

“The work of preaching is the highest and greatest and most glorious calling to which anyone can ever be called”

Martyn Lloyd-Jones

A Landmark – The First Seminary Graduation

Saturday 3rd July was a landmark event for the trustees, lecturers and students at the Salisbury Reformed Seminary. This was the occasion of the Seminary’s first graduation of students. Messrs Kevin Armstrong and Alex Clarke had completed their three-year course and a service of thanksgiving and presentation was held to mark this.

Because of Covid restrictions, it was possible only for a limited number of people to be present in Emmanuel Church in Salisbury. The service began with Rev **Malcolm Watts** fittingly reading Psalm 115:1 “Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth’s sake...” and then leading us into the presence of God in prayer.

Seminary Beginnings

Following warm words of welcome, Pastor Watts gave us a summary of the history of the Seminary. It began with a parking problem the church had. The Lord’s solution was the purchase of the local doctors’ surgery just yards up the road from the church. This had the car parking needed, but also a Victorian villa named Grove House. The acquisition of this spacious property coincided with a burden the Lord had laid upon Malcolm Watts’ heart, together with others, for the founding of a seminary where men could be trained for the ministry in biblical, pastoral and experiential subjects. Not merely an academic training, but a curriculum that would produce men who know God and would become His sent servants in the ministry.

This burden turned into a series of meetings, attended by many from various churches, for prayer and planning for such a seminary. Eventually the vision became a reality in 2018 with Grove House refurbished and transformed into lecture rooms, a library and all the facilities needed for what is now Salisbury Reformed Seminary.

Then followed a brief exposition of a theme that has characterised the aims of the Seminary: the opening answer of the Shorter Catechism, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.” This means that God is glorious in Himself; when the Spirit works in us, we *want* to glorify God; it encourages us to look to Him to bless and to prosper us.

In acknowledgement of the Lord’s favour and good hand upon us, a prayer of thanksgiving was offered to God for granting this vision, for the way the Lord has led and provided, and for the first three years of the Seminary’s ministry.

Seminary Graduation



Then, the two graduating students in turn gave their testimonies to what the Seminary course had meant to them.

Kevin Armstrong, in a moving tribute, thanked everyone at the Seminary for all he had learned, and how the glorious things of God’s word had become clearer to him. Not only so, but also for the deepening sense of God he had received, and the assurance that He would be with him in his future ministry.

Alex Clarke also testified to how his understanding and experience had been enlarged by the Seminary course. The

Lord had wonderfully helped him complete the course and he had found it the “green pastures” of God’s word (Psalm 23:2). He thanked everybody at the Seminary for their help and encouragement. Alex had benefited so much from the course that he declared that he would “like to start all over again”!

The Graduation ceremony took the form of Pastor Watts, as the Seminary Principal, presenting the two graduates with a certificate, a personal letter of commendation, and the Trinitarian Bible Society’s Westminster Reference Bible. He then commended them to God and to the word of His grace in prayer. **Dewi Higham**, the Seminary Registrar, then also led in prayer.

Thanksgiving Service

Following a short break, the preaching and thanksgiving service began. Pastor Watts led this, and the sermon was preached by Rev **Hywel Roberts**, former minister of Penzance Baptist Church. The scripture passage read was Isaiah 63:15-64:12, the text being 64:1 “Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence.” The subject was revival, which is one of the emphases of the Seminary.

Mr. Roberts pointed out that the greatest revival was the Day of Pentecost. He stated that we are in danger of becoming too used to the ordinary and overlooking the extraordinary. All true revival is the manifest presence of God, where all else melts into nothingness before Him. In the 18th century, Jonathan Edwards, commenting on the awakening in Northampton, Massachusetts said, “There is scarcely a person not affected by the great things of the eternal world.”

Revival cannot be attained by our efforts but must be sought by prayer. It is a sovereign work of God. And, as one author put it, “Failure to pray is a monstrous hindrance to revival.”



A genuine revival can be tested by the following questions:

Does it exalt Christ? Does it bring sinners to Christ? Does it produce Christlikeness? Is worship more reverent, more solemn, and yet more sacredly joyful? Does it exert a spiritual and moral influence upon where it is given?

The blessings of the occasion were crowned by a further time of fellowship at a tea in the garden of Grove House. This was enjoyed by a limited number because of Covid restrictions.

We all felt that the Lord had been in the midst and had favoured us with much cause for thanksgiving and encouragement.

John Thackway (Trustee)

Special lectures

Professor Andy McIntosh will give lectures to the students about Creation on Saturday July 24th at Emmanuel Church:

11.30 How science grew out of the Reformation.

Lunch (please bring your own)

13.45 Why creation is theologically important.

15.15 How do I use apologetics in the pulpit and on the pavement?

If you are interested in attending any of these lectures, please contact the Seminary Administrator at admin@salisburyseminary.org

Seminary teaching

Covid has presented many challenges. We are grateful to God that the work of the Seminary has continued during this time, initially through pre-recorded lectures and then via Zoom. Recently, lectures took place in Grove House again ... with suitable regulations in place.

We trust the Lord will continue to enable us.