
Good News!

Good news from the Highland Theological College. On Wednesday 24th May, the Church of Scotland, meeting in General Assembly in Edinburgh, approved HTC as a place of education and training for ministers of the Kirk. On the same day, we heard that the University of Aberdeen had validated our new MTh degree in Reformed Theology. Only the week before, we appointed Dr Innes Visagie as Lecturer in Pastoral Theology.

In this Newsletter, we will provide details on all of these stories and more. There is a real sense around HTC that we are entering a new and exciting phase of the life of the College. On 1st August, HTC will be twelve years old. Perhaps this is 'the end of the beginning' and that we can move on to the next stage of development.

Thanks to all who have prayed, encouraged and supported us to this stage. We need your support more than ever as we try to take the College to the next level.

The Church of Scotland

The 2005 General Assembly of the Church of Scotland instructed its Ministries Council to carry out an assessment of HTC to see if it was a suitable place to educate and train Ministers for the Kirk.

The Council duly set up a Review Group, which came to HTC on 11th November 2005, HTC having been asked to provide significant documentation in advance of the visit. That Review Group carried out, in its own words, 'a rigorous and detailed process', examining HTC's suitability against agreed criteria which had been approved by the Assembly.

The result was that the Review Group presented to the Council a unanimous recommendation that HTC be approved without conditions. The Council duly approved that recommendation, also unanimously.

The Convenor of the Ministries Council, the Rev Douglas Cranston, on 24th May, duly presented this recommendation to the General Assembly. There was significant opposition, not least from the Principal of New College, Edinburgh and the Principal of Trinity College, Glasgow but the vote was in favour of HTC by a huge majority.

Partnership in Education

Although it was HTC's academic standards and quality which were the main focus of the decision to give approval for ministerial training, this would not have happened without UHI.

The current policy of the Church of Scotland is only to work with bodies which are Government-designated providers of Higher Education, which receive funding from the Scottish Funding Council and which are subject to inspection by the Quality Assurance Agency of Scotland. If HTC had not been one of the Academic Partners in UHI, it would not have met the criteria. Indeed, Professor Robert Cormack, Principal of UHI, was part of the team which met the Church of Scotland's Review Group in November.

We will also have a new partner as we move forward, Christ's College, Aberdeen. The Church of Scotland requires that all students can participate in the life of one of the three Church Colleges. Christ's College, Aberdeen, has agreed to work with HTC to fulfil this condition.

Since the University of Aberdeen is already partnered with UHI, as the body which validates our PhD degrees, it is very appropriate that we should work with Christ's College.

The Rev Dr Innes Visagie



On 16th May, the Rev Dr Innes Visagie was appointed as Lecturer in Pastoral Theology at HTC. Dr Visagie has five academic degrees, including degrees in social sciences and philosophy as well as in theology. He also has twenty three years of experience as a Minister in the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa.

Dr Visagie's experience in ministry is quite extensive. As well as being Minister of a congregation, he has also served as an Army Chaplain. While serving in a congregation, he also managed a Social Services Agency for the church and provided a Counselling service for the people in the town where he lived.

Dr Visagie's wife, Anne-Marie is a schoolteacher, qualified at both Primary and Secondary level. Innes and Anne-Marie have three children. Their daughter Marna is married to Jozua and they live in South Africa. Their sons, Regardt and Herman are both students.

It is somewhat paradoxical that after Dr Noel Due returned home to Australia, we recruited Dr Michael Bird from Australia. Now, following Dr Alistair Wilson's departure to South Africa, we have recruited Dr Visagie from South Africa!

We look forward to Innes and Anne-Marie joining us on 1st August and pray that God would bless them as they begin this new chapter in their lives and ministry.

Hector in Prague

The Rev Hector Morrison, Vice Principal of HTC, recently spent a week in Prague, in the Czech Republic, teaching a Module on Old Testament Themes to the extension study students of the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Prague (ETS).

HTC has a formal agreement with ETS, whereby some of their graduates continue their studies through HTC, by distance learning. This was signed by Dr Karel Taschner, President of the Seminary, in 2005.

This visit enabled Hector, as BA Course Leader, to meet with staff and students and to monitor the progress of those who are studying with HTC.

Travel & Conferences

Hector Morrison has been invited to Australia this summer, to speak at a number of conferences for Ministers and to preach in various churches.

Mike Bird is giving a paper at the European Association of Biblical Studies in Budapest, Hungary and another at the British New Testament Conference in Sheffield.

Andrew McGowan is giving the Tyndale Lecture in Doctrine at the Tyndale Conference in Nantwich and later attending the Fellowship of European Evangelicals in Prague.

Jamie Grant is also attending the Tyndale Triennial Conference and has again been asked to edit the conference volume.

MTh in Reformed Theology

HTC offers courses at every level, from an Access Course to a PhD. The one gap in the portfolio has been a taught Master's Degree. We have for a number of years had an MPhil degree, which is a research degree but felt the need to develop a taught degree at the same level.

Since the University of Aberdeen validates UHI research degrees, and since all new HTC PhD students are registered with Aberdeen, we asked UHI for permission to seek validation through Aberdeen. This was given and the process began. We were delighted to hear on Wednesday 24th May that the validation had been successful.

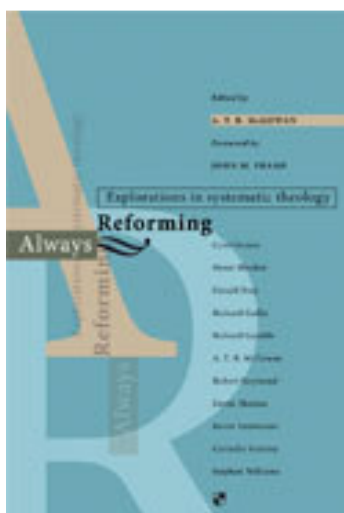
The taught MTh is intended to provide students who already have a degree in theology with an opportunity to study Reformed Theology to a deeper and greater extent than is possible at Honours level. It will particularly attract those with an interest in the rise and development of the Calvinistic tradition.

The degree will take 12 months for full-time students and 24 months for part-time students.

Students are required to take two modules designed to help with research methods: 'Method in Theology' and 'Dissertation Colloquium'. In addition, the following modules are compulsory: 'History of Reformed Theology' and 'Scottish Covenant Theology'. Two modules will then be taken from the following electives: 'Calvin & Calvinism', 'Reformed Theology & Pastoral Ministry', 'Zwingli and the Swiss Reformation', 'Romans in the Reformed Tradition' and 'Biblical Theology of the Reformed Tradition'.

Finally students will write a 20,000 word dissertation.

Professor McGowan is the Course Leader for the MTh degree and will also do the bulk of the teaching. Anyone who is interested in registering for the degree, which will begin in October, should contact the Academic Officer at HTC. Full address and e-mail contact details are on the back page of this Newsletter.



New Publication

A book edited by Professor McGowan has just been published by Inter-Varsity Press. It is called *Always Reforming: Explorations in Systematic Theology*.

Professor McGowan has written the Introduction and the chapter on the Atonement. There are also chapters by Gerald Bray, Henri Blocher, Richard Gaffin, Richard Gamble, Robert Reymond, Derek Thomas, Kevin Vanhoozer, Cornelis Venema and Stephen Williams.

The Way Forward

As you can see from everything in this Newsletter, HTC is moving forward with confidence and is achieving all its academic targets and goals. It is vital that this progress be supported by a solid infrastructure and appropriate staff numbers. Three years ago we had to reduce our staff numbers because of financial pressures. This means that a small number of people are carrying too heavy a load and this is true both of academic and administrative staff. This becomes most apparent when someone is ill and the work simply piles up and causes real stress.

In order to take full advantage of the Church of Scotland decision and the MTh validation, both of which will involve more work, we have to ensure that sufficient staff members are in place to do the work. This, naturally, has serious financial implications for the College. We are also under a certain pressure from UHI to bring our staff salaries into line with others in the Higher Education sector. The Board has committed itself to achieve that as soon as practically possible, although it may take two or three years.

If you share with us a sense that God is working in and through HTC and that he is now taking us to the next level, then please help us. A donation to HTC at this time will help us greatly to move forward.

Contact Information

For Course Information:

Write to: Academic Officer, HTC, High Street, Dingwall, IV15 9HA

e-mail: HTCAdmissions@htc.uhi.ac.uk

Send donations to:

The Bursar, Highland Theological College, Dingwall, IV15 9HA, Scotland

Telephone, Fax & Web:

Phone: 01349 780000 Fax: 01349 780001 www.htc.uhi.ac.uk

Contact the Principal of the College:

If you would like to contact Professor McGowan, please phone his PA, Miss Fiona Smith, on 01349 780208 or e-mail her at: Fiona.Smith@htc.uhi.ac.uk



University-level study in the Highlands and Islands

The Highland Theological College is an Academic Partner of the UHI Millennium Institute.

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