

# Grace Reformed Baptist Church

## *School of Theology*

Between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> of July 2007 eleven men gathered in a classroom at Massey University in Palmerston North for the first of what may become an annual School of Theology hosted by Grace Reformed Baptist Church. The men came together from seven churches in New Zealand and Fiji for an intensive week of learning under the instruction of Dr. James M. Renihan, the Dean and Professor of Historical Theology at the Institute of Reformed Baptist Studies at Westminster Seminary in California. During the course of the five days attention was focussed on one topic, Baptist Symbolics: the 2<sup>nd</sup> London Confession of Faith of 1689 which, to Baptists, is symbolic of the biblical theology we espouse.

Dr. Renihan briefly introduced the historical background to the Confession and then took us chapter by chapter in an analysis of its language and theology with reference to the Westminster Confession, the Savoy Declaration and the 1<sup>st</sup> London Confession. Exploring the language as it was understood in the seventeenth century revealed a care and clarity in the Confession which few of us had appreciated before, while opportunities for questions and discussion ensured relevance and practical application to our current day and theological climate.

All who attended the School benefited greatly, not only from the teaching, but also from the warm fellowship together and also the nourishing food which was provided throughout the week by two of the ladies in the church.

Next year we hope that Jim Renihan will return for our second School of Theology to be held in Palmerston North between 7<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> of July 2008. The Lord willing, the week will focus upon Baptist History, considering baptism in the early church and medieval period as well as the history and development of various Baptist groups from the time of the Reformation to the present day. By this year's standard this promises to be a stimulating overview providing fresh insights and practical lessons of relevance to our churches.

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