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# Rutherford House

# NEWSLETTER

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Autumn 2008

## Letter from the Director

Dear Friends,

### *Does Theology Matter?*

It seems strange that we even pose the question, but it is certainly the case that many in the church, especially evangelicals, perceive theology to occupy a place reserved for technicians rather than practitioners. The former quibble about that which often has no bearing on piety, and the latter are called to address 'real life' issues that, in turn, diminish the relevance of all other pursuits, however noble or idealistic they might be. Some years ago I corresponded with a minister in a large congregation in North America regarding a job advert he had posted for an education pastor. After relating my experience, training and current doctoral studies I was surprised when he inquired why a PhD student would want this job. This position, he explained, was for preaching and teaching, not academic work. Mind you, it was a post for an *education* pastor! Apparently he wanted someone to teach his congregation, but that person must not be *too* educated. What

would this minister think of a GP who considered medical school irrelevant or who ignored current trends in the field, yet insisted upon being capable and trustworthy as a doctor? Unfortunately, the reality is that the past seventy-five to one hundred years have seen a steady disassociation between theology and praxis. Blame for this state of affairs can be laid at the door of both academia and church ministry.

This simply ought not to be. From a Christian perspective the head-heart dilemma just described is a false dilemma, for the one who expresses faith can only do so in conjunction with knowledge (Rom 10:14), and knowledge devoid of faith is not true knowledge of God (1 Cor 2:14-16). Thus, the old cliché is true: that there are no Christians who are not also theologians, i.e. theologians to a greater or lesser extent, but a theologian, nevertheless. Further, the practitioner is only a practitioner to the extent that he/she incorporates the knowledge of God into practice; and the technician (vocational theologian) is only such as he/she relates that knowledge of God to faith. Only recently I preached on Isaiah's vision of the Messiah found in chapter six of his Old Testament book, and was struck by the inextricable connection between theology proper and practical application. In order to fulfil God's call and to speak to this generation the minister must be a student of both theology and practice, indeed, a theology that is wholly practical.

The leaders at Rutherford House recognise this critical link and are keen to build bridges between academia and ministry. This is reflected in our purpose statement and our strategy. *Rutherford House desires to serve the church by strengthening leaders and future leaders for biblical ministry in Scotland, Europe and throughout the world.* The working out of this purpose is the threefold strategy of *Support, Study and Sow*. We want to *support* pastoral ministry so that churches demonstrate vitality and longevity. We want to *sow* for the future by coming

alongside ministerial students so that they are prepared theologically, pastorally and personally. *Study* is an essential aspect of both spheres and will permeate everything we do. Therefore, whether involved in a conference, seminar or study/discussion group we want to create an atmosphere of scholarship that is relevant for pastoral ministry, and ministry that values and embraces theological insight—all of this for the name of Jesus Christ and the advancement of his kingdom.

Jason Curtis  
Director

## **Rutherford House has a new ‘House’**

Since the sale of 17 Claremont Park and the appointment of the new Director we have been looking to lease a property that would have adequate office space and accommodate our vision. We are pleased that God has been gracious to provide 1 Hill St, Edinburgh—a property that amply meets those requirements. Hill Street is located between George and Queen Streets in the city centre, providing easy access by foot, train, bus, car or tram (eventually!). It also has two large gathering rooms that can facilitate a sizeable number for a seminar, small conference or discussion/study group. This, of course, offers a wonderful place where pastors and students can meet for encouragement and support. We hope to be fully established in our new accommodation during January. For now our contact information will remain the same: 0131 554 1206 and [info@rutherfordhouse.org.uk](mailto:info@rutherfordhouse.org.uk).

# Trustees

Rutherford House owes much to those who have given faithful service as Trustees. In particular we want to acknowledge the contributions of Eric Alexander and Frank Lyall who have recently retired. Both became Trustees when the House was established in 1983. We are all in their debt – to Eric for his often timely counsel over the years, and to Frank for sound legal advice, especially at the beginning when the Scottish Evangelical Research Trust was set up and the property at 17 Claremont Park was purchased.

Two other Trustees, Andrew Anderson and Martin Allen, will also retire shortly. Andrew has served as Secretary for over 25 years, though, when he took on the job, it was on the understanding that he would only serve for a year! He has given unstintingly of his time and his gifts to the administration of the House's affairs. Martin has also served as a Trustee from the beginning. For 14 years he chaired the former Council and steered us with tact and wisdom through testing times. Our warm thanks to them both.

The Trustees at present are considering the appointment of new Trustees. As the House enters a new era under the directorship of Dr. Jason Curtis, please pray that the Trustees will be led to those people who have the gifts and the skills which are necessary to promote the vision of the Trust.

David J C Easton  
Chair of the Trustees

# Gatherings

Encouraged by the pilots last year we have continued to organise gatherings for specific groups of ministers in the Crieff Hydro. Larger conferences have an important role. These gatherings however, seek to build on existing relationships and provide a more personal, prayerful and practical interaction that will give encouragement to ministries in their location.

In September (14-16) there was a gathering for probationer ministers and their spouses. During a minister's training the spouses feel marginalised as they are often not acknowledged or included. The aim over the two days was to strengthen marriages and prepare couples for the particular stresses and strains of ministry together. It was led by Rev Neil and Dorothy Urquhart and Rev Jill and Frank Clancy. It involved 30% of this year's probationers and was the first of its kind. It was very well received, particularly by the spouses, so the plan is to build on it next year.

In November (3-5) there was a gathering for those in the first five years of ministry. The objectives of this one included - 'Relaxation and refreshment, Small group workshops on preaching, Prayer, Introduction to preaching a genre / book of the Bible, Teaching with practical edge, Exploration of issues relevant in a new ministry, Sharing of resources.' The format seemed to address the need. We plan to continue these gatherings, refining them to give maximum benefit for those who participate.

Nigel Barge  
Trustee

# Upcoming Events

**Hearing the Word (20 November and 4 December):** This is a low-key conference designed to communicate basic strategies in reading and meditating on the Scripture, with a view toward sharing those insights. It is held over two evenings at the Partick Trinity Church in Glasgow.

**The Annual Conference of the Scottish Evangelical Theological Society (23-24 March):** The title of this year's conference is 'Does the Church Matter?' and will include papers from Nigel Barge, Jason Curtis, Rose Dowsett, Kevin Scott and Jock Stein. It will be held at the Faith Mission College in Edinburgh.

**Gathering for Ministers (post-five years) in association with Crieff Fellowship (27-29 April):** The purpose of this event is to sharpen study, preaching and prayer and to foster community amongst experienced ministers. It will be held at the Crieff Hydro.

Other events that are yet to be confirmed: 1) Funeral Training for non-ministers (potential dates in the spring of 2009); 2) Day Conference on biblical interpretation.

For more information on these and any other activities of the House please contact us at [info@rutherfordhouse.org.uk](mailto:info@rutherfordhouse.org.uk).

## **A Big ‘Thank You’**

A very warm thank you to those who were able to attend the Director’s commissioning service at Holyrood Abbey, Edinburgh on 5 October. It was a great evening of inspiration and encouragement. Andrew Anderson preached a challenging sermon, and David Easton gave the charge to the Director. If you missed the service, you can hear it online here: [www.holyroodabbey.org/downloads](http://www.holyroodabbey.org/downloads)

Many thanks also to all who were unable to attend yet sent their best wishes for the service and the Director. We were hugely encouraged to hear from so many of our supporters, and we do hope to maintain a relationship with you in the coming months and years.

## **Bursaries**

As we indicated in the previous newsletter a key component of our vision is to equip the future generation for biblical ministry, and that can be partially accomplished through bursaries, especially for postgraduate students. Our budget has a line item set aside for this purpose, and we were recently able to contribute to a student in Edinburgh who plans to complete his PhD studies by April, 2009 and return to his home country to serve the church there. This is a crucial project, and we believe in it passionately. If supporting students who are training to be leaders in the church resonates with you, would you consider contributing to our bursary budget? For queries or contributions please contact us at [info@rutherfordhouse.org.uk](mailto:info@rutherfordhouse.org.uk).

# **Dogmatics Conference**

The 13<sup>th</sup> Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference will take place  
24<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> August 2009

Speakers include: John Franke, Bruce McCormack and  
Henri Blocher

Get this date in your diaries now and watch out for further  
information on our website as soon as available.

## **Conference Papers**

*Spirit of Truth and Power*, edited by David F. Wright, published  
by Rutherford House; the papers from the 9th conference, 2001.

*Engaging the Doctrine of God*, edited by Bruce McCormack,  
published by Baker Academic and Rutherford House; the  
papers from the 11th conference, 2005.

The above titles can be ordered from Rutherford House.  
Price £14.99 (Includes delivery within the UK only)

## **Rutherford House Staff**

We are indebted to Marian Paluchowski for her tireless efforts, keeping all business in order during this transition. She has been a huge asset. Recently Marian accepted a part time post at another organisation, but will continue with the House on a part time basis, supervising accounts and database work. In light of this we have an opening for the position of PA to the Director and office administrator. This is a full time post and we are seeking to fill it immediately. For a detailed job description, please email our office, [info@rutherfordhouse.org.uk](mailto:info@rutherfordhouse.org.uk).