

# Rutherford Centre for Reformed Theology

**February 2021**

The mission of the Rutherford Centre for Reformed Theology is to help people to think biblically and theologically. As you read this Newsletter, you will see the various ways in which we seek to carry out that mission. We hope that you will find it interesting.



The chairman of the Board of RCRT is the Rev Gordon Kennedy (left). The Director of RCRT is the Rev Professor Andrew McGowan (right).



Other Board members: Dr Brian Boag; Mr John Bruce; Dr Jamie Grant; Professor Marjory Harper; Rev Jonathan Keefe; Mrs Judith Keefe; Miss Susan MacKenzie; the Rev Dr M. Maclean; Dr K D Morley; Mrs Marion Manson-Morley; and Dr Robert Shillaker.

## **Job Vacancy for Personal Assistant**

RCRT is seeking to appoint a Personal Assistant to work with Professor McGowan. The successful candidate will have good administrative skills, ability to manage our website and Facebook page and will be comfortable proof-reading manuscripts for publication. A full job description, including salary and annual leave details, is available from Professor McGowan: [andrew.mcgowan@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:andrew.mcgowan@uhi.ac.uk)

## **Elder Training**

A particular focus for RCRT is the education and training of elders. We encourage churches to use the Elders' Training DVD which we produced and which can be purchased through our website ([www.rcrt.scot](http://www.rcrt.scot)). This enables churches to look at different aspects of elder training, either on their own, or with other congregations. The DVD includes nine sections, some of which are led by ministers and some by elders. These can be used over a number of weeks, or for a day conference.

In addition to this, RCRT offers elder training either in person or by Zoom. We have already responded to invitations from individual congregations, groups of congregations and several Presbyteries. The options for training include: the biblical teaching on eldership, the history and practice of eldership in the Reformed churches, training in pastoral care, help in leading worship, and working with elders who have been recognised by their churches to preach.

Would your church or Presbytery or a group of churches in your area like to become involved in this training? To discuss this, contact Professor McGowan: [andrew.mcgowan@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:andrew.mcgowan@uhi.ac.uk)

## Under the Rainbow

In order to help people to think biblically and theologically, one ministry of RCRT is called 'Under the Rainbow'. This a collaborative Christian web resource with the primary goal of



supporting parents who have lost children, particularly before or soon after birth. The resource also includes support and information on infertility, adoption and fostering.

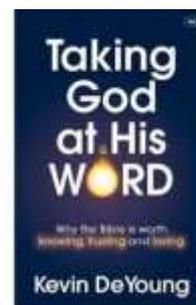
The web resource was created to encourage people in their walk with God. Through biblical resources, peoples' personal stories and other information, it

is hoped people will be upheld and comforted and glory and honour will be brought to God.

UTR has benefitted from the support of many people who have direct or indirect experience of miscarriage, stillbirth and infertility, many of whom have been willing to share their experiences. Further information can be found at [www.undertherainbow.org.uk](http://www.undertherainbow.org.uk)

## Theology 150

Another resource on the RCRT website is 'Theology 150'. This provides recommended reading for people who struggle to read Christian books. We all know the importance of reading in the Christian life, but many of us feel too busy to read anything. Social media and free time options seem to conspire against us. This resource is also for Christians who don't have a problem beginning great books but have a real problem finishing them, seldom getting beyond the first 100 pages! The books reviewed cover a variety of important theological issues and none of them is more than 150 pages in length.



There is also an opportunity to contribute as we would love to hear from you on the downloadable form if you have a recommendation of your own. Further information can be found at [www.rcrt.scot](http://www.rcrt.scot)

## Small Group Resource



Do your small groups struggle to find suitable material? RCRT's 'Small Group Resource' is available on the website and aims to link small groups with great resources. There is a wealth of great material available for small groups, but it can be really hard to discover it! This web-based resource for small group leaders provides a brief synopsis and review of many courses available, grouped in various themes (evangelistic, biblical, practical living etc) and with practical information about how the course was

received. Also, if you lead a small group and have discovered a useful small group resource we would love you to add your review of it by submitting the downloadable review form, so other groups can benefit from it too. Further information can be found at [www.rcrt.scot](http://www.rcrt.scot)

## Ecclesiology

For some time, RCRT has been helping people to think biblically and theologically about ecclesiology (the doctrine of the church). There is undoubtedly much confusion today over the nature and purpose of the church. This has only been made worse by the pandemic and the inability to meet together as we normally would. How would you answer the question: what is the church and why is it important?

As part of our focus on the doctrine of the church, Professor McGowan is conducting a number of interview/discussions with Christian leaders. The first four of these will be going live on our website and Facebook page on the following dates:

### 17<sup>th</sup> February: Archbishop Peter Jensen of Australia



Archbishop Peter Jensen of Australia served as Principal of Moore College in Sydney Australia, then as Anglican Archbishop of Sydney and Metropolitan of the Province of New South Wales. He was also the first General Secretary of the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON). He is a well-known and respected Christian leader, scholar, writer and preacher.

### 24<sup>th</sup> February: Dr John Drane

The Rev Dr John Drane is involved with the Emerging Church movement and has written on 'Fresh Expressions'. John and his wife Olive teach as adjunct professors at Fuller Theological Seminary in the USA and are both fellows of St John's College, Durham. They work with churches and denominations, helping them to understand what it means to follow Christ today. John is a theologian and biblical scholar who has published some important books.



### 3<sup>rd</sup> March: The Very Rev Albert Bogle



The Very Rev Albert Bogle, a former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, was a parish minister for 34 years. He is founder of the Vine Trust, an international relief organisation working in the Amazon and Lake Victoria, and co-founder of Sanctus Media. In April 2016 he was appointed leader of Sanctuary First, to provide opportunities for those disconnected from church to be sustained in their Christian discipleship through digital technology.

### 10<sup>th</sup> March: The Rev Dr Fergus Macdonald

The Rev Dr Fergus Macdonald is a former Moderator of the Free Church of Scotland. He served as the General Secretary of the National Bible Society of Scotland and then of the United Bible Societies and serves as Chair Emeritus of the Forum of Bible Agencies International. He was also the first Director of the Center for Scripture Engagement at Taylor University. From 1994-98, he was the Executive Chair of the Lausanne Movement and continues as one of the Honorary Chairmen. He is a Board member of the World Reformed Fellowship and serves on its Theological Commission.



## The RCRT Ecclesiology Series

Another way in which RCRT hopes to help people to think biblically and theologically about the church, is through a new series of books to be published by Wipf and Stock, in their Pickwick imprint. The series will be called: ‘The RCRT Ecclesiology Series’.



The series of books will be edited by Professor McGowan and the Deputy Editor will be the Rev Dr John McClean of Christ College, Sydney (left).

We hope that this series will make a significant contribution to the study of the doctrine of the church and will also bring the name of RCRT to a wider audience.

The first six volumes in the series will be published over the next two years:

- A general introduction to and overview of Ecclesiology by Dr Billy Kristanto.
- A Historical work on the Unity of the Church by Dr Donald John Maclean.
- A biblical and theological account of the Unity of the Church by Professor McGowan.
- The World Reformed Fellowship *Statement of Faith* (a modern confessional document) in ten languages.
- A new edition of the *Reformed Book of Common Order*.
- Papers from the Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference on Ecclesiology.

## Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference 2021

As well as elder training and the many other things we do, we have a commitment to engaging at a serious academic level. In order to fulfil that objective, we have hosted our bi-annual Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference for 35 years (it began in 1985). It had been intended that the next Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference would be held in Palmerston Place Church from Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> – Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2021. Sadly, due to the pandemic, the Board has decided to hold the conference by Zoom. Although this is disappointing, it does mean that people from all over the world, who cannot currently travel to Edinburgh, will be able to take part. The subject is the doctrine of the church and we are delighted that the following have agreed to take part: Professor Oliver Crisp; Professor Tom Noble; Professor Tom Greggs; Professor Gerald Bray; Professor Stephen Williams; Dr Andrew Clarke; Professor Tony Lane; and Professor David Fergusson.

## Books for Africa

Over the years, Rutherford House published many books. The RCRT Board has agreed that the remaining stock of books will be sent to Africa, to be distributed by a former staff member at Highland Theological College, Fraser Jackson (pictured). Fraser is working with an organisation called NetAct to provide library resources (both hard copy and digitised) for fifty theological colleges in thirteen countries in Africa.



The RCRT Board also agreed, assuming we can obtain the permission of authors, to digitise those books for which we hold the copyright. In this way, the ministry of RCRT will be extended across Africa.

In addition, we are in discussion with NetAct about ways in which we might be able to conduct elder training in Africa by Zoom.

## Director's Publications

Professor McGowan has attended various conferences and meetings in the past six months, at some of which he delivered lectures. He has also been writing, including some book reviews:

- Reviewed Alan D. Strange *The Doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church in the Ecclesiology of Charles Hodge* for *Themelios* (45/2).
- Reviewed David Fergusson & Mark Elliot (eds) *History of Scottish Theology* (3 vols.) for the *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* (38/1).
- Reviewed James Eglinton: *Bavinck: A Critical Biography* for the *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology*.
- Reviewed Donald Macleod *Therefore I Speak: Scottish Theology 1500-1700* for *Themelios*.
- Reviewed Steven Duby *God in Himself: Scripture, Metaphysics and the Task of Christian Theology* for the *European Journal of Theology*.

In addition to these book reviews, he has written the following:

- An endorsement for a new book on *The Attributes of God* by Gerald Bray.
- A commendation for David Searle's volume on the sermons of Robert Bruce.
- Foreword for a book by Bryson Arthur entitled *A Theology of Suffering*.
- A seminar paper 'Challenge to the Church in Europe', delivered at the General Assembly of the World Reformed Fellowship in Jakarta in August 2019, has been published in the *Haddington House Journal* vols. 21-22.
- A commissioned article: 'Charles Haddon Spurgeon: What can we learn from him for today?' is to be published in the next issue of *Verbum Christi*, the house journal of the Reformed Evangelical Church of Indonesia (GRII).
- A chapter on 'James Orr' is soon to be submitted for a book on *British Evangelical Theologians of the Twentieth Century* to be edited by Professor Tom Noble and published by IVP.
- A chapter entitled, 'T.F. Torrance and the Doctrine of Scripture' has been contributed to Myk Habets and R. Lucas Stamps (eds) *Torrance and Evangelical Theology: A Critical Evaluation*.
- An article on 'Inerrancy' for the *Oxford Handbook on Divine Revelation*, should be published shortly by Oxford University Press.
- A book Professor McGowan wrote 35 years ago, *The New Birth*, has now been digitized and is available at: [https://theologicalstudies.org.uk/book\\_new-birth\\_mcgowan.php](https://theologicalstudies.org.uk/book_new-birth_mcgowan.php)
- Work is ongoing on a book on the Unity of the Church.

## Looking Back and Looking Forward

Most people reading this Newsletter will probably already be on our mailing list and therefore know something about us but, for the sake of those hearing about RCRT for the first time, some background might help.

Rutherford House began in 1983, based in a large house in Leith, Edinburgh. Over the past 38 years it has sought to help people to think biblically and theologically, from an evangelical and Reformed perspective. This has been done in various ways: publications, conferences, reading groups, training events, church revitalisation courses and much more.

After a period of reflecting on the mission of Rutherford House, the Board decided to make some changes, so that the organisation would be fit for purpose in the years ahead. For that reason, Rutherford House was re-branded as the Rutherford Centre for Reformed Theology and we moved from Edinburgh to Highland Theological College in Dingwall. Interestingly, the original Rutherford House library was given to HTC some years ago. In all these changes, however, the core vision remains the same, to help people to think biblically and theologically.

When RCRT was launched in 2019 it was agreed that our work would focus on three areas: research and publications, education and training, and promotion of the Reformed faith. Sadly, a number of our planned meetings, conferences and training events have had to be cancelled this year but we look forward confidently to getting up to speed again.

## Facebook Page

To keep up to date with the work of RCRT, please 'like' our Facebook page because, although these Newsletters will come out four times each year from now on, the Facebook page is where we will post regular updates on our work.

## Finance and Support

In order to develop RCRT and to achieve its full potential, we need financial support from our friends. Some of you have supported Rutherford House for many years and we hope that you will continue to do so. Some of you have prayed for the work but never been financial supporters and we hope that you might now consider coming on board to help us financially. It may also be that your church can add RCRT to its missions' budget or its end of year disbursement. Please consider this prayerfully.

There are various ways you can donate:

- If you would like to make an online donation, you can click on the 'Donate' button on our website: [www.rcrt.scot/donate](http://www.rcrt.scot/donate)
- Cheques made out to 'Rutherford House' can be sent to our treasurer at: RCRT, c/o John Bruce, Croit Iain, Muirtown, Inverness IV3 8QZ
- Gift Aid or Standing Order forms will be provided on request. If you would be willing to donate £10 per month, this would help us greatly.

Any questions on finance should be directed to our treasurer: [john@east2westfs.co.uk](mailto:john@east2westfs.co.uk)