

The University Next Door



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THE EXTENDED VERSION

Those of you who do a lot of home movie-watching know that we have passed into the age of DVDs, and they have a lot more space than videotapes. Consequently we now have “extended version” DVDs containing footage of a movie that was edited out of the original film. The newsletter I sent out early last month had lots of “additional footage” that was cut out for the sake of time. This newsletter is the “extended version”

OF KRONOS AND KAIROS

I’m told there are two words in New Testament Greek for time, kronos and kairos. Kronos, simply, is clock time. We use it to make appointments and measure how fast someone ran the forty-yard dash. Kairos is more mysterious. The New Testament uses it to talk about “God’s time,” as in Ephesians 1:10: when the times “have reached their fulfillment” God will place all things under Christ. In other words God doesn’t work according to human plans or timetables. Ministry at FSU this fall is a case in point of this.

We began the fall with a very successful outreach to new graduate students, and made contact with over thirty new students. We invited them all to a kick-off-the-semester-party we had been planning for over a month before, and about half of them came. There were twenty or more other students from last year who came as well. The student leaders of grad fellowship and me had planned out three weekly events and bi-weekly weekend fellowship events that spanned the entire semester. We had flyers detailing all this that we handed over to anybody who would take one. In short, *we were prepared* for this semester. With such a promising start we had every reason to believe our plans would bare fruit. It hasn’t turned out that way.

Once a semester begins in campus ministry it’s difficult to make up for lost time because students get in a routine. That’s why you have a variety of activities on different days – so there will be something to fit most people’s schedule. Despite the tremendous variety of activities we had planned none of it has matched people’s schedules well. Attendance even at old stand-by activities like Dead Theologians Society and Food for Thought has been down by half or more.



This year’s grad fellowship chapter president Mark Aveyard.



Law student Randall Ivey and graduate student in mathematics Phillip LePoudre

There were other things we couldn't control. Labor Day weekend, for example, we had a big gathering planned at the FSU Reservation ("the Rez" to many of you), and it was the weekend there was a run on gasoline in Tallahassee in the aftermath of Katrina. The town was out of gas by Friday night, and nobody wanted to get out much. Finally, in the midst of the semester, we lost access to the Episcopal University Center due to a change in leadership there. This change has now resulted in our loss of its use for Dead Theologians Society as well. So from the standpoint of "kairos," God's timing, this has not been the semester for graduate ministry to explode into the 24/7 festival that I was frankly hoping it would in August.

But just because it hasn't been God's season for big growth doesn't mean it hasn't been "kairos" for other things. In the last newsletter I spoke of a "deepening" amongst the students in the ministry, and that has been God's biggest blessing this semester. Our meetings have been smaller, but those there more passionate about being there. Many of our students, Mark Aveyard, Matt Harrington, Katie Merrill and Phillip LePoudre among others are showing solid confidence in who they are as scholars *and* Christians, and they show this with a depth I haven't seen during my time as staff worker. These same students have taken it upon themselves to put together workshop-type events so Christian graduate students can help each other grow specifically in the area of combining their faith with their scholarship. One of them is planned for December 2, and another planned for the spring. The response from the other students, and some faculty, has been encouraging, with twelve participants signed up for the first event. Something similar is taking place at the law school where the student leaders, as a group, are stepping up to the plate.

PRAYER REQUESTS

As always I covet your prayers for me and for this ministry. Here are some specific things you can pray for as this semester comes to a close and the next one lies close ahead.

- Our "scholarship night" seminar that I spoke of above on December 2.
- For all the students as they begin taking final exams for the fall.
- For the Gulf States Colloquium on Faith & Learning coming up at the end of February '06 featuring Ken Myers of the Mars Hill Audio Journal.
- I've written a lot about the students taking initiative in the area of "Christian scholarship." Pray with me that they will also begin to take the initiative in praying with and for each other.

This is the last "full edition newsletter" for 2005. I'll be sending a "year-end" letter in a couple of weeks. May our Lord bless you all in this season that we celebrate His first coming.