

## College News

We have just completed the first week of lectures for the new semester. We have six new students on campus and a number of new students joining our distance program. We are very grateful to the Lord for his provision of new students to train.

Between the semesters Mick Elliott (along with some student help) has done a wonderful job in converting the library foyer area into a new student lounge. This will be a great place for students to relax and enjoy fellowship with one another in a comfortable and informal environment.

The 2013 Preaching Conference is just around the corner. This year's conference focuses on preaching Wisdom, exploring the wisdom literature of both the Old and New Testaments. Held at the RTC in Geelong on Thursday 26 and Friday 27 September, we know this two-day conference will be well worth the time and effort to attend ([www.rtc.edu.au/Calendar/Events/2013-Preaching-Conference](http://www.rtc.edu.au/Calendar/Events/2013-Preaching-Conference)).

## Faculty News

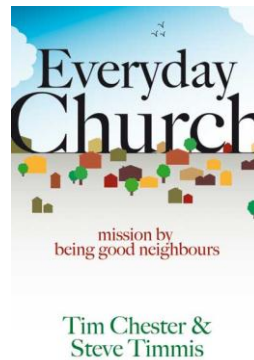
Phillip Scheepers had the opportunity to visit the Reformed Theological College of Myanmar from 12-19 July. This college, founded in 1997, seeks to provide training for both lay and ordained leaders of the Christian Reformed Church of Myanmar. They do so under rather difficult circumstances in one of the poorest countries in Asia and one with an overwhelming Buddhist majority. In addition to lecturing opportunities Phillip also had talks with the faculty of the RTCM on ways in which our two institutions can cooperate in the future. From our side this will involve investigating ways in which we can support the ministry of the RTCM as a "mission partner." Faculty is currently discussing ways in which this can be done and more news and information on this will follow in the near future. We encourage you pray for the ministry of the RTCM as they seek to serve God and train leaders in one of the most spiritually needy parts of the world.



Murray Capill is now on long service leave for most of the second semester. It is 12 years since he began teaching at the College. During his absence Dr Bill Berends will be the Acting Principal of the RTC. We wish him a good, refreshing, and well-earned rest.

## Book Recommendation

(by Dr Murray Capill)



Tim Chester and Steve Timmis, *Everyday Church: Mission By Being Good Neighbours* (Nottingham, IVP: 2012. 197 pp.)

I am sometimes a little sceptical when authors produce new books at a great rate. Can they really have thought through another area, written another good book, and come up with something else worth offering to the heavily saturated Christian book market? Or are they just milking the market for all it's worth? Given that Tim Chester, in particular, has produced many resources in recent years, I had a little of that scepticism as I began to read, but it soon dissipated. The same also happened when I read his book, *You Can Change*. Although this work is similar in theme to *Gospel-centred Church* and *Total Church*, *Everyday Church* does offer something new and something extremely valuable.

*Everyday Church* wrestles with what it means to be an effective missional church in the post-Christendom era. Early in the book the authors establish the central issue: churches cannot simply improve their product to win people to Christ because most non-Christians are never going to look at the product. Unbelievers have to be met off the church's turf. We need to drop, they say, our preoccupation with "church" by which we so often mean the building, or the institution, or the meeting time. The main focus when we think about church and mission should be thinking about where the members of the church are throughout the week – in their homes, communities and workplaces. This leads them to helpfully re-think not only mission but church community, pastoral care, evangelism and the cost of following Jesus.

The book is engaging, practical and tremendously stimulating. It doesn't provide a silver bullet for doing mission, nor does it present a full biblical ecclesiology – there are some big gaps. But it does provide a new way of thinking about what it means to be the church in our culture. This is a helpful and important read.

## Ministry Spot

(by Rev Alastair McEwen)

### Practical Suggestions for Building Body Life

We are all part of the body of Christ. And we all participate in building the body of Christ – we either do it well or poorly, but we are part of the Lord's program for the growth and maturity of his body.

But how?

*How?*

Books have been written on this so what follows are a few basic ideas that may help us as we work at this vital task from the Lord.

Now building the body of Christ takes place in some very basic ways. If only we realized this we might be more intentional in improving these opportunities.

There are the worship services. Just being there is an encouragement to brothers and sisters in Christ. We know this because we all experience it. Not many at the service this evening? How did you feel? Encouraged or discouraged? So when you or I give it a miss we are letting an opportunity to encourage our fellow Christians go down the tubes. Not a good idea. We are missing an opportunity to do what the Lord wants us to do – exercise body life and build the body of Christ.

And it's not just being there at the services. Singing is part of God's program for building the body of Christ, as both Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19 indicate. Of course when we sing we should be more conscious of who were singing to. Nearly every Christian knows some Hebrew. Ask him or her what *hallelujah* means. The reply? "Praise the LORD!" Then ask who we sing it to. If they're thoughtful the penny will drop. We sing "Praise the LORD" to one another! We trying to gee each other up into praise mode – or should be. Of course the LORD is listening as well. He gets praise as we give reasons to one another to praise him. But when we sing *hallelujah* and other "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" the Lord uses our singing as a means of enabling the word of Christ to dwell richly in us. [Col. 3:16; cf. Eph. 5:19] That's got to build the body of Christ. So we build the body by singing with and to each other. If we were more conscious of this – if we encouraged our people to be more conscious of this – we all might benefit more and the body of Christ be built up.

Then there's after the services. Showing loving Christian interest for others afterwards strengthens them. Listening – yes listening – and responding thoughtfully, caringly, quality rather than quantity. Also preparing beforehand for this is something we all can do, and not just the minister. How? At least

by praying for others – selected others usually as we can't help and personally interact with everyone. And thinking about what their needs might be. Then being prepared to watch out for them, to touch base with them, to care. As the writer to the Hebrews says: "[L]et us consider how we may spur one another on to love and good deeds." [10:24]. There's intentionality for you. "Let us consider how...." It's getting ready to build the body of Christ even before we meet together.

Of course the list of opportunities could go on, if we are willing to use them! Mid-week meetings or cell-groups. Meals together. Congregational camps, where eating, worshipping, playing, studying, and doing dishes together gives lots of opportunities for us to open up to one another, to share our ups and down, and so to love one another more appropriately and build to body. Certainly more could be said but these are some basics of how to build the body of Christ, a task to which and for which the Lord has called us all.

*Who?*

Who should be the focus of our attention in Christian body building? Any fellow Christian is a candidate. But can I make a special plea for the "peripherals"? Let's remember the peripherals, love the peripherals, put time and personal interaction into the peripherals. Who are the "peripherals"? Those who don't have support mechanisms in the congregation, or perhaps no support mechanism at all. They don't have family in the congregation with whom they connect just with a look, a smile, a hug. They don't have the long-term connections with the congregation, don't know the congregational family connections, the standard congregation jokes, sayings, references, don't have any drop-in friends in the congregation. Peripherals. Or the singles, or those from a different ethnic background, or those from a different sub-culture, those who are functionally illiterate [and on one count that's more than 45% of Australia's population] who are being brought into a bookish community, or who are disabled, aged, poor, struggling. Often peripherals are in our congregations. One of the hardest jobs is embracing and incorporating the peripherals. But if they belong to Christ they're part of the body too – and need to be built up, with special attention. It takes time and effort to be a Jew to the Jew and a Greek to the Greek, to build the body of Christ. But we are called to this. To this we may need to attend. Because the Lord wants it.

The Lord Jesus promised to build his church, and he will. But he does this through his people, through you and me. This is a ministry task of us all.