

## **Report of the Deputies for Students for the Ministry**

### **Personnel**

Synod 2005 appointed Revs John Haverland and Michael Flinn as Deputies for Students for the Ministry with Rev John Rogers as the alternate. In 2006 both primary deputies made the visit to Geelong. In 2007 John Haverland went on his own because there were no major issues with the RTC, no students needed vicariate placements, and our student numbers were low. In 2008 Michael Flinn went on his own for the same reasons as cited above.

### **A. Students**

For most of the last inter-synodical period we have only had one student for the ministry at the RTC - Craig van Echten from the Reformed Church of Foxtton. He began a five year programme in 2005 and DV will complete his studies at the end of 2009. In December 2007 through to January 2008 he did a summer internship in Bishopdale under Rev Robert van Wichen. In Geelong Craig is involved in an evangelistic Bible study run by RTC students open to any of the 35+ resident students at Barkley Hall and is active in the Reformed Church of South Barwon.

André Holtslag of Silverstream began his studies at Mid-America Reformed Seminary (MARS) in June 2004 and completed them in May 2007. Regrettably (!) the deputies were not able to visit Andre and Anita during their time there. We did, however, maintain correspondence with Andre and with Dr C Venema regarding his progress, and we received written reports of his two summer internships in URC churches. Thankfully, Rev Bruce Hoyt was able to attend his graduation and also meet with the MARS faculty. All reports about Br. Holtslag's studies and about the training at MARS were very positive.

Jacob and Thelmarie Couprie also spent a year at the RTC during 2006. Jacob followed a one year diploma of theology and Thelmarie audited a number of the courses. Both thoroughly enjoyed their time in Geelong and others enjoyed having them there.

Two men in our churches are currently considering pursuing studies for the ministry, both of whom have the full support of their sessions. One of them is planning to go to Mid-America Reformed Seminary.

### **B. Faculty**

Since our last Synod Dr. Henk de Waard has retired as principal of the RTC and from full time lecturing. He will continue as a part-time lecturer and will assist with the administrative work involved with the RTC affiliation with the Australian College of Theology (ACT). Dr de Waard has lectured at the RTC for 27 years and has served as principal for 11. We wish to acknowledge the faithful, diligent and efficient work he has done over this entire period and his honest and gracious manner in all his dealings with his colleagues and with the churches. Dr. Murray Capill been appointed as the new Principal to which appointment we offer our congratulations.

Prof. Alastair McEwen (vice principal) continues lecturing in Old Testament, Dr. Stephen Voorwinde in New Testament, Dr. Bill Berends in Systematic Theology, and Dr. Murray Capill in Practical Theology. These brothers always receive us warmly on our visits and we are grateful for good relations with them. During our week at the RTC we attend as many lectures as we can fit in and continue to be satisfied with the work done by all members of the faculty. Our students express appreciation for the lectures and personal interaction with the college staff.

In the next five years A McEwen, S Voorwinde and B Berends will also retire; therefore the board will need to replace four members of the faculty over this short period of time. This will involve significant changes for the RTC and these appointments will be critical for the future of the college. Let's pray that suitable men will be found and appointed.

## **Report 3**

### **Deputies for Students for the Ministry**

#### **C. Curriculum**

The ACT Bachelor of Theology and Bachelor of Ministry degrees continue to be the benchmark requirement for our students, and definite requirements for young men. We have, however, been quite flexible with respect to more mature students who enter their training with considerable experience in the church and previous academic studies. In such cases the B.Th. teaching is the core degree while the B. Min. subjects are tailored to their requirements in consultation with the student and faculty. This is similar to the CRCA requirements. They have made their benchmark the B.Th. plus reformed distinctives and their deputies have outlined these distinctives in detail.

The faculty has informed us that the board has approved exploring ways to make more subjects available through distance learning and block courses. This will make it possible for candidates for the ministry to remain in their home church for longer and so reduce the number of years they need to be in Geelong. This has plusses and minuses. On the one hand there are some definite advantages in retaining our NZ students in their home congregation for longer and in reducing the time spent in Geelong. On the other hand we do not want the academic quality of a man's theological education compromised by too short a time at seminary. A move in this direction may also reduce the (already small) class sizes in at the RTC. We plan to interact closely with the faculty on this matter, and they want to consult closely with the deputies of both the RCNZ and the CRCA.

#### **D. CRCA Deputies**

At present the CRCA deputies are the Revs Crosbie de Kretser, Rev Ron Nauta, Rev John de Hoog, Rev Albert Esselbrugge and Mrs Sonja Esselbrugge. (Rev Bill Bosker stepped down from this committee when he was elected to the board of the RTC.) We work well together with them and arrange to meet with them at the RTC on our annual visits.

#### **E. Memorandum of Association**

The last Synod accepted the proposed Memorandum of Association and this was signed by the Board of the RTC and by the RCNZ Deputies at a subsequent Board meeting. So far this Memorandum has worked well.

#### **F. Evaluation of Prospective Candidates for the Ministry**

We are encouraged that sessions appear to be making a serious evaluation of men who express a sense of call to the ministry. Synod 2005 approved Appendix 2 of Report 17 as considerations for sessions when evaluating candidates for the ministry and we would remind the sessions to make use of that document.

#### **G. Fees**

During the last three years there has been a significant increase in fees, largely directed by the ACT (Australian College of Theology) with which the RTC is affiliated. Furthermore, the rules have changed and our NZ students are no longer eligible for the study grant called AUS study. This means that in years to come there may be a greater call on our Student Assistance Fund. Currently we have about \$54,000 in this fund held in NZ, and about AUS \$4000 held in trust by the RTC.

#### **H. Vicariates**

In consultation with the CRCA deputies we also act as the Vicariate Committee. Generally NZ men have been placed in the RCNZ, and Australian men in the CRCA. We have had a number of vicars placed in our churches in the inter-synodical period. This has been very good for our denomination as we are critically short of pastors. Our thanks to the churches for paying their quotas so these men can be supported for this final part of their training, and to the supervising ministers who have been willing to take on this task. Our thanks also to the Church Extension Committee for their efficient administration of the Vicariate Fund.

The following vicars were trained between 2005-2008:

2005 - Robert van Wichen in Bishopdale and Dovedale jointly supervised by the Bishopdale Session and Rev. Michael Flinn.

2006 - Andrew Nugteren in Dunedin supervised by Rev Hans Vaatstra.

- Michael Willemse in Pukekohe supervised by Rev John Haverland.

2006 - Pieter van Huyssteen in North Shore supervised by Rev John Rogers.

- David Waldron in Hastings supervised by Rev Bruce Hoyt.

2007/08 - Andre Holtslag in Pukekohe supervised by Rev John Haverland.

All of the above men have received calls (some quite a number!) and have taken up pastorates in our churches. For this we praise the Lord!

The vicariate for Dr. Pieter van Huyssteen was more unusual as he came into the ministry under Art. 12 of the Church Order. In view of his previous training he did a part-time vicariate under Rev John Rogers, but then sat the normal preliminary and final presbytery exams.

We have also approved a request from Daniel Wilson for a vicariate in the RCNZ beginning in October 2008. Daniel is married to Raewyn (Couperus) and is a student for the ministry at Greenville Presbyterian Seminary in South Carolina. He served a three month internship in the Mangere church under the supervision of Rev Sjirk Bajema; at then end of this time the session gave him a very positive report. Rev John Rogers and John Haverland also interviewed Daniel and Raewyn during their time in Mangere, and the deputies also sought advice on this request from the Auckland Presbytery.

## **I. General Comments**

The RTC continues to provide good training for men in our churches and is a valuable resource for equipping others in our churches to know the Scriptures better and to serve more usefully in our churches.

The greatest problem the RTC faces at present is a lack of students. Few men are presenting themselves as students for the ministry. This is of great concern and ought to be a matter of prayer. Those in the CRCA who do sense a call to the ministry sometimes choose to study at other theological institutions (e.g. Queensland Bible College, Moore Theological College).

In a recent visit Dr Murray Capill pointed out that if all the churches sent one young person per church per year the college would greatly increase their student numbers and that person's biblical and theological education would be of considerable benefit to local churches. .

For the last two years the RTC has hosted a conference for those who are considering some area of service and/or training. These *Fan the Flame* conferences have been popular and a number from our own churches have attended and found them useful.

Over the past five years the RTC has organised an annual preaching conference. These have been well attended and much appreciated

## **Recommendations**

1. *That Synod appoint two deputies (and an alternate) charged with supervising all RCNZ ministerial students wherever they are studying.*
2. *That the deputies interview each student annually where this is geographically possible.*
3. *That both (or one) of the deputies shall visit the RTC annually to:*
  - a) *meet with RCNZ students;*
  - b) *discuss curriculum and student progress with the RTC faculty;*

### **Report 3**

#### **Deputies for Students for the Ministry**

- c) meet with the CRCA deputies to discuss vicariate placements.*
- 4. That the deputies continue their responsibility for arranging vicariate placements.*
- 5. That the Churches continue to support the RTC financially by a recommended contribution of \$63,000 p.a. in the inter-synodical period.*

Rev. J. A. Haverland (Convenor and Reporter)

Rev Michael Flinn

Rev. J. Rogers (Alternate)