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Growing in
GRACE

John Calvin



Assembly 2009

Newsletter of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand

GRACE
Presbyterian Church of New Zealand

Calvin on How To Be Wise

Guest Editorial by GPCNZ Moderator -
Andrew Young

Recently a friend offered some advice on writing academic papers. “When I was doing post-graduate work at university,” he told me, “my supervisor insisted that I start everything I write with a ‘bang’. I had to state my argument with full force in the opening sentence. Everything that followed was simply meant to prove and establish that point.”

Whether or not John Calvin knew of that axiom he practiced it in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. According to the editors of the Battles edition, the decisive opening words of the *Institutes* “set the limits of Calvin’s theology and condition every subsequent statement.” In other words, Calvin starts “with a bang.”

How did he begin this literary and theological masterpiece? Here is how Ford Lewis Battles’ translates the opening statement: “Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and ourselves.” There are few better ways of commemorating Calvin’s spiritual legacy than by exploring this statement.

Wisdom and Knowledge

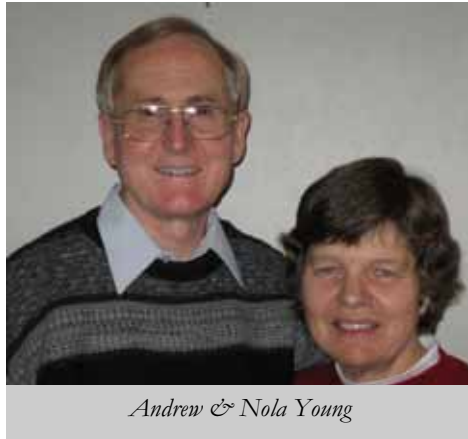
By beginning with the theme of wisdom, Calvin stands in the tradition of King Solomon and other wisdom writers in the Bible. His aim is not to discuss abstract theology but to help people live well. For wisdom can be thought of as that quality of insight and understanding that enables us to live good, true and satisfying lives.

Such an aim is consistent with the overall thrust of Calvin’s ministry. Contrary to popular perception, he wasn’t an ivory tower theologian devoted to disputes and to promoting an icy, impersonal doctrine of predestination. At heart he was a pastor, a man of God who longed to comfort, strengthen and help fellow-believers. The original audience he had in mind for the *Institutes* – persecuted evangelical believers in France and other parts of Europe – testifies to this.

How, then, can people become wise? Or what is it that constitutes sound wisdom? Calvin believed that nearly all true wisdom could be reduced to this: knowing God and ourselves.

This conviction is rooted in his understanding of human nature and how God intends us to function. Calvin held that the human soul (the ruling part of our nature) is composed of the mind and the will. The mind conceives of what is good, true and right, and the will executes its judgments. Consequently, if we are to live well we must think well. Our minds need to be informed with truth if we are to discern what is right and best and live successfully.

It is this which makes knowledge so important. It’s not a matter of being brainy or intellectual, but of knowing what is true and best. And this comes about, Calvin believed, as we know both God and ourselves.



Andrew & Nola Young

Knowing God

We cannot begin to live well without knowing that there is a God. Like the biblical writers, Calvin doesn’t try to prove the existence of such a being but assumes it. There is ample evidence from nature and Scripture to support that belief, he claims, and no one is without excuse for denying it. If God is there, and if he is who he says he is (not the idolatrous creation of imaginations), then we simply cannot approach life in the right way without acknowledging him. That means more than conceiving that he exists; it requires understanding what he is like and how we are to relate to him.

Calvin discusses the knowledge of God under two headings, the knowledge of God as Creator and as Redeemer. In both he constantly shows the relationship between knowing and living. Some examples will enable us to see how these two things are linked.

Understanding God as the Creator of the universe, Calvin says, teaches us to “fear and reverence” him, and to “learn to seek every good from him” (*Institutes* I.2.2). He adds,

For how can the thought of God penetrate your mind without your realizing immediately that, since you are his handiwork, you have been made over and bound to his command by right of creation, that you owe your life to him? – that whatever you undertake, whatever you do, ought to be ascribed to him (Ibid.).

The knowledge that God controls and cares for everything similarly leads us to “trust, invoke, praise and love him” (I.14.22). More than that, it liberates us from fear and enables us to live calmly amidst trial and uncertainty.

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Assembly

On Being a Human Preacher

Dr. Zack Eswine and his wife, Jessica, live with their three children, Nathan, Abigail and Caleb. Zack currently serves as lead pastor of Riverside Church in Saint Louis Missouri. Prior to that he served for seven years as Assistant Professor of Homiletics and Director of Doctor of Ministry and then Associate Dean of Ministry Formation at Covenant Theological Seminary in Saint Louis. He is also the author of two books, "Kindled Fire: How the Methods of C.H. Spurgeon Can Help Your Preaching" (Mentor), and "Preaching to a Post-Everything World: Crafting Biblical Sermons that Connect with our Culture" (Baker).

Zack and his family were the special guests at this year's General Assembly where he spoke at the commencement and close of each session. During the Assembly he sat down with Geoff Macpherson for a chat about his thoughts on preaching to contemporary culture and what John Calvin has to offer us on his 500th birthday.

Geoff: Zack, tell us a bit about yourself, specifically your childhood. What was that like?

Zack: I grew up in a broken and religious family. My parents divorced when I was only four years old. Though today, my Dad and Mom both follow Jesus, each of my parents is now in their third marriage. My Mom and her husband, at the time, were strong Roman Catholics. So I was raised Catholic, and I was very serious about that. I thought I would be a priest, used to go to confession regularly and prayed the rosary. As a teenager, while some of my peers rebelled, I became even more religious. I threw myself into doing all that I thought God required of me. I read the Bible and prayed regularly - but didn't know Christ.

So, how did you come to know Christ?

It was at college through a college ministry group called *The Navigators*. A man called Bob Smart, who is still a mentor of mine and who worked with *The Navigators*, shared the gospel with me. I couldn't stand him when I first met him - he was too authentic! He cared about me genuinely and I just mistrusted him. I was still a part of the Catholic Church and even a worship leader there, but gradually came to see that I couldn't stay there with my new faith. Through Bob Smart I came to worship in the Presbyterian Church of America, a reformed denomination. Through that church I came to learn about the sovereignty of God in salvation.

How did you come to be a church pastor?

I initially went to university on a theatre scholarship planning to be an actor. Then I switched to social work and used to work with crime victims. But, through *The Navigators* people began to encourage me to train my gifts in teaching



and leading. So I worked as a ministry apprentice with my local church serving in all kinds of areas of ministry. Each time I was taught how to lead and how to evaluate my gifts. At the end of that year they encouraged me to enrol at Covenant Theological Seminary.

After graduating I served for seven years as pastor of Grace Church in Cleveland and also commenced work on my PhD. After completing that I returned to seminary to teach homiletics. Today I serve as pastor of Riverside Church in Saint Louis Missouri.

You have written a book on preaching; do you have a definition of preaching?

To begin, I would say that preaching is *the vocation of testifying to Christ*. You see, a preacher is a human being who is called to the vocation of testimony. I don't see preaching as speech making with all the attendant rhetorical elements. For most pastors giving time to these kinds of elements are a luxury, and not the core. At its core, to preach is a vocation rather than a moment of eloquent speech. I understand that preaching is expounding God's Word in the power of the Spirit to glorify Christ. I also understand that every Christian is called to testify to Christ. But not every Christian is called to the vocation of testimony. Most people don't have to do what we do - standing up in a public forum and telling others what we believe.

What should preachers be passionate about?

I know that I should say ‘the glory of God’, or ‘the exaltation of Christ’ - and I’m assuming those things - but I’m going to say ‘being human.’ The first place we start if we desire to glorify God or exalt Christ is that we say, ‘I am not the Christ.’ Only God can do all things, know all things and be everywhere at once. I must preach and minister in such a way that people learn this. So, because it is for the glory of God and the exaltation of Jesus we have a necessary commitment to be human and preach as finite creatures. I am a sinner, I am broken, I am limited, I don’t know everything and I am dependant upon him – just as my listeners are. But the difference is that I’ve been given a calling and vocation to testify to Christ.

Most people want superstar preachers, and that isn’t what you’ve just described. Why do you think that is - that we want superstars?

Our brokenness and humanity is a magnet to some and a monster to others. If you’re broken and you live like your every hope is in Jesus, then that is disruptive to some people because they can’t put their hope in you. They have to hope in Jesus too! But if you present yourself as the strong one, then people can put their hope in you. You see, if the preacher needs Christ, what does that say about me? Paul had a redemptive vulnerability and regularly spoke of his weaknesses. He even talked about being covetous in Romans, of the thorn in the flesh, of being downcast. He isn’t afraid to say that he is a clay jar, and that the treasure that is in him is Christ.

Is that what mean in your book ‘Preaching to a Post Everything World’, when you speak of the importance of ‘remembering where you have been’?

Yes. We receive the teaching of God’s teachers with the full knowledge of their story. We receive Moses’ writings knowing that Moses didn’t enter the Promised Land. We receive David’s Psalms knowing David’s tragic story, and Peter’s letters knowing that the rooster hasn’t left Jerusalem. He would have heard roosters crowing for the rest of his life, but he needs to remember his identity in Christ. We also know Paul’s angry story, yet he is the one who God has teach us the meaning of love and not Jesus! It seems to be the model of Scripture that we receive the teaching of most of God’s servants, knowing their story. God remembers where we’ve been, but knows who we are on the basis of the grace we’ve received. And we need to remember who we’d be without Him.

“Too often we think of God as the God of Moses who doesn’t know anything about the Internet, Osama bin Laden, or how to use an iPod.”

You also speak of post-modernity and multiculturalism in your book. It is understandable that many western Christians feel threatened by the Hindu temple being built down the street, or the local mosque holding open days. What should be our response?

We should respond with humility by realising that we are being implicitly rebuked by the culture. While we reject the part that denies the exclusive claims of Christ, the fact that different cultures have value and are to be respected is an area that churches should be taking the lead in. Too often our fears and uncertainties take their lead from secular culture, rather than Scripture.

We take Christ to all people, firstly because of ‘neighbour love’ as Jesus taught us in the Good Samaritan parable - which is a cross-cultural story. We see it in Paul, a Jewish man who loves his own people, but who is made the apostle to the Gentiles. Why not the Gentile Titus? Secondly, in the Book of Revelation we read of ‘every tongue, tribe and nation’ worshipping God. People from every place come to bow to Christ, which makes sense, because it was in Christ that God created all the peoples.

So, to reach our post-modern culture, are the Scriptures enough, or should we be looking for something else?

Too often we think of God as the God of Moses who doesn’t know anything about the Internet, Osama bin Laden, or how to use an iPod. We think that we should bring him up to date with these things. But we forget that God speaks every language and He is the expert of foreign policy. Remember, it was God who told Jonah what Nineveh was like, and then sent him there. Also, it is the God who taught the languages of Babylon to Daniel and who has given us His Word. This truth should anchor us and give us confidence in His Word.

Not only does God’s Word tell us *what* God thinks, it also shows us *how* He communicates. We see the difference in how the prophet Isaiah confronts the sin of drunkenness (Isaiah 5:11-23) with how the sage in Proverbs (23:29-35) deals with the matter. Traditional reformed preaching tends to focus on the prophet, which is right and good, but we forget that God also spoke through priests and wise men. Generally we are uncomfortable with the wisdom literature of the Bible. We need to see that God uses questions, riddles and poetry to communicate also. What is interesting is that wisdom literature, for example, requires a less explicit understanding of the Abrahamic covenant than the prophets.

And, so we see, that the harshest words of the Old Testament are not for those outside of the covenant, but are for God's covenant people. In the same way, Jesus' hardest words are not for the Gentiles, but are for the 'Bible believers'. He didn't speak to the woman at the well with the same force as He did to the Pharisees and religious leaders.

In your latest book you speak of the need for contextualisation. Some people see this merely as a euphemism for old-fashioned liberalism. How would you explain contextualisation?

Contextualisation is happening right now because we're speaking in English. If I break out into Spanish, and you don't speak Spanish, then we're in trouble. As soon as I speak in English, I have limited who can understand me and has access to what I'm saying. So, to 'contextualise' is simply to translate, and we depend on translation. To translate is to seek clarity. We expect any missionary to translate into the language of the culture they're communicating with. We get that part of contextualisation and assume that they will do it because they are a missionary. The problem is that we don't think of ourselves as missionaries!

Secondly, there are the cultural norms of communication. We see that in the differences between Acts 13 and Acts 17. In the first instance, Paul speaks to the Jews from the Old Testament. In Acts 17, on the Areopagus in Athens, he doesn't quote from the Bible once and doesn't mention the name of Jesus. He quotes from the Athenian poets and the altar to the Unknown God. He uses texts that they are familiar with to speak of Christ. Jesus did a similar thing when He said, "*You have heard it said, but I say to you...*" It must have been unnerving to hear Jesus use the folk or religious wisdom of the day. He makes a cultural connection and gives a biblical redirection. We need to do this today also, to understand the texts of our day, the movies, the novels and other mediums, so we can use them to convey the gospel.

We have to do this with everyday words also. We say what the text says, but also account for how people hear it. For example, I was speaking once to a group of teenagers and said that 'Stephen was stoned to death.' Then I noticed them all looking at each other and sniggering. Why? Because they weren't raised on the Bible and what they heard me say was that this guy, Stephen, overdosed on drugs and died! So we need to redirect their thinking so they know what the Bible is saying.

It is a minefield, isn't it, the degree to which we engage our culture.

Yes it is, but I think that is because we are offended because we forget where we've been. Like when the apostle Paul sees

the idolatry in Athens (Acts 17), he doesn't do what I think my tendency would be, which is to start waving signs or form a protest march and start denouncing the people as idolaters. Instead, we read that he was provoked in his heart, and '*so, he reasoned with them in the synagogue and the market places...*' He didn't physically separate himself from them. So with Jesus, the religious leaders asked, "*Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?*"

As you know, July 2009 is the birth month of John Calvin. On his 500th birthday, what do you think that Calvin would say to us today?

His writings on vocation are very helpful because he saw our vocations as God's provision for our contentment and protection. In other words, knowing the next thing I'm supposed to do is God's protection for me. This is important for a restless 21 Century culture, because we know that doing the next thing I'm supposed to do glorifies God. It is what you are supposed to do, it is a good life, and it is enough.

It also brings contentment, because I can stay within my limits and do what God has asked me to do; and that person over there is doing their thing. I don't have to be everywhere at once doing everything. Our little local thing is substantial in God's eyes. Imagine how anticlimactic it would have been for Titus when Paul sent him to little old Crete! Why not Rome or Athens?

The other thing is Calvin's teaching on the work of the Spirit by and with the Word. In Calvin's view, by itself the Word has no power. It is the fact that the Word is the 'sword of the Spirit' that makes it powerful. So, when we preach, it isn't enough to have the words, but we need an in-the-moment *intensification* of His Spirit's presence. The Pentecostal expectation of an encounter with the Spirit is right, but the means being used is wrong, because it is through the Word, not experience, that we encounter God. We speak God's Word in the moment with our feeble voice, and in that moment God takes what is true in what we're saying and actually speaks into the souls of those He is effectually calling. Thus, we approach the ministry of the Word with reverence because we believe that God is actually present, and we know God intends to work in that moment.

This is the balancing of our talk of being human – God's condescension to us – we're the human beings coming to testify on His Word. We are earthy humans, but God is working something supernatural through us.

Well, that brings us pretty much back to where we started from. Thanks for your time, it has been a pleasure talking. May God bless the rest of your time in Aotearoa.

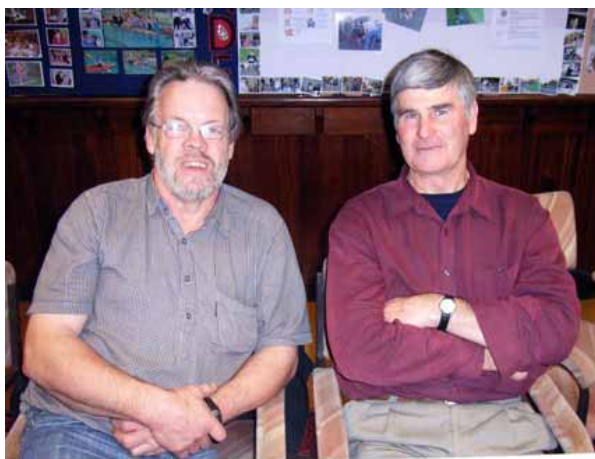
2009 General Assembly Report



Ross Thompson & Steve Panapa



Peter Reynolds & Barry Swann



Gavin Landreth & Mervyn Marshall

Grace Presbyterian Church held its Eighth General Assembly from 8th July -11th July at Covenant Presbyterian Church, Manurewa. Attending General Assembly were approximately **25** delegates representing 14 congregations. There were also a number of guests, including Zack Eswine, who powerfully ministered to the delegates. Dirk van Gardaren also brought greetings from the Reformed Churches of NZ.

Moderator – This year was the second year of Andrew Young's (Wyndham) two-year term as Moderator. Rod Peek (Covenant) is Moderator-elect for 2010-11. David Bayne (Ashburton) was reappointed as church Clerk, George Wallace (Gore) as Treasurer and Tony Bracefield (Redeemer) as Minute Secretary and Administrator.

Assembly Business

The business of Assembly is conducted around the four Assembly Standing Committees. These Committees are designed to be servants of the church. They are made up of elected delegates with each presbytery having representation. Their primary job is to make sure that decisions made at Assembly are carried out in a practical way. While not having the authority of a church court, they may recommend to assembly various changes to policy or courses of action.

The Committees are:

Administration and Finance Committee – Current members are Rod Peek (Convenor) Tony Bracefield, Andrew Macpherson, Bill Boyes, plus the current Assembly moderator, Treasurer and Clerk.

Education and Publications Committee – Geoff Macpherson (Convenor), Andrew Young, David Bayne, Peter Reynolds, David Farr, Wally Rakete, Richard Worth

Home Missions Committee – Peter Boyd (Convenor) Andrew Macpherson, Richard Eyre, Rob van Rij, John Oh, Gavin Landreth, Mervyn Marshall, Barry Swann.

Overseas Missions Committee – Mark Smith (Convenor), Malcolm Tasker, Trevor Webb.

Next General Assembly – will take place in Dunedin from Wednesday 6th October - Saturday 10th October 2010.



John Calvin in a McWorld

John Calvin's Advice For A Self Indulgent Age

By Mark Smith

What can we learn from a theologian who lived 500 years ago? How can he help today's followers of Jesus get balance in the Christian life? He knew nothing of Facebook, McDonalds, DVD's, iPods' or current fashions. So what relevance does John Calvin bring to us today, in the 21st century?

While at studying at Grace Theological College in the 1990's he spoke, from beyond the grave, deeply into my life. It wasn't his explanation of predestination, nor was it his ideas on our knowledge of God. It was his teaching on how the Christian is to see this present life.

We breathe in the air of the culture we live in. Like residents in a polluted city we inhale a way of life that is severely infected by materialism, hedonism and presentism, and its obsession for immediate pleasure and personal happiness. This, coupled with our own addiction prone hearts, distorts the way God would have us live in this world for Him.

Calvin in his *Institutes*, his magnum opus, helps us clear the air. He exposes our attraction to this world, gives a corrective to how we are to view it, and points out where our focus needs to be.

1. Our Attraction To This World

Calvin says God recognises that we have a 'brutish love for this world' and cleave tenaciously to it. We are dazzled by the wealth, power and honours, preoccupied with greed ambition and lust, looking only for happiness in the 'here and now'. This affects, not only those who seem to be winning the materialist game of life, but all those who are playing.

One of the greatest dangers for 'poor' University students, I believe, is money. Not so much having it, but anticipating having it and building materialistic future dreams around it. We are blessed in this life in numerous ways but Calvin says *'the blessing of God in this life instead of binding cords that lead us to God can become a rope that strangle us.'*

God knows our hearts and longings. He knows what we tend to do, so He acts to prevent it. In order to avoid a false hope of deep and lasting peace in this life, God allows a disruption. He rattles the cage. He uses all sorts of things to loosen the grip and shatter our fixation.

Calvin gives a whole list of examples (in a modern day context) things like: having your car stolen or house burgled, a marriage partner who drives you nuts or kids that go off the rails, getting sacked from your job or contracting some exotic flu bug. What he is saying is, God often allows a derailment in our world so that we learn that this *'life, judged of itself... is unhappy in countless ways... uncertain, vain and fleeting.'* We so often crave and yearn for the pleasures of this world, that we can't taste or have lost the ability to taste, the pleasures of eternity.

So what is the answer to our hedonistic hearts living in such a self indulgent culture?

2. The Corrective

Calvin suggests several things that can help us.

a. Seeing the goodness and blessing of God

Calvin urges us to use the things of this world for the purpose for which they were created.

We need to consider the purpose and end for which God created things. For example; Food? Did God just make food to sustain us or is it also for our enjoyment? Flowers? Has not God clothed flowers with great beauty and sweet fragrance. Therefore, if the Author designed them for such use then is it wrong for us not to enjoy them. We need to learn about the goodness of our Creator and feel gratitude for His generosity. This checks us in several ways. If we are thankful to God for our clothes, we are less likely to admire ourselves and look down on others. It is also hardly gratitude if you stuff yourself with food and drink, leaving yourself unfit to pray or work.

b. Contentment, accountability and pilgrimage

Calvin suggests that concepts like contentment, accountability and pilgrimage are vital in a self indulgent age. We must learn the secret of contentment like the Apostle Paul (Phil. 4:12) and realise we are stewards, who, one day, will have to give an account of our time, money and resources. Along with this, develop a pilgrimage perspective that realises this world, as it is, is passing away. (1 Cor 7:31)

“Like residents in a polluted city we inhale a way of life that is severely infected by materialism, hedonism and presentism.”

We so easily get absorbed in the moment, forgetting we are pilgrims and craving every fashion and latest gadget that comes along. Calvin calls us to have a certain contempt for this present world, especially in light of our true home and destination.

3. Where Our Focus Needs To Be

Calvin insists that we are to desire, long for and meditate upon the heavenly kingdom. To enjoy the presence of God is the summit of happiness. As we taste the sweetness of divine generosity, it should whet our appetite and ignite our hope for the full revelation of it. God's gifts in the present become ladders by which our hearts and mind rise to heaven, where Christ, who is our life, is seated. (Col 3:1-4) The blessings of God now, are to fuel a longing and passion for the life to come. We are to live with an expectation of all that God has in store for us.

'...the Lord will receive his faithful people into the peace of His kingdom, 'will wipe away every tear from their eyes' (Rev 7:17) will clothe them with 'a robe of glory...and rejoicing' will feed them with the unspeakable sweetness of his delights, will elevate them to his sublime fellowship - in fine, will deign to make them sharers of His happiness.'
(Calvin)

He also quotes the Psalmist Asaph,

'You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.' Psalm 73:24-26

I think Calvin is right; the antidote for materialism is gazing at the life that is to come. It is the cure to a hedonistic heart because at God's right hand are pleasures forever more. It is also the remedy to presentism because our immediate reality has nothing in comparison to the eternal divine realities. Our craving hearts malfunction in this sin cursed world, but by God's grace, we can start craving the right thing. God has made us for Himself, it is only when we are with Him that our craving will cease. So let us gaze at the life that is to come and long for His presence above all, the true summit of happiness.



CHRISTCHURCH
10 & 11 August 09
Bishopdale Reformed Church, Christchurch

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Contact: Richard Eyre
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AUCKLAND
12 & 13 August 09
Covenant Presbyterian Church, Manurewa

For information and registrations
Contact: Michelle Willis
P: (09) 267 2212 E: danandmich@willis.co.nz

Speakers:
Dr. Harry Reeder & Rev. Lynn Downing
from Briarwood Presbyterian Church
Birmingham, Alabama, USA

Embers to a Flame revitalization conferences provide strategies to facilitate spiritual renewal in churches. The Christchurch and Auckland conferences are sponsored by the GPCNZ and are open to church leaders, ministry interns and students of all denominations.

Rotorua



Steve Panapa

The Northern Presbytery has agreed that Steve Panapa be sent to Rotorua as an evangelist. Steve has, for a long while, had the desire to return to his 'home' territory to establish a gospel witness there. Steve was born in Rotorua but has not lived there for many years. However, in recent time,s the call to 'go home' has been strong and Steve and Eva believe they are compelled to answer that call.

Steve also believes that his call includes a desire to reach his own iwi (tribal group), the Te Arawa people. Rotorua still has a large Maori population - about 40 percent of the total population. Many marae in and around Rotorua offer a readymade platform to speak and, where opportunity may arise, to share the gospel through word and song. Steve is planning a community based local church with a hope to add a Maori flavour with things such as prayer, songs and action songs in Maori.

Another reason for being in Rotorua is its special location within the North Island. Rotorua is central in the Bay of

Plenty region, eg: Tauranga and Te Puke are 40 minutes drive east, Whakatane is one hour drive east, Taupo is approximately one hour west, Hamilton is approximately one hour north, Gisborne is 2 ½ hours south-east and Auckland is 2 ½ hours north. Rotorua is also a place where thousands of tourists head every year.

Steve believes that he is ready and equipped to do this work. He told GIG that:

I am from Rotorua of Te Arawa descent on my birth parents side and mother's side. I never lived in Rotorua for any length of time as we left there when I was a child. My grandfather and father were and are ministers in the Anglican Church. I am saved by God's grace in Christ. I was a member of St James Anglican Church, Mangere Bridge for ten years then was a member of Greenlane Christian Centre for eight years. I am called to be a pastor and have spent three years at Grace College learning reformed, evangelical faith and historical / redemptive biblical theology, to preach Christ from all Scripture. I assisted Pastor Andrew Macpherson for the first three years in establishing a new church plant – Trinity Church in Takanini. Was pastor at Catlin's Evangelical Church in Owaaka for three and a half years. Spent six months with Barry Swann - another church planter in Invercargill Currently in Auckland where I have been co-pastoring with Andrew Macpherson at Trinity Church for the past two years.

Steve's plan is to move to Rotorua in December 2009 and work toward establishing services there in early 2010. If any one wishes to support Steve and Eva contact the National Missions Committee:

Peter Boyd - Email: petethepastor@gmail.com.

"There is no worse screen to block out the Spirit than confidence in our own intelligence."

John Calvin

"There is not one blade of grass, there is no colour in this world that is not intended to make us rejoice"

John Calvin

"You must submit to supreme suffering in order to discover the completion of joy"

John Calvin

Trinity Junior Youth

Jesus calls us to go into all the world and make disciples and Trinity passionately believes that includes children (Mark 10:13-16).

Trinity reaches children and youth through Boys Group (12 - 16 years), Girls Group (12 - 16 years) and Junior Youth Group. Junior Youth Group runs every second Friday night from 7:00pm - 9:00pm. It is enthusiastically attended by 50 + ten & eleven year olds.

They enjoy some rough and tumble games, food and 20 minutes of teaching time.

Many of these children are collected for church on Sunday mornings and are a lively addition to the service. They are full of joy and smiles despite many coming from difficult homes and backgrounds.

This ministry has great potential to make a real gospel impact in the community and the Trinity Leadership are keen to hear from any young person(s) who would be willing to take on the leadership of this group and establish it as a ministry that reaches not just the children, but their families as well.

For information contact: Pastor Andrew Macpherson



Trinity Junior Youth

Mint Blokes

Nathan Paton (Christchurch) and Greg Mackay (Wellington) are both part of Grace Presbyterian churches and both part of the Tertiary Students Christian Fellowship (TSCF) Minty year 2009. TSCF, since 1936, has been a NZ mission group working in our universities seeking to put the gospel at the heart of New Zealand and New Zealand at the heart of world mission.

Part of that is the Minty year – recent university graduates as volunteers with TSCF. The aim is Psalm 92:12-15; growing individuals who will remain ‘fresh and green’ into old age. Minty is about structured input into volunteers as they glory in Jesus and point university students, both Christian and non-Christian, to Him.

The whole TSCF team want to thank the GPCNZ family for your huge role in that – in training, teaching, encouraging and supporting both Greg and Nathan. As TSCF staff we welcome this partnership in the gospel and

rejoice in what the Lord is doing both in and through these two men for His glory. Do ask Greg and Nathan about TSCF Minty 2009 and if you’re interested in TSCF Minty 2010 visit: www.tscf.org.nz/Minty.

*- Tim Hodge
Team Leader TSCF.*



Greg Mackay (2nd from left) and Nathan Paton (front)

Around the Country

Grace@Wellington

From Wellington, Ian Bayne writes:

“My meditation this week has been on the passage in Philippians where the apostle Paul, after articulating his personal qualifications in regard to the law, concludes that he counts them as rubbish (refuse) that he might gain the righteousness of Christ. (Phil. 3:1-11)



Ian Bayne

What amazes me, and somewhat intimidates me, is that Paul even had a form of righteousness to count as rubbish! So for me to be the object of Christ's mercy feels like a miracle indeed. But, what annoys me most is the lack of progress I have made in becoming what I have been given in Christ. For all of my life, Jesus has been my constant companion, there has never been a time when I could act or think something without being conscious of God's all seeing eye (Proverbs 5:21). So I relate well to David's assertion in Psalm 22:10, ‘*You have been my God from my mother's womb.*’ Unfortunately I also relate well to a further statement he makes in Psalm 51:5, ‘*Behold I was bought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.*’

I guess it just goes to show that whether you are a Pharisee or a Tax Collector, an Epicurean or Stoic, only the righteousness of Christ imputed and our sin atoned for by Jesus on the cross is able to make us right with God..

The Challenge however still remains for us as believers to "become what we are in Christ" (Augustine). The quest for holiness is our lifetime struggle; we cannot give up until our lives in this world are over. Pray for me and I will pray for you.”

Grace@Wellington's Mission Statement is:

Seeking God - believing the Bible to be authoritative and sufficient - weekly expository preaching - building a covenantal community of love and care - encouraging every member to discover their gifts and, to reach maximum personal potential.

Throughout the week some of the regular church events are:

Music @ Grace: This is half an hour of music for babies, toddlers and preschoolers, their parents and carers. We aim to provide an environment where children can enjoy music and have lots of fun with their carers and other children. Our songs are chosen to provide a range of music with different actions, dancing and percussion instruments. We include some songs that teach simple truths about God, especially written for preschoolers. We encourage all parents and carers to join in the singing and actions and have fun. This helps the children learn from our example and gain the greatest enjoyment from our time together. We provide a simple morning tea following the music time. This is a great opportunity to socialize for both children, parents and carers.

Asking the Hard Questions: Student ministry on Thursday nights. All students are invited to come and ask the pastor hard questions about Christianity.

Men's prayer breakfast on Saturdays at Ian and Glenys'.

Women's Bible study on Thursdays

Exegesis to Exposition: Mondays fortnightly at 7:30pm.



Wanganui Mission Church

The Central Presbytery of GPCNZ is delighted to announce that it has accepted a group of believers in Wanganui as a mission church of the denomination.

Presbytery has appointed a commission to oversee the work in Wanganui and local man, Rob Clow, is providing weekly ministry. The church plant is named Grace Presbyterian Church. Please remember to pray for the local members and the Central Presbytery as they move forward with gospel outreach in Wanganui.

Around the Country

Rock of Ages Arabic Church, Christchurch

Confide in Jehovah for ever; for in Jab, Jehovah, is the Rock of Ages.
Isaiah 26:4

The beautiful hymn "Rock of Ages" was written by Augustus Montague while sheltering under a rock in Burrington Combe during a storm in late 18th century England. Isn't it true that we are sheltered in God's name during the thunderstorms of life? *'The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.'* Proverbs 18:10.

We are a small mission church of Central Presbytery that meets to worship each Sunday evening in Christchurch. We began life as a daughter church of the *Evangelical Presbyterian Church* (now *Grace Presbyterian Church*) of Christchurch in 2005. The church was started with a desire to provide fellowship for Arabic speaking migrants and to reach out to Muslims with the gospel.

We praise the Lord for keeping us going and growing, despite all the challenges. We are focusing on a very rocky ground of nominal or traditional Christians and Muslims.

During the last year, we were blessed to receive three Ex-Muslims into faith. This week we had a newly converted

person to make up six new converts in total. Isn't it amazing how God is working among Muslims! There are some others who are very close - they need your prayers.

We are praying at the moment with some other people who have the same vision to extend the work with Muslims inside the university campuses and also to create a network for ex-Muslims in New Zealand to encourage and equip them to evangelize other Muslims in New Zealand.

Please remember us in your prayers, we are in a need for some resources and more laborers as *"the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."*

- Botros Morgan
YFC Director and Arabic Church Worker



Lamp Presbyterian Church, Christchurch



Lamp Presbyterian Church is a Korean language church of Grace Presbyterian Church. They meet each Sunday at 1.00pm at Riccarton Baptist Church, Christchurch. On Saturday they have a youth service and fellowship group with 15 to 20 attending. A men's group has started meeting fortnightly on Wednesday evenings, as well as a prayer meeting at 6.00am every weekday morning.

In the first week of the school holidays, Lamp Presbyterian joined all other Korean churches in Christchurch for a city wide evangelistic mission. Over 500 youth and their parents attended. This was a big encouragement for all the churches involved.

Lamp Presbyterian recently elected their first elder, Mr. Shem Chung, who will be inducted in 2010. They have a lady, Mrs Hwang, who is full time worker with children, youth and women.

Around the Country

Northern Presbytery Combined Service

At the June Presbytery meeting for the Northern Presbytery it was decided that the South Auckland congregations of GPCNZ should meet regularly for combined worship. It was agreed these services would be held bi-monthly and would be a time of preaching the gospel, sharing in praise and fellowship.

The first service was held on Sunday evening 12th July with Providence Congregation in their new place of worship - the Mangere Reformed Church building. This building has been kindly leased to Providence Church.

About 120 people attended the first service and enjoyed a great meeting. We heard Zack Eswine sing and preach from John 20. This followed by a hearty get together and tour of the new premises.

The service was a real blessing and encouragement for all. Another combined service is planned for 13th September at Trinity Church in Takanini.



Providence has a Home!

It has been a long wait, but it seems that Providence Presbyterian Church has finally found a place to call home.

Since commencing services in September 2005, Providence has moved five times. Due to the grace of God, Providence has now taken up the lease (two years renewable) of the former Reformed Church of Mangere building at 22 Rosella Road. This location offers special opportunities being on the boundaries of Papatoetoe and Otahuhu. Middlemore Hospital is also very near.

Elder Uaita Levi - who is nearing the conclusion of his pastoral studies - says that Providence has already commenced door knocking in the area and have seen immediate results with some families and individuals attending worship. They are planning further outreach to the community in the summer months. Uaita says the goal is to have the church buildings open as often as possible for the community.

Uaita and the team at Providence are thankful to God for His great faithfulness!



Directory

NORTHERN PRESBYTERY

MANUREWA

Covenant Presbyterian Church

77 Rogers Road, Manurewa, Auckland
Service Times: 10:00am & 6:00pm
Pastors: Peter Boyd & Peter Reynolds
P: (09) 269-1046
E: covenantchurch@ihug.co.nz

TAKANINI

Trinity Presbyterian Church

Takanini School Hall, Old Park Place
Service Times: 10:00am & 6:00pm
Pastors: Andrew Macpherson
P: (09) 267-2847
E: trinitychurch@orcon.net.nz
www.trinitychurch.org.nz

FLAT BUSH

Redeemer Grace Presbyterian Church

Chapel Downs School Hall, Flat Bush
Service Time: 10:30am
Pastor: Wally Rakete
P: (09) 267-5584
www.redeemergpc.com

MANGERE

Providence Presbyterian Church

22 Rosella Road, Mangere, Auckland
Service Time: 10:00am
Contact: Elder Uaita Levi
P: (09) 267-9440

CENTRAL AUCKLAND

Pastor: Travis Scott
P: 021-628041
E: travis.w.a.scott@gmail.com

GISBORNE

Grace Church Gisborne

481 Gladstone Road
(beside Teal Motel)
Service Time: 10:30am
Pastor: Geoff Macpherson
P: (06) 868-1411 / 027-7276711
www.gracechurchnz.org

ROTORUA

Pastor: Steve Panapa
P: 021-839499
E: stevenfuieva@gmail.com

CENTRAL PRESBYTERY

NEW PLYMOUTH

Grace Community Fellowship

Fred Tucker Memorial Hall, Bell Block
Service Times: 10:00am & 6:30pm
Pastor: David Farr P: (06) 759 9378
www.gracencp.co.nz

WANGANUI

Grace Presbyterian Church

Pastor: Rob Clow
E: robertclow@hotmail.com
Presbytery Contact: Richard Eyre
P: (03) 359-5044 E: eyred@paradise.net.nz

WELLINGTON

Grace@Wellington

Thistle Hall Community Centre,
293 Cuba St, Wellington.
Service Times: 10:30am & 5:30pm
Pastor: Ian Bayne P: (04) 976-5093

ASHBURTON

Evangelical Presbyterian Church

63 Princes Street, Ashburton
Service Time: 10:30am
Pastor: David Bayne P: (03) 307-7355

FAIRLIE

Evangelical Presbyterian Church

McKenzie Centre, Fairlie (preaching station)
Service Time: 4:00pm
Contact: Andrew Johnson
P: (03) 685-8222

CHRISTCHURCH

Grace Presbyterian Church

Fendalton Community Centre,
170 Clyde Road, Fendalton
Service Times: 10:30am & 6:00pm
Interim Pastors: Richard Eyre /
Kris Morrison
P: (03) 359-5044
www.journey.org.nz

Lamp Presbyterian Church (Korean Language Service)

Riccarton Baptist Church, cnr Rattray &
Peverel St.
Service Time: 1:00pm
Pastor: John Oh
P: (03) 960-6879 / 021-855267

Rock of Ages (Arabic Language)

Windermere School, Condell Ave
Service Time: 6:00pm
Contact: Botros Morgan
P: (03) 357-1059 / 021-1893886

SOUTHERN PRESBYTERY

DUNEDIN

Grace Bible Church

Leith Bowling Club, Duke Street, Dunedin
Service Time: 10:00am
Pastor: Mark Smith
P: (03) 473-8100

WAIHOLA

Tokomairiro Grace Bible Church

Service Time: 10:00am
Contact: Grant Bullin
P: (03) 417-7120

OWAKA

Catlins Evangelical Church

Owaka Community Centre,
3 Ovenden Street, Owaka
Service Times: 10:30am & 6:30pm
Contact: Gavin Landreth
E: landrethgw@farmside.co.nz

GORE

Grace Presbyterian Church

30 Hamilton Street, East Gore
Service Times: 10:30am & 6:30pm
Pastor: Azriel Gray
P: (03) 208-8027

WYNDHAM

Wyndham Evangelical Church

Corner of Balaclava and Redan Streets
Service Times: 10:30am & 6:30pm
Pastor: Andrew Young
P: (03) 206 4147
www.wyndhamevangelical.org.nz

INVERCARGILL

Grace Presbyterian Church

Cnr. Centre and Morton Streets, George-
town, Invercargill
Service Times: 10:30am & 6:30pm
Pastors: Barry Swann & Peter van den Brink
P: (03) 217-7679

TUATAPERE

Tuatapere Fellowship

Scout & Guide Hall, Erskine St
Service Time: 10:30am (fortnightly)
Contact: Bruce Barney
P: (03) 225-5734

Editorial (cont)

If anything adverse happens, straightway he [the person who trusts in God's providential care] will raise up his heart here also unto God, whose hand can best impress patience and peaceful moderation of mind upon us... His solace, I say, is to know that his heavenly Father so holds all things in his power, so rules by his authority and will, so governs by his wisdom, that nothing can befall except he determine it (I.17.8).

Here we see how knowing God shapes the way we live in adversity. In other words, it provides wisdom for life. Knowing him as our Redeemer – as the One who sends his Son to be the Mediator to deliver us from condemnation and heal our alienation from him – imparts wisdom to us as well. It teaches us where to look for salvation, peace of heart, and hope for eternal life. It directs us to look out of ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ alone for all we need.

We see that our whole salvation and all its parts are comprehended in Christ (Acts 4:12). We should therefore take care not to derive the least portion of it from anywhere else... Some men, not content with him alone, are borne hither and thither from one hope to another; even if they concern themselves chiefly with him, they nevertheless stray from the right way in turning some part of their thinking in another direction. Yet such distrust cannot creep in where men have once for all truly known the abundance of his blessings" (II.16.19).

Knowing Ourselves

Knowing God and knowing ourselves are intimately linked in making us wise. Which comes first, Calvin says, can be debated. The most important thing is that we need both.

To be truly wise we need to know ourselves in two ways. First, we need to appreciate who we are *as we came from the hand of God* – the pinnacle of his creatures, endowed with rich gifts, righteous and holy, and fitted for communion with him. This gives us a sense of our dignity and intended calling. Then we also need to understand ourselves *as we are fallen in Adam*. This shows us our unworthiness and calls for humility.

In regard to the second of these – knowing ourselves as fallen and corrupted sinners in Adam – Calvin maintains we are apt to deceive ourselves. It is our natural tendency, he says, to think more highly of ourselves than we should and to downplay the degree to which our nature has been corrupted by sin. God's truth, on the other hand:

requires the kind of knowledge that will strip us of all confidence in our own ability, deprive us of all occasion for boasting, and lead us to all submission. We ought to keep this rule if we wish to reach that true goal of both wisdom and action (II.1.2).

Having a true assessment of ourselves is especially necessary when it comes to our inability to understand spiritual truth. In the matter of discerning the reality of God's spiritual kingdom, Calvin writes, "the greatest geniuses are blinder than moles!" (II.2.18). He goes on to say,

Flesh is not capable of such lofty wisdom as to conceive God and what is God's, unless it be illumined by the Spirit of God... We infer [from this] that the grace of Christ is the sole remedy to free us from that blindness and from the evils consequent upon it" (II.2.19; II.3.1).

These samples are enough to show how Calvin connects wisdom with knowing God and ourselves. While such knowledge may not provide us with the technical or practical know-how that we hanker for, it nevertheless orientates us in the right direction. It helps us see God as the centre of our existence and source of all our needs, and his law as the guide for the way we should live. It reminds us of our brokenness and constantly drives us out of ourselves to him for all we need.

It is this fundamental orientation – an orientation that produces gratitude, reverence and trust – that is the essence of true wisdom. The absence of detailed methods and practices won't trouble the wise Christian; these practical details will flow naturally from what God has revealed of himself, and what we know of ourselves, through his Word.

Calvin and Today

Calvin's approach to true wisdom differs radically from the practical wisdom of our day. Ask most people about the way to a successful and fulfilling life and you won't hear anything about knowing God and yourself. More likely than not you will be encouraged to buy into some technique, book, or psychological practice to bring health, wealth and prosperity.

Sadly, that's often the case in the church as well as in the world. Church leaders seldom point people in search of wisdom to a deeper study of what the Bible has to say about God and themselves. Theology is not considered practical, or at least, doesn't have the same immediate practicality as a ten-step process.

It ought not to surprise us, then, that Calvin's teaching – when applied – gives birth to a vigorous, robust and yet humble brand of Christianity different to what most of us experience today. For it necessarily turns us toward God and makes us look for everything in him. As he says himself:

For until men recognize that they owe everything to God, that they are nourished by his Fatherly care, that he is the Author of their every good, that they should seek nothing beyond him – they will never yield him willing service. Nay, unless they establish their complete happiness in him, they will never give themselves truly and sincerely to him (I.2.1).