

Grace Alone

A Decade of Grace



Highlights

- ◆ Reviews of the past decade at GTC by Ross Thompson and Peter Reynolds
- ◆ A dream for the future
- ◆ A review by Alison Gray of the "Women in the Bible" Course
- ◆ Courses for 2005
- ◆ Exciting prospects for 2005 and beyond

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

In a brief month or two we will complete 10 years of ministry at GTC. It seems like yesterday that a group of 250 people gathered in St. Andrews Presbyterian Church to launch the beginning of a new theological college. But yes, that was ten years ago.

What years of challenge and blessing they have been. But perhaps the best term to describe them, however, is years of grace. Everything that we have been able to do has been a gift of God's rich grace. Our teaching and teachers have not merited his favour. Nor has the godliness of our students. Everything from beginning to end has been of God and has been the fruit of his lavish and undeserved goodness. We want to acknowledge that and give him the

credit for all that has been accomplished.

As we near the end of a decade of existence, we want to share highlights and reflections with you. This issue contains three contributions from long-serving members of the Board and faculty of GTC. Ross Thompson, current Chairman of the Board, looks back on how the College began and what it has achieved; the founding Principal, Andrew Young shares the vision that keeps him deeply committed to the work of GTC; and Peter Reynolds, currently studying in the USA, tells of his ten years of association with the College. In our final issue for the year we plan to take you back through the decade focusing on highlights and points for praise.

◇ Andrew Young



Old and New: Grace College's premises for the first 8 years at 150 Great South Rd, Manurewa, and new home from October 2002 at 75 Rogers Rd, Manurewa



A Vision becomes a Reality

Ross Thompson, Chairman of the Board of GTC and one of the early visionaries behind the College, tells of how GTC came into being.

The story of how Grace Theological College (GTC) began is the story of God laying a vision on the hearts of a few very ordinary people, and of that vision becoming a reality.

It begins with a small group of people sharing the conviction that God is calling them to start a new theological college in New Zealand. Together they respond by taking the first steps of faith, committing themselves to open a new college a year from the date of their first meeting. In making that decision they are conscious that from a human perspective, the task before them is impossible. They have no financial resources, no buildings, and no staff; just a deep conviction that such a college is necessary if the gospel is to flourish again in the land. And in the twelve months that follow, they see the hand of God overcoming all obstacles and the vision become a reality.

The actual decision to establish GTC was made at a meeting in Auckland of four Churches who had come together to form a national Fellowship for mutual encouragement. This Fellowship had other joint-projects in mind as well, but the most challenging of them was the establishment of an evangelical and Reformed theological college. Members of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand and the Reformed Baptist Churches who were committed to the venture were invited to be part of it as well. Their contribution was to be vital over the next 10 years.

The goal of the new college, to be called Grace Theological College, was to prepare pastors, missionaries and others for leadership in the church here in New Zealand, and wherever else the Lord



might call them. Its emphasis was not only to be on sound doctrine and preaching, but on the godly character and servant leadership that were central to our Lord's instructions to the disciples.

Looking back from the distance of 10 years, I am still amazed at the mighty step of faith we took in establishing GTC. As mentioned, we had no financial resources apart from a \$2000 gift from St Andrews Shop Trust in Manurewa. We had no buildings, no staff and no potential students. But one year later the College was up and running. And at the end of that first year, all of our financial needs were met by the God who supplies above and beyond what we ask.

Andrew Young accepted our Macedonian call to become the founding principal of the new College, giving up the security of a growing ministry in Australia to bring his family back to New Zealand. This was a tremendous step of faith as he, his family, and the Board, had to trust God for the money to pay his stipend. Ten years later it is clear that Andrew was the man of God's choice as he has taken the College from strength to strength.



Ross Thompson

In that same year leading up to the establishment of GTC, one of the committee members was left a sum of money that allowed him and his wife to purchase their own home. This meant that a church manse was now unoccupied, and through negotiations with the church leadership concerned, it was offered rent-free to the College for the first three years. Also in that year, three young men applied to attend the College when it began in 1995.

So it was that lectures began in early February 1995. Besides the three full-time students there were a number who attended College lectures on a part-time basis. Andrew Young bore the brunt of the teaching load in that first year, assisted by

others such as David MacKie, Arthur Palmer, and Peter Reynolds.

Has the vision of the founders been realized? For me personally the answer is a resounding YES. Although ten years is a short time to evaluate the influence of a college, I for one have been tremendously encouraged by the graduates who have taken up leadership in the denomination I belong to, the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand. In fact I am not overstating it when I say that if GTC had not been established there would be no Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand today. These Graduates all reveal a good grasp of the Reformed Faith, they are able to communicate and touch the hearts of their hearers as they preach the Word, and they seek to give true ser-

vant leadership.

The need of our day, in my view, is for congregations that are led by humble and godly men who have a firm grasp of the "whole counsel of God", who have absolute confidence in the truth and authority of the Word, who are dependent upon prayer as their chief weapon, and who lead by example, always seeking to follow the pattern of the Chief Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ.

May GTC continue to be used by God to thrust such servants into the harvest fields of the world. And praise to him for raising up Grace Theological College.

"I Have a Dream"

[GTC Principal Andrew Young shares one of the dreams that inspires and sustains him in his ministry at the College]

Like the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., I too have a dream. Dr. King's dream was of two children, one black and one white, sitting opposite each other on a seesaw, entirely oblivious of each other's skin colour. This was what inspired him in his Civil Rights campaign in the USA in the 1960's. It was also what led to his untimely death by an assassin's bullet.

Mine is a very different dream but one that is nevertheless equally distinct. It is the dream of a Christian congregation at the close of a worship service. It could be any congregation, of any denomination and size, and in any place. The critical thing is not its colour or its number, but its attitude.

The congregation I see is one that is enthralled with the glory and presence of the triune God. It is a group of people who have not simply been through a series of familiar exercises – praying, singing, speaking, listening, and giving – but a group of people who have been brought into per-

sonal contact with the risen Christ. They have encountered him in their worship through a manifestation of his Spirit. They have heard him speak through his Word, offered their worship and praise to him in song, and poured out their hearts to him in prayer. And they have ended their time together overwhelmed and awed by a sense of his presence. Their hearts have been blessed. They love the Lord with a fresh love and are bursting to serve him with every fibre of their being. They are not "sitters and soakers" basking selfishly in the glow of a moving experience, but living members of Christ who have been energized by a fresh encounter with him and who are now ready to do his work in the world.

A Welsh preacher once described to me a period of his life when the dream described above was a regular reality. He was a student in London at the time and attended a well-known congregation in the heart of the city. It was especially the Sunday evening evangelistic services that made a deep impression on him. "We used to go from those evening services," he said to me, "feeling we could take on the world. The gospel, and the living Christ of the gospel, had been set before us



with such power that we believed that the whole world needed to hear what we had just heard. And we believed that there was nothing in the world that could stop us from telling that message.”

That’s what I dream of seeing in congregations throughout our own country. I am deeply convinced that the hope of the church lies in its knowledge and experience of God through the Lord Jesus Christ. He is its Head. As such, he is the source of its life, the One who empowers its members and directs and energizes its mission in the world. The greatest need of the church (and of



Andrew Young

resources will all accomplish nothing of true spiritual worth. Paul’s words to the Corinthians are as true today as they ever were: “I planted the seed,

its individual members) in all ages has been to know Christ and to be filled with his life through the Holy Spirit.

Without that any church is impotent and merely an outward shadow of what it should be. Its activities and buildings, its campaigns and its re-

Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow” (1 Cor. 3:6,7). There it is; it is only God who makes things grow. Without his empowering presence, nothing the church does will come to anything.

That’s why I long for days when God’s people will be filled with his presence and power, particularly in their corporate gatherings for worship. Of course, this is not the only time they can be filled with his Spirit. But it is the most glorious time, and the time that does the church as a whole the most good. There is something about experiencing the power of God together with others that cannot be equalled. The body as a whole is built up and stirred into life. That pleases the Lord and makes the church a force for him in the world.

That dream sustains me in my ministry at Grace Theological College. It keeps me focused on equipping and supporting leaders for the church, for I am convinced that the Lord blesses his church through godly leaders. Through them people come to know Christ and use the gifts they receive in serving others and witnessing to the world. At GTC it is our privilege to train leaders who can, by the grace of God, do just that. Our focus, in other words, is upon helping others become servant leaders whom the Lord will use as channels to overwhelm people with his presence and empower them for his service.

My Ten Years with GTC

[Peter Reynolds, currently studying at Covenant Theological Seminary in the USA along with his wife Margaret, has been a key contributor to the life of GTC since its beginning. We asked him to reflect on his years of association with the College and on his vision for the future.]

Ten years! Has it really been that long since GTC first opened its doors? Well, I guess it has. We have come so far, and we have learnt so much, and God has been so good. We have much

to praise him for. And here we are looking back now on ten years of establishment and consolidation, anticipating a future of growth and expansion. What a wonder of grace.

What personal reflections come to mind as I sit here at my keyboard, allowing my mind to drift back over the previous decade?

When I returned to New Zealand in 1984 after four years of study at Westminster Seminary in

Philadelphia, I was conscious that the Lord had laid on my heart four areas of kingdom endeavour that, to me, arose quite naturally out of a Reformed and evangelical world and life view. I had a desire to be involved in the planting of churches committed to the doctrines of grace, to contribute to the growth of Christian education, to seeing the growth of pastoral counselling based on sound biblical and theological foundations, and, finally, to be involved in training men and women for ministry in churches committed to the Reformed and evangelical faith. I had no idea how all this was to come about, but we made a start, made many mistakes along the way, but by God's grace persevered.

Then in 1995 Andrew Young came to town and the College began. It was a great personal blessing for me to be involved from the beginning as a Board member and lecturer. If we are to see the doctrines of grace flourish in this country we need to train people at all levels of ministry, plant churches, promote Christian education, and develop pastoral care that is aware of the issues of post-modernism without backing away from a Gospel that requires faith and repentance.

The Scriptures have given us our focus, and also the scope for our labours at GTC. The focus ever remains the Gospel of the Kingdom (Mark 1:14-15), a message of the sovereign, electing love of God that he willingly and graciously extends to any who repent and believe. As for the scope, it

includes all people in every place. The Great Commission suggests no limitations on the scope of this message. As I'm sitting here thinking about the scope, and about the situation in New Zealand, I'm thinking about the occasion in Mark's Gospel when the disciples were in the boat with Jesus and the storm came upon them without warning (Mark 4). There is an interesting note in verse 36, "There were also other boats with them." Other boats were following Jesus, other boats were caught in the same storm, and other boats were saved by Jesus rebuking the wind. Jesus was acting on behalf of all the boats.

What a great reminder for us at GTC; *there are other boats with us*. We are not alone, and the truths we hold dear should not be kept to ourselves. In the decades to come may we reach out to the other churches of New Zealand, Australia, Asia, and the South Pacific as we train and teach and exhort, so that GTC graduates may be found throughout the churches and denominations in both our country and overseas. And to God alone will be all the praise and the glory.



Peter Reynolds

No Longer "Squashed" by Truth

[Alison Gray, a second year student at GTC, shares her response to the "Women in the Bible" course offered for the first time this year]

What is the role of women in the church today? What do biblical manhood and womanhood actually look like? What effect did the fall have on male and female roles? Why does God describe himself using male language? These are some of the questions we grappled with in our class, "Women in the Bible," during the second and

third terms.

"Women in the Bible" was put together and taught by Sue Bracefield. It was the first time such a course has been offered at Grace Theological College, so it was a privilege to be a part of it. The class involved about half a dozen women who met together every Monday morning from 10am - 12 noon. The atmosphere was relaxed and there was plenty of opportunity for interaction and questions.



In our first lecture we discussed the increasing demand for equality between men and women in all areas of society today. We saw how this created pressure on churches, and how many had responded by asking questions like: "What can't women do in the Church and why?" and "Does the Bible really teach that men and women are supposed to have different roles?" The answers provided to these questions, we noted, often left women feeling dissatisfied, hurt, and /or confused.

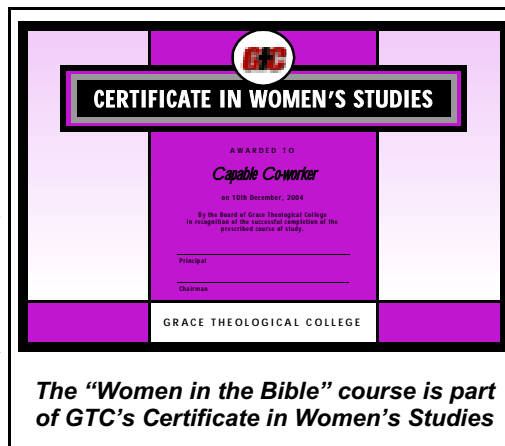
Before I did this course, I think I fell into the "dissatisfied" and "confused" categories. I knew that the Bible clearly taught that women were not to be pastors, but I didn't really understand why. It seemed to be unfair somehow. And I found it confusing that some churches willingly let women be pastors while others staunchly opposed the idea. It didn't seem to make sense.

In our "Women in the Bible" course we didn't make these issues an immediate focus. Instead we sought to answer the deeper, foundational question: "What does biblical manhood and womanhood really look like?" In other words, we tried to discover God's design for men and women. We set out to find what the Bible teaches about how men and women are to relate to each other, and flowing from that, what roles should they fulfill in the home, the church and in society.

To do so we first studied the Genesis account of how God created man and woman, of how Adam and Eve fell, and how God responded to that. We then went on to look at women in the Old Testament, firstly in terms of family and community life, and secondly, in leadership roles. We then studied Jesus and how he viewed and dealt with women, and then looked at women in the church age. The course came to a conclusion by looking at how biblical manhood and womanhood are to be expressed today, particularly in the areas of marriage and family, society and the church.

The thorough survey of theology and biblical texts in this course helped me to see a number of things more clearly. I came to see that because men and women are both created in God's image, they are of equal value. However, I also saw clearly how

men and women were created to complement one another, and thus have different roles and should not be treated with an undifferentiated sameness! I now better understand God's design and pattern in creating two sexes, male and female. I am more aware of the God-given roles and responsibilities of both men and women, and appreciate the reason why women are not to be in positions of authoritative teaching/leadership in the church. I no longer feel "squashed" by this truth. Instead, I know that women are a vital part of God's creation, and that we need to use our gifts to honour and serve him in the church, in our homes, and in society as we were created to do.



COURSES FOR 2005

GTC plans to offer a range of first and second year courses in 2005. These include Systematic Theology (Andrew Young and Carl Stevens), Greek and Hebrew (Arthur Palmer), Old and New Testament Introduction (Arthur Palmer), Practical Christianity (Andrew Young), Ministry of the Word I&II (Andrew Young and John Haverland), Biblical Theology I & II (Ian Grant and Carl Stevens), Women in the Bible (Sue Bracefield), and Women in the Church (Sue Bracefield and Nola Young).

You can find details of these courses and the proposed timetable for next year in the revised Prospectus that is available now. Please contact us if you would like to know more about what these courses involve, what they will cost, and when they will be held.

Exciting Prospects for 2005 and Beyond

The past four months have been exciting months for GTC. God has marvelously provided several new teaching staff for the College for the coming year – and we trust, for the years to come. Let us introduce them to you.

Carl and Irma-Maria Stevens

Back in May we were quite unexpectedly contacted by friends in Western Australia and told about the availability of a Dr. Carl Stevens to come and assist us at GTC, if we were interested.



After a lengthy process of e-mail contact, Carl and his wife Irma-Maria and daughter, Mona, came for a visit. Carl spent three weeks in total in New Zealand, two of these at GTC in Auckland and one in the South Island. As a result

of that time the Board of the College felt confident to invite Carl to come and teach at the College for at least the next four years.

Dr. Stevens is a native of Oklahoma in the USA. He studied theology at Dallas Seminary in Texas, then at Princeton, New Jersey, and finally at Westminster Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania. He taught for some years in Germany, and then moved to Perth some four years ago for his most recent assignment. His main areas of interest are in Theology, Apologetics, Greek and Hebrew. He will be majoring in these areas, and also in Biblical Theology, after he arrives mid-way through next year. We are also hoping that Irma-Maria, a graduate in Christian Counseling, will be able to present courses in “Counseling for Women.”

Zachary Eswine

Just a month or so after the Stevens family had visited another quite unexpected letter arrived from the USA. It came from a Dr. Zachary Eswine, an Assistant Professor of Homiletics (preaching) at Covenant Theological Seminary in Missouri, the denominational seminary of the

Presbyterian Church in America. Dr. Eswine had been granted five months of study leave for the early part of 2005 and was looking for an institution overseas where he might spend the months writing and doing a little teaching as well. Through Peter and Margaret Reynolds he came to hear about GTC and developed a deep interest in spending his study break with us here in New Zealand.



At the time of writing arrangements for Zachary and his wife Shelly and their children to visit are still being finalized. However, they do fully intend to come, arriving in February and departing again in May. Zachary hopes to make good progress on his book during those months, and we hope to tap into his expertise in preaching by way of class lectures and a preaching conference.

Ian Grant

Ian, a Board member of GTC, is a trained architect who has also studied theology in Melbourne. Since returning to New Zealand in 1995 he has resumed work as an architect with the Auckland City Council. He has not lost his love for theology, however, and the Board is eager to see him utilise his considerable gifts as a teacher in the area of introductory Bible Theology. He will be offering an evening class in this subject in 2005.

John Haverland

The fourth of our new faculty members for 2005 is Rev. Dr. John Haverland of the Pukekohe Reformed Church. John has a special interest in the areas of preaching and pastoral ministry. We have asked him to take a course called *Preaching to Postmodern New Zealanders* in the first half of next year. This was the topic of his D.Min research project. We look forward to John sharing the fruit of his work with us, and hope that many pastors in the Auckland area will seize the opportunity to participate in this course. More details will be provided early in the year.

Please join us in....

Thanking God for

- ◆ The vision and faith that led GTC to being established
- ◆ Ten years of ministry at GTC
- ◆ Providing GTC with competent lecturers, Board members and Trustees
- ◆ The provision of Grace College House, purchased as a residential unit for students
- ◆ Encouraging feedback from our first "Women in the Bible" Course



Praying for

- ◆ GTC to have an impact on the spiritual life of churches in our nation
- ◆ Carl & Irma-Maria Stevens as they plan and prepare to come to NZ next year
- ◆ Zachary & Shelly Eswine as they seek to confirm arrangements to have a sabbatical in NZ
- ◆ New students for 2005

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