



GRACE COMMUNION
SEMINARY

GCS NEWS

A Newsletter for Students and Alumni of Grace Communion Seminary

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President's Letter



'Historically Orthodox'

For more than a decade, we have described our theology as “Incarnational, Trinitarian theology.” The capital letters (prescribed by the Merriam-Webster dictionary for these adjectives) make it look like this is a formal title, and some people within GCI have used it that way. Some people have a Reformed theology, some a Lutheran theology, and some seem to think that Incarnational, Trinitarian theology is like that.

If a prospective student wants to learn more about this type of theology, they might look in a theological reference book. They will find an article on the Incarnation, and one on the Trinity, but will not find any article for “Incarnational Trinitarian theology.” If they search on the internet for the exact phrase, they will find a meager 48 results (or more if the search engine counts occurrences in very similar documents) – most of them from Grace Communion International or people associated with GCI.

Although “Incarnational Trinitarian theology” may look like a label for a well-defined theology, a school of thinking generally known among Christian thinkers, it is not. It was not intended to be an identifying label. Rather, it is a summary *description* of some of our central doctrinal beliefs.

Almost all Christian churches accept the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity – the two beliefs usually go together. Yet few churches use the combination phrase Incarnational Trinitarian, or its reverse, Trinitarian Incarnational.

What do we mean by this combination of terms? By Incarnation, we are pointing to the importance of the fact that the eternal Word of God became flesh and lived among us (John 1:14). Many other doctrines are connected to this doctrine:

- Humans cannot know God unless God takes the initiative. The best that humans can do on our own is to realize that our standard ways of knowing cannot explain everything. Those ways serve as the origin of many mythologies and religions, as people hypothesize what might lie beyond our understanding. The Christian doctrine of the Incarnation says that the Incarnation – Jesus Christ – is the transcendent and eternal God revealing himself to us.
- All reality must be understood in the light of God becoming a human, living perfectly as a human, dying on the cross as an atonement for all our sins, and being resurrected from the dead not only as an example of what will happen to us, but also as the means by which it does happen.

We have a Christ-centered theology. Everything else depends on him.

When we say Trinitarian, we mean much more than a simple acceptance that “God is three persons in one being.” Many churches accept that teaching, but it makes no practical difference in what they do. When we say Trinitarian, we are pointing not just to the formula, but to the worship and beliefs that were involved in developing that formula. The formula points to the revelation of Jesus Christ to the inner dynamic of the kind of God

Cont.

we worship: three divine persons in eternal communion with one another, involved in dynamic relationship with one another.

- The doctrine of the Trinity is not just about the way God is within himself – it’s also about the way humans are made in his image, how God interacts with us, and how we interact with one another.
- The focus on relationships reminds us that God relates to us on a personal level, not based on legally defined performance. It’s a family kind of relationship, a covenant, a personal bond of loyalty and trust, not a contract or bargaining relationship.

In saying Trinitarian, we are also pointing to the early church councils in which this teaching was clarified. We are “historically orthodox” –

we are describing ourselves not in reference to the Great Awakening, the Great Disappointment, or the Reformation. Rather, we are pointing to the early church and its definition of correct Christian beliefs.

What makes those historically held beliefs orthodox (right teachings)? They are orthodox because they are based on the preaching and teaching of the original apostles, whom Jesus appointed to represent him. The early church relied on the teachings of those apostles, now collected in Scripture. Describing our beliefs as Incarnational and Trinitarian means they are biblical or apostolic; that is what is meant by orthodox.

The history of the church gives us many case studies in how different ideas being promoted during those first four or five centuries were evaluated. These findings are well summed up in three confessions or

creeds formulated during the first four centuries of the church: the Apostle’s Creed (second century AD), the Nicene Creed (325 and 381), and the Definition of Chalcedon (AD 451).

What, then, does describing ourselves as being Incarnational and Trinitarian add up to?

- Our primary standard is Jesus, who is revealed to us through the witness of the Scriptures, including the Old Testament as it was interpreted and validated by what Jesus said and did.
- We are also attentive to how the New Testament witness was lived out in the early centuries of the church and embodied in its worship of the Father, through the Son and in the Holy Spirit.
- The early church was not infallible, and we do not need to copy all their methods of showing piety and reverence, but we believe that Jesus was the head of the church in those early centuries, just as he is now, and we can learn from the way he continued to lead them by the Holy Spirit in understanding the Scriptures, and from the summary conclusions they were led to on that basis.

The assumptions, ideas, attitudes of modern culture are not our standard. Rather, we want to be able to present historically orthodox beliefs in the world today. Just as the early church wanted to present timeless truths in a way that spoke to the culture they were in, so also do we. Methods may change, but we always strive to be biblical, Christ-centered and historically orthodox. That’s what we mean when we describe ourselves as being Incarnational and Trinitarian.

*Michael Morrison, PhD
President*



Introducing New Faculty Members

Steve Dolson-Andrew



In late 2021, we lost our beloved history teacher, Neil Earle. While we will miss him, we are happy that his

church history courses will continue. Steve Dolson-Andrew has agreed to administer these courses. Dr. Dolson-Andrew received his PhD degree from Fuller Theological Seminary in 2019 with a dissertation on John Calvin's doctrine of the kingdom of God. He has experience teaching online at two community colleges in southern

California (using his master's degree in politics).

His first course for us will be this fall semester: CH502 Church History: The Second Millennium. We hope that you give him a warm welcome and enjoy the course!

Jeannine Graham



Once upon a time, GCS offered three Old Testament courses – all created by Dr. John McKenna. His course on

the OT Prophets was eventually transferred to Dr. Tim Finlay. After Dr. McKenna died, we were left with only one course in the Old Testament, that by Dr. Finlay. He teaches his course once every three years, and will teach BI512 The Prophets this fall.

We are happy to announce a new Old Testament course, which will be taught by Dr. Jeannine Graham in spring 2023: BI510 Old Testament Survey.

She received her PhD from the University of Aberdeen in 1993 with a thesis on the atonement theologies of Karl Barth, John Macquarrie and Dorothee Sölle. James B. Torrance was her doctoral advisor. Since then, she has taught a wide array of courses at Sterling College, Fuller Theological Seminary, Whitworth College, and George Fox University.

In addition to several other publications, she wrote the article "Grace Communion International" for the *Encyclopedia of Christianity in the United States*. She is a member of the T.F. Torrance Theological Fellowship and contributed an article to its journal, *Participatio*, "The 'One for the Many' Theme in James Torrance's Theology." She has been interviewed for the *You're Included* series – see <https://learn.gcs.edu/course/view.php?id=58#section-10>.

ANNOUNCEMENT: Tuition Increase


In June, the GCS Board voted to increase tuition \$25/credit hour starting with the Spring 2023 Semester.

This will bring our hourly tuition rate to **\$245**, and the tuition for a three-credit course will be **\$735**.

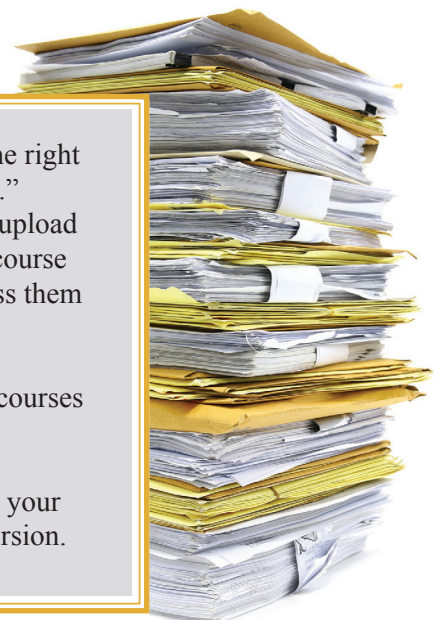
The price to audit a three-credit course will be **\$367.50**.

Save Your Papers!

Computers have been known to fail, so we encourage you to save a copy of your final papers as part of your GCS portfolio.

The final papers of many courses will be needed if you ever decide to pursue a Master of Divinity degree. Even if you do not currently plan to get the MDiv, you might change your mind later, or you might want those papers for some other reason. Here's how you can put all your final papers in one place so that you will continue to be able to access them: 

- Log in and go to your dashboard. In the right column is a box labelled "Private files." Click on "Manage private files," then upload a copy of your papers (label them by course number), and you will be able to access them in future semesters.
- You may want to do this for previous courses you have taken at GCS.
- If your instructor makes comments on your papers, you'll want to preserve that version.



E-books and Internet Books

We recommend that you buy printed books, but we also recognize that e-books have advantages in some situations.

- E-books are convenient. They don't weigh anything, so it's easy to carry a lot of books. You can read whenever you have time.
- You can search for text in some e-books.
- You can highlight text in e-books and export that text to a computer, thus saving time in typing good quotes.
- E-books sometimes cost less than "very good" used printed books.
- In some nations, e-books are better because print books are very expensive, don't arrive on time, and sometimes not at all.

However, the most common types of e-books have some disadvantages:

- You don't own an e-book – you just have a license to use it, good only as long as the corporation, your account and your devices work.
- E-books cannot be given to friends or sold in a secondhand market.
- Electronic devices create e-waste. The devices, the programs, and the batteries are doomed to fail.

It is also possible to rent e-books. We try to assign textbooks that you will want to keep for a long time. If you rent the book, you won't be able to keep it. Renting has several disadvantages, but it may still be useful in some situations.

- You can gain access to numerous textbooks on scribd.com for \$12 per month. You'll need them for

three months, so that would be \$36 – in some cases that is less than buying the books. Scribd does offer the first two weeks free, and sometimes there are coupon codes for more.

- The best advantage is that with scribd, you will also get access to many other books that could be useful for writing papers in your classes. For example, there are more than five commentaries for each of Paul's letters. If you are going to need these books for your research paper, then you might consider using scribd for the textbooks as well.
- Scribd books can be viewed online, but most cannot be downloaded or printed (except via print screen). There are some research papers, books and other documents that can be downloaded.

Scribd is not the only way to access commentaries on the internet.

1. **Openlibrary.org** has a few commentaries and theology books that you can check out for an hour at a time.
2. **Biblegateway.com/plus** offers access to some Zondervan resources for \$4 per month. Most of their commentaries are one-volume commentaries, so they don't offer much detail, but they are good for an overview.
3. **Scholar.google.com** can link you to numerous books. You cannot access the entire book, but you can often see enough of the book to get useful information from it.
4. **Kindle Unlimited.** If you already subscribe to Kindle Unlimited, or have a free trial, you may want to see what books are available to you free. It does not include many commentaries and reference books, but some others may be useful.

5. Commentaries on miscellaneous sites:

- Asbury Bible Commentary <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/asbury-bible-commentary/toc/>
- IVP New Testament Commentary series <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/ivp-nt/toc/>
- Bob Utley commentaries, at <http://www.freebiblecommentary.org/>
- David Guzik commentaries, www.enduringword.com
- Basic Bible Commentary series and the Abingdon New Testament Commentaries at <https://www.ministrymatters.com/library/>
- Constable's Notes, <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>
- [Bridgeway Bible Commentary](http://www.bridgewaybiblecommentary.org), on [studylight.org](http://www.studylight.org)

6. You can get a free theology e-book each month by signing up for emails at [wipfandstock.com](http://www.wipfandstock.com).

7. More free resources can be obtained from Logos.com. You can sign up for a free basic account at <https://www.logos.com/basic>. They give away three free books each month, and some of them may be useful in the future.¹ These books can also be read on mobile devices with the free Faithlife app. Logos will offer you dozens of "good deals" and imply that you'll be a better preacher and scholar if you pay them more money. Ignore the ads unless you have an immediate need for the resources. It takes a few minutes each month to gather these free resources, but you'll eventually have a good list of resources.

*Michael Morrison, PhD
President*

¹Logos advertises one free book each month, and you can also get another free book at their parent company, [faithlife.com](http://www.faithlife.com), and a third book (often on church history) at an affiliated site for Roman Catholics, [verbum.com](http://www.verbum.com); all can be viewed with the Logos program or the Faithlife app.

Schedule of Courses

All schedules are tentative

Fall 2022: Registration begins Aug. 22. The first lecture will be posted on Tuesday, Sept. 6. Subsequent lectures will be posted on Mondays, Sept. 12 to Nov. 7. All work is to be completed by Dec. 4.

BI522	The Prophets	Tim Finlay
BI524	Epistles of Paul	Mike Morrison
CM501	Foundations of Christian Ministry	Lance McKinnon
CH502	Church History: The Second Millennium	Steve Dolson-Andrew
CM507	Experiencing the Trinity	Larry Hinkle
FE501-3	Field Education	Randy Bloom
TH502	Jesus Christ, the Nature of Humans and Salvation	Gary Deddo

Spring 2023: Registration begins Jan. 3. The first lecture will be posted on Monday, January 16. Other lectures will be posted on Mondays, January 24 through March 20. All work is to be completed by April 16. Easter is April 9.

BI501	Biblical Interpretation	Mike Morrison
BI510	Old Testament Survey	Jeannine Graham
BI523	Acts of the Apostles	Dan Rogers
CM504	Practice of Ministry	Ted Johnston
FE501-3	Field Education	Randy Bloom
TH501	Nature of God and Jesus Christ	Lance McKinnon & Gary Deddo

Summer 2023: Registration begins May 1. The first lecture will be posted on Monday, May 15. Other lectures will be posted on Mondays, May 22 through June 19, and July 3 to 24. All work is to be completed by August 13. The GCI Denominational Celebration is June 29 to July 2.

BI522	The Gospels	Mike Morrison
CH501	Church History: The First Millennium	Steve Dolson-Andrew
*CM511	Homiletics	Dan Rogers
*CM513	Trinitarian Worship	Lance McKinnon
FE501-3	Field Education	Randy Bloom
TH507	Theology of C.S. Lewis	Gary Deddo

*Part of this course will be conducted in Charlotte, NC, prior to the GCI Denominational Celebration.

All schedules are tentative. If fewer than five students register for a course, it may be cancelled, at the discretion of the instructor.
Thesis and Capstone courses for the master's degrees are offered in all semesters.

CONGRATULATIONS to our 2022 Graduates

These students have completed their
Master of Divinity (MDIV):

Mervin Walton



These students have completed their
Master of Pastoral Studies (MPS):

Ceeja Malmkar

Dishon Mills

***The next GCS Graduation will be held at the GCI
denominational celebration in the summer of 2023.***



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Financial support from alumni and friends like you has a profound impact on the seminary's mission of
“Equipping the Saints for Pastoral Ministry.”

If you have a passion for the provision of seminary training informed by an Incarnational Trinitarian faith, GCS is grateful for your partnership through prayer and financial support.

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3120 Whitehall Park Drive, Charlotte, NC 28273
or donate online at gcs.edu/donate.