



MONTHLY

October '26 - Issue #196

College News

RTC students are currently taking a well-deserved break after a busy period of lectures and submitting assignments. Please pray for them as they recharge their batteries and work on assessment pieces that are due after the break.

During September we had the privilege of welcoming guest speakers from CMS (Joshua Millard) and Indiway (Ben Peletier, an RTC graduate). It was very good to be reminded of the worldwide calling of the church and to pray for the advance of the gospel in some hard-to-reach places.



From 3–6 September we had the opportunity to participate in the NextGen Conference at Clayton Chinese Christian Church, where Phillip Scheepers and Aleesha Bransgrove were able to talk with many attendees who are considering possible study and future ministry.

On 25 September a good number of RTC students and staff attended a social event organised by the student committees of the four AUT colleges in Melbourne (RTC, Ridley College, the Presbyterian Theological College, and Melbourne School of Theology). It was a great opportunity to fellowship with students and lecturers from other colleges and to encourage one another in the gospel.



Upcoming Events

A Day at RTC

13 October 2026

Join us as we open our doors, both in person and online, to anyone interested in experiencing life at RTC. Attendees will have the opportunity to take part in devotions, attend classes, join a special session on studying at RTC,

and engage in conversations with lecturers and students over lunch.

For more information, and to register, please click below:

<https://rtc.edu.au/a-day-at-rtc/>



RTC Elders' Retreat

17 October 2026

This year's Elders' Retreat, led by RTC Faculty, will focus on serving together as a team. Plan to join us for a rich day of teaching and equipping. This will be both an in-person and livestreamed event, with special pricing for eldership teams to join together in a 'watch party'.

For more information, and to register, please click below:

<https://rtc.edu.au/rtc-elders-retreat-2026/>



Theological Book Sale

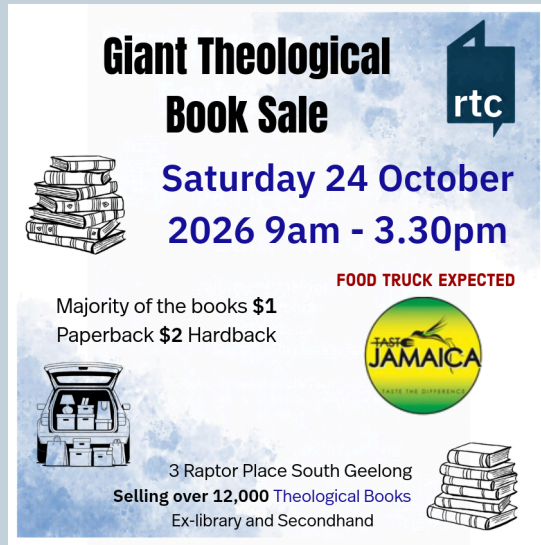
24 October 2026

As part of the library rightsizing project, we plan to offer around 15,000 ex-library and second-hand theological books for sale at our Geelong warehouse.

Location: Unit 5, 3 Raptor Place,
South Geelong

Parking: Please use on-street
parking outside the 3 Raptor Place
complex

Date: Saturday 24 October 2026,
9:00 am–3:30 pm

A promotional poster for a 'Giant Theological Book Sale'. The title is in large, bold, black letters. Below it, the date and time are listed in blue: 'Saturday 24 October 2026 9am - 3.30pm'. To the right is the RTC logo. On the left is an illustration of a stack of books. Below the title, the pricing is listed: 'Majority of the books \$1' and 'Paperback \$2 Hardback'. To the right of this is a red banner that says 'FOOD TRUCK EXPECTED' above a circular logo for 'TASTE OF JAMAICA'. Below the pricing is an illustration of a car with its trunk open, filled with books. At the bottom, the location '3 Raptor Place South Geelong' is listed, followed by 'Selling over 12,000 Theological Books' and 'Ex-library and Secondhand'. To the right of this text is another illustration of a stack of books.

**Giant Theological
Book Sale** 

**Saturday 24 October
2026 9am - 3.30pm**

Majority of the books **\$1**
Paperback **\$2** Hardback

FOOD TRUCK EXPECTED



 3 Raptor Place South Geelong
Selling over 12,000 Theological Books
Ex-library and Secondhand 

Most sale books will be priced at \$1 for paperbacks and \$2 for hardbacks, with a selection of titles at individually marked higher prices. EFTPOS facilities will be available. Please bring bags and boxes with you to take home your purchases.

More information via the link:

<https://rtc.edu.au/giant-theological-book-sale/>

Proposed Summer Intensive

We are hoping to host our first summer intensive before the start of Semester 1, 2027. The intensive will focus on “Patterns of Spiritual Formation” and will be led by Chris Pretorius. Chris is the minister of Wonga Park Christian Reformed Church and recently completed a DMin at the Melbourne School of Theology, with a dissertation focusing on Reformed spiritual formation.

The intensive will be open to all registered AUT students for credit. We would also like to encourage serving pastors to come along, as audit students, to be better equipped in their calling to shepherd God’s people.

Please click here for more information and/or to register your interest:

<https://rtc.edu.au/summer-intensive-patterns-of-spiritual-formation/>

Book Recommendation | Dr Phillip Scheepers

Evangelism as Exiles: Life on Mission as Strangers in Our Own Land, by Elliot Clark (The Gospel Coalition, 2019, 176 pages)

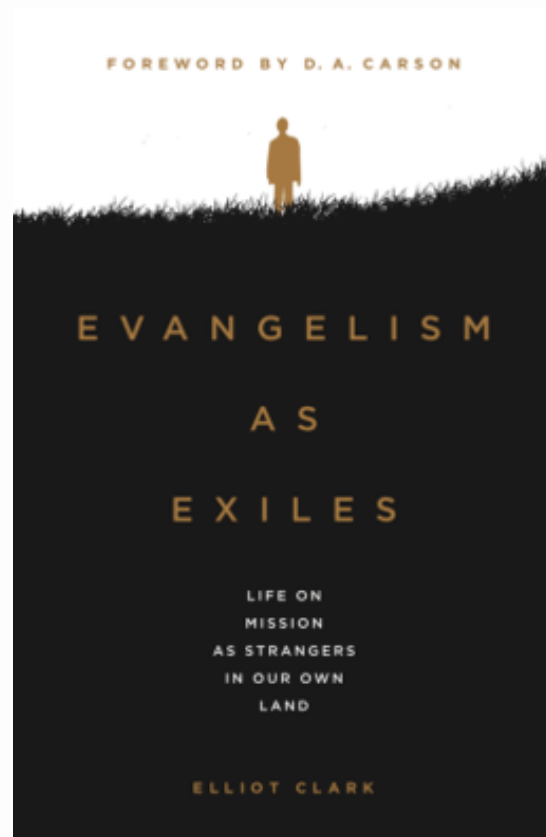
When asked for a list of names that could be used to describe Christians, “exiles” is probably not one that would immediately spring to mind for most people. Yet, in his book *Evangelism as Exiles*, Elliot Clark maintains that a rediscovery of our identity as “*aliens and strangers*” (1 Peter 2:11) must be a key ingredient of evangelistic effectiveness in the 21st century.

Clark takes his place in a long line of cross-cultural missionaries whose overseas experiences caused them to take a long, hard look at their “home context”.

In his case, he spent six years as a church planter in a closed Central Asian context. It forced him to rethink many of his assumptions about evangelism, since he was ministering in a society where the Christian faith was often viewed with bewilderment, if not outright hostility. This experience led him to reflect deeply on Peter’s references to believers as “*elect exiles*” (1 Peter 1:1).

The reality is that broad cultural acceptance (i.e., a deep sense of belonging to the cultures we are part of) is true for only a shrinking minority of Christians and would have been seen as something entirely unfamiliar to the earliest Christian believers. This is the context behind the “exile” language used by Peter and the author of Hebrews (Hebrews 11:13). Far from causing us to retreat from society, our identity as exiles should stir us to hope and to a renewed commitment to share our faith.

Clark’s main argument on how exile can motivate and strengthen our evangelism unfolds along the following broad arc: Christian exiles are people who know that their ultimate hope is not in their current circumstances but in the return of Christ. The fact that He will ultimately be victorious releases us from fear, shame, and guilt. It also forces us to be



humble, since our message is not based on our status in society. Instead, like “beggars telling other beggars where to find bread”, we can point lost and bewildered people to our true Home. This should be done through verbal proclamation (“declaring His praises”), distinctive lifestyles embodying biblical teaching (Clark calls holiness “*an embodied argument of the gospel’s veracity*”, p. 115), and sacrificial hospitality.

What I found particularly helpful was Clark’s take on some of the obstacles to evangelism that spring from the fact that many Western Christians prize cultural acceptance and leadership. Within this context, being rejected when we share the gospel could be seen as utterly shameful and something best avoided (through not sharing the gospel in the first place!). On the other hand, those who know that they are “aliens and strangers” realise that at least some people will find their message strange, or even offensive, and are therefore prepared for apparent rejection as part of the process through which God is working to sovereignly call people to Himself.

It should be noted that the main focus of *Evangelism as Exiles* is on personal and family witness. It would be interesting to see its principles being worked out in terms of the evangelistic work of a local church, but this was evidently beyond the scope of Clark’s book. Be that as it may, it will provide plenty of food for thought for those who are keen to grow in their confidence and ability to share their faith in an increasingly hostile society. I am confident that reading this book will not only spark some good ideas as we think about our own witness but will also kindle a renewed zeal for the task with which we have been entrusted while we live as strangers until our Lord’s return.

Ministry Spot | Dr Stephen Lewis



Greet One Another with a Holy Kiss

A pet peeve of mine is when the preacher at a church tells the congregation to turn to the person next to them and say something. *"Turn to the person next to you and say, 'You are beautiful!'"* The next week it's, *"Turn to the person next to you and say, 'Greater is He that is in you!'"* Maybe you love those moments, and they can be a good way to engage an otherwise passive congregation, but to me it just feels really inauthentic. I'm forced to say specific words, and I'm not given any time in advance to consider those words. So, it might surprise you to know that I am a big fan of having a time in the worship service every Sunday where you turn to someone near you and say, *"The peace of Christ be with you."* Some people call this *"passing the peace."* In churches that do this well, you aren't forced to stick to the script. You can say, *"Welcome to worship in the name of Jesus!"* Or you can say, *"So glad you are here!"* The congregation is given three minutes to mingle a bit, to ask the other person a question, or give a hug. If your church is perceived as being cold or stiff, this is a way to raise the temperature and loosen up.

Formally greeting one another is not a waste of precious worship time. It's a command. Five times we, the church, are commanded to "greet one another." On the last page of his epistle to the Romans, the Apostle Paul commands us, *"Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you."* (Romans 16:16) Notice that the command is to the entire church, not merely to the well-trained greeting team. Greeting teams are great. They didn't use to exist. The walk from the car park to the pew used to be a lonely

walk interrupted only briefly by an awkward usher at the front door who pressed a paper bulletin into your hand. But now, before you can step in out of the rain, the friendliest people on the planet are inviting your children to youth group, handing you a goodie bag, beckoning you to the barista kiosk in the foyer, and managing to squeeze out of you every possible piece of demographic data and contact information that will enable them to follow up with you by Wednesday. That's professional greeting. It can be hugely helpful, and it is usually quite sincere. But what the apostle has in mind is something different.

Paul wants every Christian, not just the extroverts on the special team, to greet and to be greeted. Greeting one another is reciprocal. It's not merely about letting the newcomer know they are valued. An old-timer might arrogantly think, *"I don't need to be welcomed here; I own the place."* But Christ owns the place. We are His guests. Greeting one another reminds us of that.

On the last page of Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, he writes, *"All the brothers send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss."* (1 Corinthians 16:20) Perhaps you've seen pictures of Russian Orthodox believers giving each other two kisses on the cheek and you've thought, *"I am so glad we don't do that at my church."* Every epistle in the New Testament is culturally situated, right? So, we regularly consider what the underlying principle is as we attempt to obey the command. There is room for cultural accommodation. A "holy kiss" might legitimately be expressed as a warm handshake, a holy fist bump, or a half-hug. Not everyone wants a hug from a stranger. And some people need to take extra precautions against catching the latest cold from well-meaning church members. But a verbal greeting is usually doable. A genuine smile, some eye contact, a signal of shared humanity – this all contributes to community. Every other thing we will do in the worship service – praying, hearing the Word preached, giving, singing, sharing in the sacraments – will be better stamped with the imprint of unity and fellowship if we take a moment to welcome each other.

Guess what appears on the last page of Second Corinthians? *"Greet one another with a holy kiss."* (2 Corinthians 13:12) Before we write off the "holy kiss" as a cultural custom that we can replace with a handshake or a smile, we should ask, "What is it about a kiss that the apostles were wanting to see embodied in the church?" In one word – "affection." We usually know if affection is being faked or if it's for real, and when it is real, it is life-giving. Clubs, teams, workplaces, and classrooms can all survive without affection, but a church cannot. Love is not merely a spontaneous thing that you do in your own sweet way at your own sweet time. Paul thinks the outward sign of love can be commanded. Taking time in the worship service to express the sign of affection gives everyone the opportunity to truly be affectionate.

Kisses will probably not be appropriate in our culture any time soon. But some gesture of affection is not only appropriate, it's deeply needed.

By the time we get to 1 Thessalonians 5:26, we are no longer surprised that Paul is closing out by saying, "*Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss.*" If we want to appreciate how important it is to welcome each other at church, consider that this greeting command occurs more often than the command to sing together at church, which is why it probably belongs in the worship service itself. In almost every church I visit, I see people lingering, embracing, praying together, crying together. A lot of real one-another ministry is taking place in the thirty minutes after the benediction. That is fantastic. But it does not touch 100% of those assembled. If a brief expression of Christ's love and peace is offered during the service, everyone is covered, and that brief exchange might increase the likelihood of a more substantive conversation later.

Some of us are so market-driven that we think of the worship service as prime time for grabbing new repeat customers. Turning the church into a business betrays the church's deeper calling, but the evangelistic impulse is commendable. The posture of the biblical church is one that welcomes the non-Christian. For them, our greeting is a miniature version of the free offer of the gospel. It sets a tone of invitation: we are glad you are here; we hope you keep taking steps towards Jesus. But notice that these apostolic greeting commands are aimed not at the outsider but at the brother and the sister. The greeting is not a technique or method to increase our market share. It's a genuine display of the fact that we are family.

Finally, the greeting command is not merely Paul's thing. The Apostle Peter closes out his first letter saying, "*Greet one another with the kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.*" (1 Peter 5:14) What Peter adds is the offer of peace. True peace, biblical shalom, is not just the absence of war but the presence of loving and respectful community. Peace seems so unattainable that we might think it is fruitless to exchange words of peace. But words are more powerful than we think. The sound waves may be quickly absorbed by the furniture and disappear into the air. But the impact on someone's heart can be permanent. Throughout the week, we are bombarded with words: the commercial pitch, subtle insults, and predictions that we will never amount to anything. Let it be that when we arrive at church, we are greeted with words of welcome, belonging, affection, and peace. The words Peter wants us to exchange are not empty words of wishful thinking. They are words offered to those who are "in Christ." When the crowds caught up to Jesus in Luke 9:11, "*He welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God and cured those who had need of healing.*" What ended in healing began in welcome.



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"Soli Deo Gloria—Glory to God Alone"