

From the June 4, 2009 Issue

## **Gospel Vision in G.C.I.**

Grace Communion International welcomed approximately 200 participants to the denomination's regional conference in Somerset, New Jersey. These conferences are designed to share the Gospel vision of GCI with the various regions within the Church. Special emphasis is placed on living and sharing the Good News.

At this year's conference, and in the ongoing education of the denomination in Trinitarian theology, the 3 primary questions raised were, "Who is God as revealed in the Person of Jesus?", "What is Jesus doing in the Spirit?" and "How can we participate with Jesus in the Spirit?"

These questions were addressed in the 3 main Plenary Sessions, presented by Dr. Joe Tkach, GCI president, Dr. Mike Feazell, GCI vice-president, and Dan Rogers, GCI superintendent of ministers.

In his presentation on the GCI Updated Statement of Beliefs, Dr. Mike Feazell addressed the question: "Who Is God as Revealed in the Person of Jesus?" He answered this question, comprehensively, and informed us that those Statements of Belief have been updated to more accurately reflect GCI's growing Trinitarian theology.

It was designed to be an interactive presentation, but Dr. Feazell got so impassioned in the proclamation and enthusiasm of the Good News he never got to field any questions, let alone go through the brief updates! It was GREAT!

Dr. Feazell began his presentation with a brief history on how GCI experienced its transformation into grace and a more inclusive theology by being challenged to reconsider the doctrine of the Trinity, which it had formerly rejected.

After prayer and research, it was concluded that the doctrine of the Trinity was *the primary doctrine and ground of the Christian faith!* We have been on the "fast track" of Trinitarian grammar ever since.

Dr. Feazell then aided our understanding of Trinitarian theology by defining it more precisely. Whereas most tend to think that "Trinitarian" means to believe that God is one God in Three Persons, Father, Son and Spirit, Dr. Feazell explained that it means much more than that.

Essentially, Trinitarian theology is theology that proclaims the relationship of the Father, Son and Spirit as the primary lens through which all of life is viewed. The end result of this understanding is that the Relationship of the Trinity is one in which all of humanity is already included and adopted in the Person of Jesus Christ, solely by God's grace.

After outlining the 8 key elements of Trinitarian theology, he concluded with this quote from Karl Barth:

**...the sin of Adam counts for less than the righteousness of Christ... Where man has refused, God has not refused. He Himself has come to the rescue of the men who refused. He has done well what man has done ill... God takes man's transgression seriously by taking it upon himself: He Himself becomes the sinner and dies in man's place and so makes both sin and death pass away... Adam excludes Christ: but Christ includes Adam. – Karl Barth, *Christ and Adam***

Dr. Tkach updated the Church on various International happenings and gave a Gospel presentation based on John 5 entitled “For the Love of God.” He stressed that even though attendance seems to be down in the United States, from a more objective perspective; GCI is growing and has a reason for optimism. He mentioned that in the Philippines and Africa alone, the GCI has grown by 7,000 members over the last couple of years!

The Philippines is especially productive with 90% of their Bible studies transforming into distinct churches. They have 60 Bible studies going right now, and all are expected to become new church plants! He also noted that the nations of Australia and the Philippines were especially enthusiastic about and adept in Trinitarian theology, and that their enthusiasm is infectious.

In his Gospel presentation of John 5, which is the story of the man who was an invalid for 38 years beside the pool of Bethesda, Dr. Tkach made the following points:

God communicates his love for us through relationship and Jesus is the highest and best Revelation of God. Jesus is not absolute proof for some but is sufficient proof for everyone.

Jesus initiates relationship. Jesus cures us first and then we can walk in wholeness and healing. Jesus finds us. Jesus warns us about continuing to sin. Jesus resisted the Pharisees. The New Covenant is not a supercharged version of the OT.

Are we personally modeling this kind of Christian ministry? Are our congregations?

Finally, Dr. Rogers (along with other presenters Ted Johnston and Randy Bloom) addressed the subject of how we participate with Jesus in His ministry in the Spirit. He helped us to see that there is only one real ministry, the Ministry of Jesus Christ.

“Our” ministry is only a participation in Jesus’ ministry, and because of Who Jesus is, we can know that God the Trinity is at work with everyone, everywhere. This means we have the best possible start in serving others because Jesus is teaching us through the Holy Spirit that He is already at work with everyone.

Dr. Rogers emphasized these following points: The Son of God lives as a man fully responsive to the Spirit and shares His ministry with us; therefore, we can do his ministry with Him! We don’t have our own ministry but only participate in Jesus’ Ministry IN THE SPIRIT. Christian ministry is what Jesus does, and Jesus does Who he is! Jesus is ultimately responsible for ministry, but we are responsive to His ministry!

He concluded with a powerful example from his life about how Jesus was working with a member he visited back in the 70’s. On his ministerial visit to her home, she desired for Pastor Rogers to listen to a Red Sox game, and he did so because that is what Jesus was doing on that day in that relationship!

Dr. Rogers also emphasized how “We don’t just believe what the Bible says; we believe what the Bible means!” He noted how in Matthew 4 the Adversary quotes the scriptures and quotes them accurately, but Jesus demonstrates how the Adversary misses their meaning entirely!

Ted Johnston and Randy Bloom expressed how the Trinity is inclusive of every generation and how, in his overflowing love, He is reaching out to the Church and the entire human race, serving others and planting churches in his grace!

Overall, this conference was an important movement forward in GCI's education in the Holy Spirit about Who God is as revealed in Jesus, what He is doing, and how we can participate in what He is doing!

*~ Tim Brassell*