation from a range of other factors, including the people they attract, the lives of their members, their style of worship, views on morality, facilities and programs.

It is useful to ask, what is the reputation of our church? How are we perceived by others? How does the community regard us? How do other churches see us? Of course ultimately only God's opinion of us matters. When Jesus addressed the churches in Asia Minor he wrote to the church of Sardis, “You have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead” (Rev 3:1). Clearly, our reputation with people may not actually reflect reality.

That does not mean, however, that we should be impervious to what others think of us. We want to live lives that adorn the gospel (Titus 2:10), and we must do all we can to avoid putting a stumbling block in anyone's way. It is a tragedy that the current sexual abuse scandals that are being exposed in Australian churches and religious institutions, for example, greatly damage the reputation of the church, bringing shame on Christ and the gospel.

Even in day to day life, we recognize that we constantly make choices based on reputation. Why do you buy one brand and not another? Why do we go with this internet provider and not that one? Businesses, schools, shops, even towns, and cities develop a reputation. Melbourne is reckoned to be the most liveable city in the world.

Since reputation matters, we have been taking a long look at the RTC's reputation as well. How are we perceived? What are we known for and what do we want to be known for?

Let me say what we don't want our reputation to be: we don't want to be known as difficult, Dutch and dogmatic! Sadly, that has too often been the reputation of Reformed people in Australia and New Zealand. Whether it is accurate or not, that is not the reputation we want. Nor do we want to be largely unknown, or to be seen as isolated from the wider evangelical church, or disconnected from our surrounding culture. We don't want to be known as a College that is only for people from Reformed churches.
Positively, we want to have a reputation for providing training that is:

- **Biblically grounded**, so that our students come to know and love God’s Word
- **Theologically robust** as they interact with the best of Reformed evangelical thinking
- **Gospel-hearted**, because what drives us is the love and mission of Jesus
- **Culturally relevant** to our complex and exciting world
- **Spiritually rich**, so that men and women are built up in their faith
- **Winsomely engaging**, so that students experience the warmth of God’s grace no matter what their church or background and so they learn how to present the gospel winsomely to others.

These six qualities are at the heart of all we are building at the RTC. We realize, of course, that more external matters like our buildings and facilities, our promotional material and our website also contribute to our reputation, so we are seeking to improve them as well. But at the heart of our reputation is the training we provide, the education we offer.

We believe that as these six qualities are deeply embedded in every course and as they shape the way we think, talk, train, pray and mentor, we will develop a reputation for providing great theological education and ministry training.

As you look at these six qualities, you might also see six things for which your church should be known. And six things that are really the mark of a good sermon. And six things that should characterise just about every church ministry. Our hope, then, is that in time this is not only the reputation of the RTC, but the reputation of our graduating students, of the ministries they form and the churches they lead.

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**Church Based Training**

**Phillip Scheepers**  
Vice-Principal / Lecturer in Missions and Church History

RTC CBT (Church Based Training) is the new name for ‘Task3’ our church-based theological education ordination track. It is not only the name that changed however. RTC CBT was redesigned to ensure that the program makes full use of the RTC’s move towards flexible modes of delivery for CRCA ordination units. In a nutshell this means that in time all ordination units will be offered in modes that are accessible to students wherever they find themselves. In practice this will involve a mixture of distance, live video conference (i.e. ‘Skype classes) and intensive units.

RTC CBT students will be able to make use of the flexible delivery modes to design a program (in conjunction with the CRCA Candidacy Committee and the RTC Registrar) that can adapt to their specific circumstances and those of their home churches. The program has three essential components:

- A church-based apprenticeship under the supervision of a local pastor
- The completion of two BILD (Biblical Institute for Leadership Development) units
- Academic study through the RTC

RTC CBT provides students with the opportunity to participate in theological education while serving the local church. It is a very flexible program that can be tailored to individual requirements and, as such, could open up the possibility of ministry training to men who may not have thought this possible.

A document with detailed information on RTC CBT is available. It spells out entry
requirements and the shape of the program. It also details some of the possible ways in which RTC CBT can be used by individuals and local churches. Please send me an email at pscheepers@rtc.edu.au if you would like a copy.

New CT Viewer

Stella Ashton
RTC Student

Recently the college acquired a new piece of equipment that may be of interest to those whose eyes aren’t that great. The purchased CT viewer enlarges text via a video lens on to a computer screen. It has several adjustments to suit different people. It was purchased to help me with my studies as I’m legally blind.

This piece of equipment has been a huge blessing already, saving me hours of having to scan chapters into PDF format to read on a screen and from having to buy books on Kindle from which I may only need to read select portions. I’m very grateful to the College for this purchase. I think many other people could benefit from learning to use it, rather than from straining their eyes to read finely printed books and articles.

The machine is situated in the journal area and takes only a few moments to master. Feel free to ask me any questions about this machine; I’ll do my best to help you.

Student Profile

James Hyslop
RTC Distance Student

I am an intern with the Reformed Church of Dunedin and my internship includes half-time ministry in the church; the other half I spend studying through the Reformed Theological College. This semester I am taking the Hebrew and Church History units via distance correspondence.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my units so far and am benefiting greatly from them. I’ve found that the lectures have been well prepared and that the learning materials have been informative, helpful and accessible. Despite the distance format, both my units provide opportunities for interaction with other students.

The lecturers themselves have been very accessible. This has provided a helpful platform through which I can ask questions and receive advice. During lessons, they are also very deliberate and intentional about seeking to apply the lessons from the various subjects to life and ministry.

Finally, the software that is used to facilitate the distance learning (Skype and Moodle) is easy to use and accessible.

Overall I have thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity and privilege of being able to study these units via distance. I’d strongly encourage others who are interested and able to avail themselves of this opportunity to learn, study, grow and become better equipped through the RTC distance programme.
Special devotions with Barry Horner

Martin Williams
NT Lecturer

We were privileged to have Dr Barry Horner come and address staff and students at our first devotion for the year during orientation week. Dr Horner, a native of Australia now residing in America, is an expert on John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. Horner has published a number of books and leads various seminars around the world, helping people to understand and apply the message of Bunyan’s famous allegory, which he first wrote from Bedfordshire county prison and first published in 1678.

In his presentation, Dr Horner opened up the themes of the gospel and the Christian life as told in *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. Like many Puritan conversions, Christian’s pilgrimage begins with a deep conviction of sin (as pictured by the burden on his back) and a sense of humiliation born of the realisation that he is utterly powerless to deal with the problem of his sin (depicted by his descent into the Slough of Despond as his depressing guilt causes him to sink further and further into the mire). Salvation for Christian came only through God’s sovereign and saving intervention in the form of two characters, Help (who providentially arrives to rescue Christian from the Slough of Despond) and Goodwill (who snatches him through the Wicket gate before the enemy can stop him).

Christian is now soundly and savingly converted (his arrival at the cross some time later leads to a deeper and more experiential assurance of salvation—which reflects the experience of Bunyan himself). A later conversation between Christian, his companion Faithful and the notorious Mr Talkative, serves to beautifully expound the sovereignty and kindness of God’s saving grace (this important conversation must be read carefully).

Following his conversion, Christian makes his way to the Palace Beautiful (a picture of the church of Jesus Christ) where he is met by the porter of the Palace, a man by the name of Watchful (a picture of a faithful pastor). With the genuineness of his conversion approved, Christian is invited into the church and its membership. At the Palace, he enjoys rest, fellowship, a good meal (the Lord’s Supper) and a tour of the library (the Bible) and the Palace Armoury (where he is fitted out for war with the armour of God). As he ventures forth into the rest of his week, Christian leaves the Palace and enters The Valley of Humiliation, where he engages in fierce battle with Apollyon (Satan), who he defeats with the Sword (as did his own Lord when he encountered Apollyon in the desert and overcame him by the Word of God). Christian’s journey then continues, in darkness and danger through The Valley of the Shadow of Death, in the joy of fellowship with a pilgrim named Faithful, in the martyrdom of Faithful at Vanity Fair and in the comfort of a new companion, Hopeful, who was converted at the Fair through Faithful’s brave witness. Christian’s journey endures further ups and downs until he and Hopeful finally cross the River of Death and enter the Celestial City (Heaven). There, they are greeted with a royal welcome: “Enter into the joy of your Lord.” I don’t want to spoil the rest of the story for you, so my encouragement is to read the whole story for yourself and to you families—you will all be richer and better for it.

New Houseparents

Stuart and Tamara Cuthill
House Parent

I cannot describe in words the abundant blessing it has been to take up the position of house-parents of Barkley Hall at the RTC and for God’s timing in calling us to this ministry.

For some time, we had been sensing that God was preparing us for a big change ahead, yet both of us had no idea what that entailed. When times were difficult
and it seemed that the enemy was attacking us in every area of life, the Lord brought this verse to mind: “The Lord will guide you always; He will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame” (Isaiah 58:11). God gave us peace that He had a special

plan in store for us.

To cut a long story short, everything seemed to fall into place and God carried out the things He wanted to fulfil in our lives. Since arriving at Barkley Hall, many of God’s special blessings have met our needs and brought to fruition other things for which we’ve so longed. What an exciting privilege it has been to share the gospel, to encourage, and form relationships with, the students at Barkley Hall and to live in community with them.

The early stages were a bit intimidating for us; we wondered how the students would respond to us, especially those who’d been here for a long time, and whether they would accept us in this role. In a short space of time, however, it was great to see relationships forming and to notice how quickly the dining hall had become a place where we could all share in laughter and conversation, like one big family. Recently it has become a tradition to have “Tea Parties” in the guest kitchen after dinner. Here, any student can have a “cuppa,” chat, relax and learn more about each other and where we’ve come from.

Our daughter has also enjoyed the attention immensely and loves welcoming each student into “our restaurant” each night, addressing them by name and sometimes bringing gifts that she makes or flowers that she picks. It’s precious to watch her put questions to the students of different cultures – to ask them why they do the things they do and to sample the many foods they offer from their countries of origin. These are just a few of the things to mention that have brought fulfilment to us and what we look forward to continue witnessing for however long God calls us here – we hope it’s a long time!

We pray that within this ministry God would keep us aware of the needs and opportunities to be like Jesus, to love the people and to trust the Holy Spirit for the words to say when they are needed. When following God’s will and obeying that to which He calls us as individual Christians, we are recipients of the promise, “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than we could ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us” (Ephesians 3:20).

Student Profile

Ralph Gambardella
RTC Student

I have been attending classes for the past six weeks in my first semester at the Reformed Theological College. Throughout the course of my two units, it has been a great experience and joy to learn about the church of God and about pastoral care.

I found the enrollment and interview process to be very easy; the Registrar, Paul Lucas, was very helpful in explaining and answering all my questions.

I have found the classroom settings to be comfortable and welcoming. The lecturers are very friendly and willing to help me in my journey with the Lord, in order that I may be blessed and be a blessing to others in my ministries.

The teaching has been very good: biblically faithful, accurate, and clear. I have also been given comprehensive outlines for both of my units and even
some YouTube clips to help me better understand the teaching material.

The resources that we use as part of our studies are very helpful. We have access to an extensive library in which I can expand my research even further as I seek to complete my work. I am very happy with all that is taking place at the Reformed Theological College.

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## Student Interview

**Braedy Rickard**

*RTC Student*

Tell us about yourself and the course of study you are undertaking at the RTC.

My name is Braedy-Jayne Rickard and I am 22 years old from Geelong. I have been involved with Church by the Bay since I was 2 years old but have been a devoted follower of Christ since 2014. I am undertaking a Diploma of Theology with the RTC that I began in February so that I may grow in the knowledge of God and his Church.

What led you to consider theological study?

It was not my intention to return to study but it was definitely something God pushed me to do. With two of my brothers having studied at the RTC, I was familiar with the College and this served to guide my path. Initially, I wanted to study to become more intimate with and knowledgeable about God. Now, I believe God will use it to better help a ministry within the church.

How do you hope your Diploma will benefit you in ministry and life?

I am leaving my study in God's hands and I remain open to where he will use me afterwards, but I do believe that my Diploma will equip me for youth work. This will take place within either church-based youth ministry or outside the church, maybe even in both if that is where he wants me to go. At the moment, however, it is just more exciting that I am learning theology and growing spiritually.

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## Orientation Week

**Phillip Scheepers**

*Vice-Principal / Lecturer in Missions and Church History*

2016 marks the 61st year of the RTC’s existence and we’ve therefore had many occasions with which to mark the start of a new academic year. Yet it always feels special to celebrate the Lord’s goodness in granting us a new year of ministry and entrusting another crop of new students to our care. This year was no exception. In a week that included three communal meals, we were able to hear wonderful testimonies of how the Lord brought our new students to this place. Some have wanted to come for a long time. Others are still a bit shell-shocked at the suddenness of it all! What they all have in common is a desire to learn and to be better equipped for their service in the Lord’s Kingdom. Please pray for them.

A special treat during Orientation week was the visit of Dr Barry Horner, a world expert on John Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress. Dr Horner spoke at our first devotions for the year on ‘The Gospel in Pilgrim’s Progress’ (for an overview, see Martin’s piece on page 4). His insights, based on a lifetime of study, were profound and left many of those in the audience ready to reread Bunyan’s classic with new eyes.

On Friday 19th February we had our annual graduation service. Six awards were conferred (three in absentia). It was great to reflect on the Lord’s goodness to our
students and to us as a college. Over the years RTC students have gone on to serve in a wide variety of fields and it is our prayer that the Lord will lead this year’s graduating class to fruitful areas of service in his kingdom.

After the conferral of degrees, the student response was delivered by Caleb Schultink. He expressed his deep appreciation for the way in which the RTC shaped him and his compatriots in their own thinking and in their preparation for service. In a rather unforgettable metaphor, he compared what happens at the RTC to pigs hunting for truffles! (Accordingly, the truffles are the riches from God’s Word that are unearthed here.)

The graduation address was delivered by Rev Andrew Grills, a former army chaplain turned church planter (right here in Geelong).

Andrew preached from Psalm 62 and he called upon the graduating students, and indeed on all present, to minister in the first instance from a living and healthy relationship with the Lord. In the end, this relationship, more than anything else, will determine whether our ministry will indeed be fruitful in the Lord’s eyes.

It is our sincere prayer that the words of Psalm 62:8, so powerfully expounded by Andrew, during the graduation service will indeed be a living reality for all of us here at the RTC during 2016 and beyond:

“Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.”

We are very thankful that our year got off to such a positive start, and we trust the Lord will continue to bless, keep and prosper the RTC throughout 2016.
raise...equip...support

The RTC has embarked on an exciting new plan to make our training far more accessible to people across Australia, New Zealand and around the world. We are delivering more units online, developing new discipleship training resources, improving our promotional material and communications and, from next year, we will be teaching our classes from a new campus in the Melbourne CBD.

As we make these changes we are looking to you, our valued supporters, to help.

First, please uphold us in prayer. Pray that we will be able to make excellent staff appointments, find a great location for our Melbourne CBD campus, make sound choices about delivery modes, attract many new students, be a great resource for churches, cope with the increased workload and, in all we do, remain utterly faithful to God’s Word.

Second, please support us financially. The new RTC model is supported by some strategic business ventures, but we are still greatly dependent on financial support from churches, members and other individuals who have a heart for the RTC. Whether you are able to give a smaller or larger donation, your contribution will help us extend our ministry in innovative and compelling ways. Your gift will be a strategic investment in the work of the gospel.

Tax deductible donations can be made by returning the form below or clicking the “Donate Online” option via our website.

Soli Deo Gloria
www.rtc.edu.au

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