

# Grace Alone

## Growth: Seen and Unseen

### Highlights

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- ◆ Student Profile: Christy Peek
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- ◆ Iain Murray on preaching
- ◆ News from the Reynolds'

### Grace Alone

is the newsletter of Grace Theological College, a non-denominational evangelical and reformed theological college in Auckland, NZ.

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### FROM THE PRINCIPAL

It's hard to believe that nearly ten years have passed since GTC began in 1995. How it has grown in that time!

The outward signs of growth are obvious. There are more students in 2004 than in 1995, more books in our library, more computers and workspaces, and far superior buildings and facilities than we had at the beginning. Anyone visiting the College today who knew it in 1995 can't help but notice the change.

But the most important growth areas can't be seen so easily. GTC has grown over the years as a supportive spiritual community. It has grown theologically as its teachers have worked hard to deepen their understanding and hone communication skills. And it has grown in its sense of mission and calling as the needs of churches in New Zealand have become increasingly clear. These signs of growth are not the most obvious to

the eye, but they are nevertheless the most important in making the College what it is today.

In this issue we want you to meet one of our first-year students, Christy Peek, and understand more of our concern for church leadership and preaching. We hope you enjoy reading about Peter and Margaret Reynolds' new life in America, and catching up on events in the lives of former students. And lastly, we trust you will be inspired by the new initiatives that the Board has approved and those it is exploring. Please pray for us throughout the year, and continue the material support we need and value so much.



**Some of our students for 2004:** (back row) Adrian de Vries, Sam Duthie, Guy McKenzie, Michael Dixon, Russell Cross, Hamish MacDonald, (front row) Katherine Young, Christy Peek, Kynan Gray and Uaita Levi

## Exciting Developments

God has wonderful ways of developing the ministries of Colleges such as GTC. Sometimes he orders circumstances in a way that demands a response. Sometimes he brings us into contact with people, or provides new resources, and through these takes us forward in our journey of faith and service. Whatever means he uses, he is always at work to maximize the usefulness of those who seek first his kingdom and his righteousness.

At GTC we are conscious that God is opening doors for development on four different fronts.

### Women's Studies

In recent years more and more women have been applying to study at GTC. This has prompted us to develop a new certificate course to cater for their special interests and needs. The **Certificate in Women's Studies** will include, along with core subjects in Bible and Theology, new specialist courses called *Men and Women in the Bible*, *Women in the Church*, and *Women in Action*. Sue Bracefield and Nola Young are developing and teaching these courses. They will be offered for the first time this year.

### Distance Learning

From time to time people ask if they can take courses from GTC through distance learning. Given our limited personnel resources we have not actively promoted this aspect of our ministry in the past. However, as demand has increased we have been forced to rethink our approach. At its first meeting for 2004 on March 1<sup>st</sup>, the Board of GTC agreed to appoint Sue Bracefield as the College's first part-time Tutor for Distance Learning. Sue is now available to promote, coordinate and supervise distance-learning programmes.

### Links With RTS

Readers of *Grace Alone* will be aware that GTC has been building a relationship with Reformed Theological Seminary (RTS) in Jackson, Mississippi in recent years. That relationship took a significant step forward at the end of January when RTS President Dr. Ric Canada visited New Zea-

land with his wife and other members of his family. Dr. Canada assured GTC Principal Andrew Young of the warm support of RTS, and encouraged the College to consider tapping into the new Centra programme offered by RTS. This is a new internet-based programme for distance learning that would create opportunities for GTC students doing degree programmes to access outstanding instruction through their personal computers. The College will be investigating these possibilities over the coming months.

### Residential Accommodation

Late last year an immediate neighbour dropped a set of house keys into the lap of GTC Administrator Tony Bracefield saying, "The house next door is yours to rent or buy if you would like it". Stunned and excited, Tony promptly secured four tenants for this year – students Sam Duthie, Michael Dixon and Kynan Gray, along with their mutual friend Carl Muir. "Minor surgery" to a tin fence opened a direct path between the College and the house. It's a wonderful arrangement for both the students and the College. The College Board has asked its Administrative Committee to explore the possibility of purchasing the property for student accommodation (see below).



#### Investment Opportunity– GTC Residential!

The College Board invites anyone who wishes to invest in securing the above 4 bedroom house on 1392m<sup>2</sup> land to write / email Tony Bracefield c/- GTC (see back page for addresses) by 12 April . We are looking to raise \$185,000. Interest will be payable on any sum loaned.

## Student Profile: Why Grace Theological College? by Christy Peek

Unknown to me at the time, 2001 was to be a turning point in my spiritual life. Through my training in the Evangelism Explosion (EE) programme at my church, I developed a strong desire for evangelism. God added fuel to this desire through my continued involvement in EE and through giving me opportunities for sharing the gospel. In 2003 I felt a deep conviction that I needed to equip myself further in order to become more effective in evangelism. This led me to the decision to study full time at GTC in 2004. I promptly asked for unpaid leave from my permanent job as a teacher and I was released for a year.



**Christy Peek**

Along with equipping myself for evangelism, I was hoping a year at GTC would give me a fuller and deeper knowledge of the Scriptures. Although I had been a Christian my entire life, I wasn't satisfied with my knowledge of the Bible and was eager to become more intimate with God and his Word. In Ephesians 6 Paul talks about Christians being in a spiritual battle and says that God's Word is our weapon. Evangelism is definitely on the front lines of this spiritual battle. So, in order to fight effectively, I realized that I needed to know what God's Word

says and how to use it.

Knowledge of the Scriptures that is transferred to the heart is inevitably going to lead to the strengthening and maturing of one's faith. Through my study at GTC, I wanted my faith in God and my relationship with him to become strong and intimate. This is the only thing that will enable me to be effective in his service - doing anything in my own strength will amount to nothing. I desired a faith that would stand firm in the midst of trial and suffering. My own sinful tendency in the midst of trial is to doubt God and his Word and yet I am convinced that God can work in me to change this. His Spirit can perform miracles in the hearts of men. I am merely opening up my heart for him to work in me.

So how will God use this year of study at GTC in my life? As to my future, only God knows. For now, I am content in the knowledge that he will equip me to be more effective for evangelism, he will give me a deeper knowledge of his Word and he will strengthen my faith as I put my trust in him. Now that is exciting!

### PAST STUDENTS

What's happening in the lives of our former students? Here are some notable facts, events and incidents.

\* **Andrew Macpherson** ('95-97), pastor of Trinity Presbyterian Church in Takinini recently visited the USA with his wife Helen and daughter Tania. They attended a missions conference at Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Alabama, and visited friends in other parts of the USA and UK.

\* **Chris Scarlet** ('96), currently farming in North Canterbury, suffered the loss of his father in late January. We extend our sympathy to Chris and to his family.

\* **Geoff Macpherson** ('95-97) and **Philip Millar** ('97) both had their families enlarged recently by the birth of baby boys. Congratulations to Geoff and Marie and Philip and Karen.

\* **Steve Panapa** (2000-'02) and his wife Eva and daughter Victoria are serving in the Catlins Evangelical Church in Owaka for the year. Steve is completing his internship programme with the Grace Presbyterian Church.

\* **Trevor Keam** ('01-03) and his wife Susan are developing a tract and evangelism ministry that assists local churches. Trevor is currently assisting a small congregation in Waihi through this ministry.

## Restoring First Love



Church leadership is high on our list of interests at GTC. We want our students to be able to provide leadership that is firstly biblical and Christ-centred, then secondly, relevant to the age in which we live. To that end we are constantly reading, thinking and talking about church leadership.

In 2002, College Principal Andrew Young and Administrator Tony Bracefield attended a Church Revitalization conference in Birmingham, Alabama, USA. This was a conference aimed at re-kindling spiritual vitality and ministry effectiveness in churches through leadership renewal. Both Andrew and Tony were deeply impressed by what they heard and returned to New Zealand eager to share what they learned with churches here.

Opportunity to do this came in the form of an invitation from the Southern Presbytery of the newly formed Grace Presbyterian Church in New Zealand to hold a mini-revitalization conference in the South Island over the weekend of November 7-9<sup>th</sup> 2003. Some thirty elders and pastors attended the five sessions spread over a Friday night and Saturday. All found it an enormously stimulating and challenging time. Individual church leaderships are continuing to process and apply the ideas this year.

Revitalizing churches is about restoring them to their first love through the power of the gospel (Rev. 2:4,5). It begins at the beginning – with a

fresh appreciation and experience of the grace of Christ through the gospel. When that happens, renewed spiritual vitality produces functional effectiveness. And functional effectiveness usually results in numerical growth.

Leaders are important in this renewal process. If those who lead the church community are lethargic, ineffective and incompetent, others will seldom rise above them. Revitalizing the church begins with revitalizing its leaders. They must be spiritually alive and well if the church is to prosper. They must have servant hearts, and they must be functionally competent. Leaders of this ilk will attract, inspire, and ultimately empower others.

Characteristically, spiritually vibrant churches have a clear sense of mission or calling. They don't exist for themselves but for Christ. As his life pulsates through them, doors open to serve and extend his kingdom in the world. This generates a sense of purpose, excitement and expectancy, and leads to a church that both prays and works.

Ultimately, it produces a church that glories in Christ and his gospel. It recognizes Christ as the source of its life, power and hope, and glories in the gospel as the power of God for salvation. It preaches the gospel, lives the gospel, and is gripped by the gospel.

Churches aren't revitalized overnight – and still less, simply by means of a brief conference. However, the process must begin somewhere. Often the first step to renewal is recognizing need. If we never take that step we will never get beyond where we are. And that, at least, is something that a conference can do.

The College plans to hold another mini-revitalization conference in Auckland over Friday afternoon and Saturday, May 14-15, 2004. This is an opportunity for students and



*Attendees at the South Island Revitalisation Conference*

church leaders to ask honest questions about themselves and their churches, to gain renewed confidence in the gospel, and to rededicate them-

selves to seeing churches that have lost their first love restored to spiritual vitality and effectiveness.

## Sharpening and Strengthening GTC Principal Andrew Young Reports on a Recent Visit to Australia



Shortly after finishing a lecture on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> March I caught a flight to Melbourne for a six-day visit to Australia. My itinerary included Melbourne, Geelong, Canberra and Sydney.

The occasion for making this journey “across the ditch” (as the Australians say), was a request to speak at the biannual church camp of the Christian Reformed Church of Canberra. To make the most of the journey it was decided that I should also call on former GTC Board member and Chairman, Murray Capill, now teaching at the Reformed Theological College (RTC) in Geelong.

The day that I spent with Murray and his colleagues at Geelong (Thursday 11<sup>th</sup>) proved full and rewarding. Murray took pleasure in showing me around RTC’s recently acquired campus, a former boarding school that has been transformed into an outstanding teaching and residential facility. We discussed common challenges facing us as teachers of preaching and pastoral theology, and I spoke to a combined meeting of staff and students over the lunch hour on the merits of popular church leadership practices. Later in the afternoon I met with the faculty to share thoughts and insights on the spiritual formation of theological students.

I was struck by the similarity of the interests and concerns facing us as Reformed theological training institutions in Australasia. Among these is the challenge of helping Reformed churches develop culturally relevant leadership and pastoral dynamics. Reformed churches in Australia - as in New Zealand - are grappling with how to reach their generation with the gospel and provide sensitive pastoral care. They recognize that traditional models need revising, but at the same time, are cautious about the uncritical adoption of popular

leadership practices. Murray and I parted aware that we (and others) still have plenty of work to do in developing a comprehensive and cohesive pastoral theology to suit our situation.

From Geelong I travelled via Melbourne to Canberra. The church camp I was to speak at was being held at the Fitzroy Falls campsite in the Kangaroo Valley, a distance of 195 km from Canberra. This area, known as the southern uplands, was comparatively green and lush compared to the rest of the countryside I had travelled through (and over) in Australia. Here some 90 members of the Canberra Christian Reformed Church gathered for a long weekend of fellowship and teaching.



**Murray Capill**

I had chosen to speak on the subject of Christian maturity from the book of Colossians. This little letter of Paul, written to a church hassled by deceptive alternatives to the gospel, provides a marvellous explanation of the true character of the Christian life. We were all blessed as we explored its description of the glory of Christ, the sufficiency of the gospel, and the emptiness of human alternatives. I finished the series more convinced than ever of the need for a Christ-centred, gospel-focused approach to Christian living in our modern world.

It was just after 12 midnight on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> March when I arrived back in Auckland, weary but immensely encouraged. The days away had been sharpening and strengthening – sharpening in the sense of bringing issues and challenges into clearer focus, and strengthening through the nourishment that comes from fellowship with old and new acquaintances. Such excursions are never restful, but they are invariably helpful. We look for lasting good to come from this one.

## Preaching that Convicts Rev. Iain Murray on C.H. Spurgeon

Every second year or so our College enjoys a brief visit from Rev. Iain Murray, founding editor of the Banner of Truth Trust in the U.K. Iain has a deep interest in the work of GTC and is always ready to share insights and the fruit of his research and writing with our students.

This visit he spoke on Charles Haddon Spurgeon and the doctrine of conversion. The modern church, Mr. Murray believes, has a great deal to learn from this great 19<sup>th</sup> century Baptist preacher. He was a man God used remarkably to bring people to saving faith in Christ. He witnessed many dramatic and wonderful conversions – something rare in the church today – and thought deeply and clearly on the subject of conversion. The fact that he belonged to an earlier era, different in many ways to our own, is no reason to dismiss the contribution he can make to the church today.

Spurgeon believed that God leads people to conversion by the path of conviction. He makes sinful men and women realize their helplessness be-

fore revealing to them the grace offered in Christ. As instruments in that process, preachers, Spurgeon said, were bound to “deal pointedly with sin”. They needed to expose people to the spirituality of God’s law and help them see that they were utterly lost apart from God’s grace. The law, he taught, was not given to show people what they could do. At best it could teach them what they ought to do. But ultimately, it was to bring them to despair of themselves and turn them to Christ.

Preaching to produce conviction is almost a lost art today. True, conviction is the Holy Spirit’s work. Yet in this, as in all his saving activity in the human heart, the Spirit works through means adapted to achieving his ends. To use the words of another 19<sup>th</sup> century preacher William G.T. Shedd, there is a way

of presenting truth adapted to producing conviction, and a way that is not. Recapturing this ability is surely one of the great needs in the church today. Modern preachers would do well to sit at the feet and learn from master gospel preachers of the past – Spurgeon prominent among them.



**Andrew Young and Iain Murray**

## News from America

*On December 27<sup>th</sup> GTC lecturer and Board member Peter Reynolds and his wife Margaret bade farewell to their children, church family and friends, and flew off to America for three years of study at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. Shortly after they arrived, newsletters began to filter back describing their new life and surroundings. We have included one or two extracts to keep you aware of them and praying for them.*

“The snow lies thick on the ground, we have our big coats, gloves and thermal underwear and we leave the house each morning at 7 a.m., scraping the snow and ice off the car. (Most people seem to leave their cars outside all the time, even in winter). We call in at the gym on the way to Covenant for some exercise, arriving at CTS [Covenant Theological Seminary] at 9.30 a.m., in time for chapel. The day is spent in class or in the library, and we leave either around 5 p.m. or



stay until 9 p.m. if there is urgent work to be done. This is the programme 5-6 days of the week.

“Margaret is so far enjoying the classes and the readings, and meeting all kinds of new and interesting people... I have begun my Th.M. under the supervision of Richard Winter who heads up the counselling programme here, and under the advisory eye of Hans Bayer, a NT professor and Th.M. coordinator... I am doing three courses, one on Developmental Psychology, one on C.S. Lewis, and one on preaching that looks at the preaching of Augustine, Calvin, Edwards, Spurgeon and Lloyd-Jones. In addition, I have begun a large self-study project on Multiple Relationships in Counselling when counselling occurs in a local church setting.

“We are attending Kirk of the Hills Presbyterian Church (PCA). It is very large by NZ standards but the preaching is encouraging and there are

many student families there who attend Covenant Seminary. We are on the lookout for any who could be suitable church-planters in NZ.



*Peter & Margaret Reynolds in the USA*

“People here have been very kind to us and we are so grateful to the Lord for the gracious hearts he has surrounded us with. But we do miss NZ, our friends, and especially our children. We talk to them on the phone and by e-mail, but it is not the same. Also Margaret has just found out that her 84 yr mother has cancer. She has talked to her on the

phone a few times, but it is a sad time for them both.

“We will continue to update you with our news. Knowing we have your friendship and your prayers is a wonderful strength to us.”

Because He lives,  
Peter and Margaret Reynolds

## Financial Update

The Board would like to thank all those churches and individuals who have supported the College during the 2003 year. It is pleasing to report an increase in student fee income reflecting growing demand for our courses. However due to a significant decrease in individual and church donations we ended the year with an operating loss of \$19,767. The Board is reluctant to increase student fees to cover this deficit as most of our students are already making considerable financial sacrifice to come to GTC. That being the case, we anticipate a similar deficit this year. We bring this to your attention for prayerful consideration.

## Setting Churches Alight Conference May 2004

Pastors meeting: Friday May 14th (2-5 p.m)

Conference: Friday May 14th (7-9 p.m)

Saturday May 15th (9 a.m.– 5 p.m.)

Venue: Covenant Presbyterian Church, 77 Rogers Rd, Manurewa, Auckland

Registration Fee: \$20 (covers morning, afternoon teas, lunch)

*Please register by Friday 7th May if you wish to attend*



## Please join us in....

### Thanking God for

- ◆ Several new students studying at GTC this year
- ◆ The recent Revitalization Conference run by GTC in the South Island
- ◆ Blessings from the Principal's recent speaking engagements in Australia
- ◆ Iain Murray's encouragement and insights on preaching



### Praying for

- ◆ Our students, that they may learn and study well this year
- ◆ Peter and Margaret Reynolds as they further their studies in the USA
- ◆ The upcoming "Setting Churches Alight" Revitalization Conference to be run by GTC in Auckland
- ◆ God's continued provision of finance for the College and the residential accommodation opportunity

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