

Article reprinted from *CrossWay* Issue Winter 2000 No. 79

(C)opyright Church Society; material may be used for non-profit purposes provided that the source is acknowledged and the text is not altered.

BIBLICAL TRAINING FOR CONTEMPORARY MINISTRY

David Peterson, Principal of Oak Hill, explains the goals which the college pursues in training people for ministry.

When people apply to a college such as Oak Hill, they often have a special interest in mind, such as evangelism, church planting, youth work or pastoral leadership of some kind.

Whatever their focus, at Oak Hill we believe that there is a common core of training that is essential for all gospel ministry. Christian ministry is exercised through the teaching of the Word of God, in the context of prayer, with loving self-sacrifice in the interest of others.

The task of leaders is 'to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be build up, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ' (Ephesians 4:12-13)

In a rapidly changing world, God's fundamental agenda for the Church remains the same. Understanding the culture in which they are called to minister, Christian leaders must learn to teach and apply the Word of God appropriately, to encourage the Church to grow as Scripture outlines.

Oak Hill's approach

Since we believe that the Bible is God's fully sufficient, final and liberating word for us, we want it to govern our thinking and behaviour.

The study of Scripture is therefore at the heart of all that we do and we expect students to develop an intellectual rigour in their approach to the great issues that it raises.

Subjects such as Church History, Doctrine, Worship and Ethics help us to discover how Christians through the ages have interpreted Scripture and how we might apply it today.

In looking at the subject of 'Church and World' we seek to understand people and the contexts in which they live, so that we can minister to them more effectively. Students from different parts of the world make a significant contribution to this aspect of college life.

We take mission and evangelism seriously and their theory and practice are a vital part of our programme. We encourage students to develop a healthy and enquiring mind, coupled with the practical skills required for a variety of ministries. On-the-job experience is a high priority and we are able to provide a variety of church placements.

Living and worshipping together

Above all, we want to provide our students with the opportunity to grow and develop together as disciples of the Lord Jesus. That is why we believe that residential training is so helpful in developing effective leaders.

Chapel, fellowship groups, prayer times and social activities are all an important part of our experience as a community. After all, the gifts for ministry are best nurtured in a context where we are helping one another to mature as Christians and advance in godliness.