



GCS News

A Newsletter for Students and Alumni of Grace Communion Seminary

August 2015

Dear friends and fellow students,

As I start my tenure as the second president of Grace Communion Seminary, the board and I thought it might be good to send out a regular newsletter—and this is the first one. I'd like to include in each one a personal word to all current and potential students and also alumni of the seminary. I know everyone benefits from regular communication—so here goes....

As I look back on my journey in the Christian faith, I am amazed at where I ended up. Who could have guessed that as a follower of Jesus Christ from my youth, starting at Glendale Presbyterian Church (in Glendale, CA), that I'd now be serving as president of a seminary, and that it would be Grace Communion Seminary (in Glendora, CA)? And of course, who could have guessed the trajectory of GCI's history, much less our providential intersection now in 2015? God is faithful and full of surprises, indeed! Anyone familiar with the biblical story of God's working in history among his people, I suppose, shouldn't be surprised—but I am.

Recently reviewing my own spiritual journey I was thankful for the pastoral care and instruction I received in my youth. I can see that key insights and themes were brought out and emphasized that had, by the grace of God, a great impact on my life. They set me on a pathway that I'm still on, despite all the adjustments, growth, corrections and clarifications that have come since. For, truth be told, I had to go through some of my own changes on the way to being where I am today. But early on I received teaching about the Christian life and belief that have remained foundational ever since. I'd like to share a few of those developments with you. I think you'll readily see how important they are and how anyone, perhaps most especially youth or those new to faith in God through Jesus Christ, would do well to build on those same truths given to me so many years ago.

I grew up in the Presbyterian Church, USA, in its evangelical expression, in Glendale, not far from where Ambassador College was. Our youth ministers were always young guys getting their training at Fuller Seminary. I enjoyed going to church and to youth group activities, including (many!) summer camps. What I heard I accepted and in that sense I believed as much as I could. The messages were Christ-centered and biblically based. We did a lot of Bible study and I did a good bit of Bible memory.

One of the first real insights that took hold and guided me in my understanding of the Christian life happened at one of those youth camps.

During one of the main talks I listened to what I had gladly heard many times before: that Jesus came, died and was raised for me and my salvation. Prompted by the closing words of the youth pastor, but undoubtedly also by the Holy Spirit, I came to realize something else this time. It had never really registered that the Lord who had done and given so much was interested in my response. I hadn't exactly realized that he even noticed me. But in that moment I recognized that Jesus himself was asking, "OK, now that you know what I've done for you and for everyone, what do you say?" Shocked that I was even being addressed, that I was noticed at all, I was momentarily stunned. Certainly he already knows everything I think and believe. Why is he interested in me? But realizing I had been asked, I silently stammered out a reply, "Yes, as I'm sure you already know, I do believe in you. I'm thankful that you gave your life for me. I surrender my life to you. I will follow you. Of course!" It was at that moment I came to realize I was being invited into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. My life after that time has been more and more about finding out what that means and what all it involves. But one way or another, all along, it's been about a relationship, communication and interaction with God through Christ and according to Scripture.

Given that foundation, I'm sure you can see how I'd be attuned to biblical teaching and theological understanding of the Christian faith that centered on Jesus Christ and would have a personal and relational approach. As it turns out, that's exactly the place of our surprising providential coincidence. We've all come to recognize that the whole of the biblical revelation culminates in Jesus Christ, who personally, by the Spirit, brings us the grace of his new covenant, the fulfillment of the old covenant, and calls us in to a responsive life of relationship with him as our Lord and Savior. For he is the one who reconciled us to God. He takes us to the Father and sends us his Holy Spirit that we might live as his beloved sons and daughters in eternal fellowship and communion with him. That's why GCS affirms a theology that can be summed up with the words Incarnational and Trinitarian. And that's also why I count it such a joy and privilege to be participating with you in the ministry of GCS. I look forward to sharing more with you about other lessons I learned early on that still point me to the truth and reality of who God is and who we are in Jesus Christ.

Every blessing in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gary Deddo". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and personal.

Gary Deddo
President

Course numbering system changed

Many universities use a numbering system for their courses that indicates the level of instruction: courses starting with 1 are freshman level, courses starting with 2 are sophomore level, etc. Master's level courses generally begin with the number 5.

GCS will conform to this practice so that schools and employers who look at our transcripts will see right away that our courses are offered at the graduate level. So starting this month, we will add 500 to all course numbers. TH01 will become TH501, CM03 will become CM503, etc.

You should see these changes in the *Catalog*, website, syllabi, lectures, and your online transcript. The change in numbers does not affect any degree requirements – the courses you have already taken still count!

New requirement for Master of Pastoral Studies

NT01 New Testament Background was a requirement for the Master of Pastoral Studies degree. We set it as a requirement not so much for its historical content, but because it had several lectures on principles of biblical interpretation. Now that we have a Hermeneutics course, we have decided to require it, rather than New Testament Background.

If you have already taken NT01 New Testament Background, it will be accepted as meeting the requirement; you will not be required to take Hermeneutics. (About 40 percent of the Hermeneutics course was in NT01.)

The inaugural offering of Hermeneutics occurred this summer; the course will probably be taught again in fall 2016. NT501 New Testament Background is tentatively scheduled for spring 2016. It will return to its focus on the historical setting of the New Testament, and will no longer include the lectures on biblical interpretation.

A similar change in requirements has been implemented for the four-course Certificate of Theological Studies and the seven-course Advanced Diploma of Christian Ministry. Whereas those programs used to require NT01, they now require BI501 Hermeneutics instead. Students who have already taken NT01 will be grandfathered in; they will not be required to take BI501. All these changes are reflected in the current edition of the *Academic Catalog*.

Homiletics course approved for fall semester

Our accreditor has given us the green light to offer CM511 Homiletics, taught by Dan Rogers. All lectures will be on video, and several assignments will include a peer review or critique. There is a prerequisite for this course: either New Testament Background, or Hermeneutics. See the [short syllabus](#) for further details.

Fall registration begins August 31

Registration for fall semester will begin on Monday, August 31, and will be open through September 14, when the first lectures will be posted. Susan Williams, our Registrar, will send an e-mail to all active students on August 14 with details of how to register. If you do not get this e-mail and would like to register for a course, please phone us at 1-800-851-2611. Our lineup for the fall is:

BT502 Prophets, taught by Tim Finlay
CH502 Church History: The Second Millennium, taught by Neil Earle
CM505 Women in Leadership, taught by Mike Morrison with help from Sheila Graham
CM506 Trinitarian Youth Ministry, taught by Greg Williams with help from Jeff McSwain
CM507 Experiencing the Trinity, taught by Larry Hinkle*
CM511 Homiletics, taught by Dan Rogers
NT502 Gospels, taught by Mike Morrison
TH501 Nature of God and Jesus Christ, taught by Mike Feazell
TH504 Scientific Theology of T.F. Torrance, taught by John McKenna
TH519 and TM501 The capstone courses are offered every semester

*CM507 used to require a three-day retreat in Florida. This may still be done, but Dr. Hinkle is offering an additional option for this course: three one-day retreats from any location, with video link. See the [short syllabus](#) for details.

For details on all these classes, go to www.gcs.edu/course and consult the short syllabi. Please order the textbooks early enough so that you will have them by the time the class begins. Please note that if fewer than five students register for a particular class, it may need to be delayed until another semester, at the discretion of the instructor.

Accreditation approved for another five years

The Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC) has informed us that they approved our application for renewal of accreditation until 2020. Five years is the maximum length of time that they approve. The accreditation visits are always a lot of work, but also helpful opportunities to examine the way our programs work. We expect to add more courses and programs in the next five years.

Recent graduates

This spring, four students graduated by completing option A of our capstone course: Debby Bailey, Mike Greider, Charles Taylor, and Warren Wilson.

In spring and summer, three students completed option B:

- Doug Johannsen with a thesis titled “The Gospel According to Woodturning”
- Les Mieure with a thesis titled “Evangelism as Gratitude”
- Jon Rummel with “Paul’s Doctrine of Law as Expressed in the Epistle of Romans”

These theses are posted at www.gcs.edu/course/view.php?id=23#section-3.

Congratulations to all!