Great Progress on the New RTC Model

We are very encouraged by the excellent progress being made on the new RTC model. Thank you for your prayer and support. Some key developments are as follows:

- We have just appointed Rev. KJ Tromp as our Discipleship Training Coordinator. This is a key position as KJ will oversee the development of our new Discipleship Training courses. These short, video-based courses will be designed as a resource for local churches to help in equipping their members for ministry. RTC faculty and other key ministry leaders from Australia will be the main presenters, and KJ will coordinate the project, helping map its focus and design. KJ brings to this role the background and skills we have been looking for. He is an ordained pastor with the CRCA, has a great heart for ministry training and discipleship, has strong academic skills, and has also completed an MBA. KJ will continue to pastor the Open Door CRC on the Gold Coast and will work for the RTC an average of 2 days per week.

- We have just appointed Justin Hill as our new Promotions Officer. We are seeking to greatly improve our advertising and promotional work so more people are better informed about the ministry of the College. Justin will assist us with that, alongside an outside marketing consultant who we’ve engaged to help develop our marketing plan.

- We are beginning to look at property options in the Melbourne CBD for the new campus we plan to open there in Feb 2017. We are seeking space for an office, a communal area and two classrooms. All other infrastructure will remain at our hub in Geelong.

- We have a planning permit application before the City of Greater Geelong Council for the new Child Care Centre. Please pray that this is approved soon. Funding arrangements for building the Centre are coming together in a wonderful way.

- The faculty is working hard to fine-tune the units and course cycles that we will teach in a range of modes. Many of our units will be offered online, by live video conference (e.g. Skype) and via intensive. With a combination of modes available, students may complete an award at the RTC without needing to relocate.

- The former Task3 program has been re-designed and is now called RTC Church Based Training. The new programme provides a flexible way for CRCA ordination students to undertake their study alongside ministry in their local church. For more information, contact Dr Phillip Scheepers.

- Murray Capill and Phillip Scheepers have been travelling far and wide to share the story of the new model with pastors and churches around the country. This past weekend saw Murray has been in southern Tasmania and Phillip in Adelaide. In June, Murray will travel to Perth. While there he will present a Saturday morning seminar entitled, “Church Health and Pastoral Care: How to become a more caring church.” The seminar will take place at Gateway Community Church from 9.30am – 12.00pm on 11 June. This is a free, public training event so we’d love to see you there if you live in the West.

- Have you seen the new RTC promotional video? If not, you can view it here. The video outlines the reasons for our move to Melbourne and to multi-modal delivery.

Pastoral Ministry in Reformed Churches

Pastoral Ministry in Reformed Churches has been designed as a key component of the training for Reformed Church ordination students, but it will also be a great in-service training option for elders and potential elders, ministry workers and even pastors in the RTC’s supporting denominations. This new
The course begins with online lessons in late July leading up to a one-week Intensive at the RTC from August 22-26.

The course will include consideration of:

- The call to ministry, gifts for ministry and the theology of ordination
- The pastoral task, realities of pastoral ministry, the spiritual life of the pastor and causes of burnout and stress
- The history of Reformed churches ‘down under’, along with current trends, trajectories and challenges
- Leadership patterns and paradigms in Reformed churches
- Key emphases of Reformed theology, the reasons for holding to Reformed confessions, and discussion of theological hot potatoes
- The classic practices of Reformed churches

The non-credit and non-assessment (audit) price for elders, church workers and others interested in this unit is $300. Please contact the RTC for more information.

**Book Recommendation**
(by Dr Martin Williams)

What is biblical meditation and what does it look like? Why is it crucial for spiritual life, health and growth? How does one practice it? What are some practical ways to get started?


Unlike many modern and unbiblical forms of meditation, biblical meditation does not involve the emptying of the mind or looking within oneself, “rather it seeks to fill one’s thoughts with Scripture, fastening them to the objective truths of God’s Word” (p. 20). Biblical and Puritan meditation seeks to “fill one’s mind with spiritual and heavenly thoughts” and to “affect one’s heart with the goal of personal application” (p. 31). As Saxton correctly points out, if the church is to return to vital spirituality, there needs to be “a serious focus on putting God’s word to practice in one’s own experience. We must wholeheartedly integrate doctrine with living. The necessary wedding of doctrine and practice destroys superficial Christianity, but it only comes through a careful and serious consideration of God’s Word” (p. 1). After defining unbiblical (chapter 2) and biblical forms of meditation (chapters 3-5), the remaining chapters (6-12) move the reader’s attention toward the practical application and personal implementation of this practice. Saxton discusses practical suggestions about when to mediate, what to meditate on, common distractions and enemies of meditation, and advice on how to get started.

If you feel there is something lacking in your reading and practice of the Word of God, then I cannot more highly recommend this book to you. It provides the reader with a very accessible, eminently readable, clearly written, richly illustrated, practical guide to the crucial art and practice of biblical meditation.

**Preaching Conference**

The RTC’s 2016 Preaching Conference will focus on the first book of the Bible. Genesis is the book of beginnings - the beginning of the world, of human life and society, of God's covenant community, and of the gospel itself. From the creation account to the devastating impact of the fall, from a universal flood to the choosing of one man to be the father of many nations, from covenant promises to the often scandalous lives of the patriarchal family, Genesis weaves together dozens of rich and compelling narratives. Here are the essential foundations every preacher needs to lay. Here’s the DNA of gospel life.

This year’s RTC Preaching Conference will help inspire and equip preachers to preach Genesis. RTC Faculty will be joined by Paul Harrington, Senior Network Pastor, Trinity Network of Churches, Adelaide.

Put the dates in your calendar now: 22-23 September, 2016. Registration forms will be available soon.

**Ministry Spot: A Pastor’s Week**
(by Dr Murray Capill)

One question I have often been asked is, “what is a reasonable workload for a pastor?” It is an issue for both pastors and their leadership teams and, more indirectly,
for the church as a whole. The question carries with it a host of sub-questions, such as how long should a pastor spend writing a sermon, how much time should be spent on pastoral visitation, how much administration is there in ministry, and so on.

These questions are somewhat complicated. We cannot simply turn to the Bible to find an answer. One gets the impression Paul worked night and day, but he never talks about hours and never gives Timothy or other co-workers advice on their working week. We must look for biblical principles, not prescriptions.

The issue is also complicated because both people and churches differ. Some people have huge capacity and there is a danger that when we read of champions from church history who rose for prayer at 4.00am, preached ten times a week and wrote books before breakfast, we feel there is something wrong with us for being less superhuman. Great heroes of the past are not a safe benchmark. And someone who has been in ministry for 20 or 30 years is not a great guideline for a neophyte fresh out of theological college.

Churches and church ministries also vary. There is a great difference, for example, between a small church plant and a large multi-staff church, or between a church where only one sermon is required each week and one where two or more are required.

Another complicating factor is that pastoral ministry inherently contains what I call a large "fuzzy fringe". There are aspects of the work of pastoral ministry that are also just part of being an active church member, or a committed Christian, or a godly elder. So does a pastor count attending a home group, having personal devotions, socialising with people after church, or reading a good book for edification as work time or personal time? Is hospitality part of his paid ministry or just part of being active in church life, as others are? This is the fuzzy fringe of ministry, making clear cut hours impossible.

In fact clear cut hours must never be the way we manage time in pastoral ministry. Pastoral ministry is not a job but a calling, not labour done for wages but a lifestyle. Historically, a pastor's stipend was not seen as a salary but a provision so that he is freed from the need to do other work in order to give himself fully to serving the body of Christ. Neither pay nor hours can be measured in the same way as for many other jobs.

Having said that, guidelines and principles are essential. If there are no guiding principles pastors will easily either over-work, short-changing their families, health and spiritual well-being, or they will become slack, using the freedom of their situation to indulge in procrastination or self-indulgence.

Before coming to a number of principles, one further matter we need to recognise is that pastoral ministry is, in reality, a package of ministries. There are at least eight areas of ministry that compete for the pastor's time and attention.

First, there is the ministry of teaching and preaching, along with leading in worship. These are central ministries that take considerable preparation time. Paul exhorted Timothy, "Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching" (1 Tim 4:13). It will typically take a pastor 10-12 hours or more to prepare a sermon, and time is also spent preparing for Bible studies, instruction classes, and planning Sunday services.

Second, there is the ministry of pastoral care and counselling. Along with the elders, a pastor is to shepherd the flock, and this involves, among other things, visiting the sick, caring for families, helping people with particular needs, taking baptisms, weddings and funerals, and so on. Such work can easily expand to many hours a week, especially if there are multiple complex and problematic issues in the church.

Thirdly, there is the priority of evangelism and discipleship. Timothy was exhorted to "do the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim 4:5). Gospel outreach should be at the heart of a church's ministry and if a pastor does not set the pace here, quite likely the church will de-prioritize this as well. Too easily, however, this is an area of pastoral ministry that often gets squeezed by pastors in established churches.

Related to this is a fourth area, namely training. "And the things you have heard from me", says Paul to Timothy, "entrust to reliable men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim 2:2). Pastors are not merely to do ministry but to train and equip others for ministry. They should preach and train preachers, lead and train leaders, disciple and train disciplers. This is enormously strategic as it is the way to multiply ministry and ensure that in the future not all the main ministry is done by the minister alone.

Lying behind these four areas is a fifth: the ministry of leadership. More than ever, pastors are called to lead. They do so, of course, as part of a team of leaders. A pastor should never be the sole leader of a church, but even on the leadership/eldership team they will inevitably take a significant role in shaping the direction, mission and ethos of a church. They will need time to think about the church's health, mission and direction, they will spearhead new initiatives and they will oversee other leaders. Paul says that each person is to serve according to their gifts, and "if it is leadership, let him govern diligently" (Rom 12:8). Pastors need this gift and they need to use it diligently.

If these five areas are to be done well, there is a sixth the pastor must never neglect: his own personal growth and his ministry of prayer. The apostles gave attention "to prayer and the ministry of the Word" (Acts 6:4), leaving other ministries to others. In line with that priority, pastors ought to ensure that they have time to pray and time to study the Word for themselves before they teach it to others. They also need time to read and study, attend some conferences, and maybe meet with a mentor. If time is not given to personal growth and to
prayer, their ministry will wither over time as they lose their spiritual freshness and become weary in the work.

Two further areas also go into the mix. One is engagement in other ministries beyond the local church. Pastors will often be involved in some denominational work, and maybe a school Board, or chaplaincy work, or overseas mission, or some other Christian work.

The other is administration. Most pastors are their own secretary and daily encounter office management tasks, countless emails, preparation of agendas and bulletin notices, and countless other administrative tasks. Ideally others will be engaged for administration as much as possible, but it is inevitable that a considerable slice of time will be directed toward this.

These are the eight areas I associate with the pastoral ministry package. There may be more, and there is certainly, in addition, what I earlier referred to as the “fuzzy fringe” of ministry. It makes for a constant juggling act.

Next time I will suggest some principles that can help guide a pastor and his elders in making sound choices about time usage. Until then, a fascinating exercise, not only for pastors but for elders (and even others), is to think about how much time you’d want your pastor to give to each of these areas. How do you want your pastor to spend his week?