Isn’t it exciting to be in here at last? This building, if not this precise room, has been dreamed about and planned for fifty years, and now, in God’s good timing, it is here and the first meeting held in this room is for the graduating students of 2016!

There are quite a few people we need to thank for helping us get to this point. But in particular, there has been a lot of hard work over the last couple of days and weeks in order to make it possible for us to meet in this room tonight. The IT team, especially, William Hood, Tom Harkness, and Darin Russell have worked tirelessly to make it happen. John Downward, our Operations Manager and Cam Capel our Dean of Operations have both pushed the boundaries too, in order that we might not just have this time here
tonight but that the Lord’s Supper service
tomorrow morning might be held in this room as well. Some of them are here tonight and you might like to join me in showing our appreciation for all their hard work.

After two years of dislocation and disruption we now approach the exciting time when we will be able to make use of this building. Our heavenly Father has been very generous to us. It is right and proper that we are excited and that we give him thanks and praise for what he has done. And I’m sure that even you, who now leave us and so won’t be here when the use of the building is in full-swing, can thank God that he has made all this possible. After all you’re going to keep coming back, aren’t you?

But we all know that the most important thing that happens in this place has happened all this
year without the building and for many years before. This building, we pray, will enable it to happen on a bigger scale and more effectively. But it has happened all along. Men and women like you, who are finishing your time at Moore College this week, have been growing in the knowledge of God and have been shaped and prepared to take his gospel to the world. Through lectures and through seminars, through lunch-time conversations and in chapel, in prayer groups and during the annual college mission, you have been built into a fellowship of disciples which is about to disperse in order to go and make more disciples.

That is what your time at Moore College has all been about. God is doing his great work of moving all things towards that day when everything will be properly ordered under the
authority of his Christ. And part of that is his wonderful, gracious activity of raising up men and women like you, bringing you from death to life, so that you might be his instruments to bring others from death to life as well; shaping you in life and doctrine, so that through your teaching he might shape the life and doctrine of others as well.

Our charter remains the Great Commission of Matthew 28. We know that our crucified Lord has risen. We know that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him. And it was he who charged his disciples to ‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age’. All that you
have been studying over the past year, three years or four, has been to prepare you to play your part in this mission, following the lead of those first disciples who took the gospel out from Jerusalem, to Judaea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

To persevere in that mission, to take those words of Jesus with the utmost seriousness throughout a life of service, is not easy. It won’t always be easy to keep your focus on making and growing and teaching and maturing disciples of the one who came to save his people from their sins. There is and always will be pressure to recast the mission in other terms which don’t require the exclusive claims of Jesus. You’ll be called on to drop the language of sin deserving judgment, and of forgiveness secured by atonement. You’ll be told there are more
important things to be saying just at the moment, more important words those around us need to hear. You’ll be applauded when you follow that advice. Life will be easier and more comfortable. And, I dare say, lies will be told about you if you do not. But that was the case for the original disciples as well. It was the case for those great Christian leaders in the early church. That was the case for the Reformers, Luther and Calvin, Tyndale and Cranmer. It has always been the case. But in each successive age since the resurrection of Jesus, proclaiming Christ and calling on men and women to leave their illusory independence behind and put their trust in him, has always been the powerful way God saves men and women, encourages his people and brings glory to his name.
The mission is to proclaim Christ. It is to make disciples — not disciples of yourselves, not disciples in some abstract sense, life-long learners of whatever is available to learn, but disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christian living and Christian ministry is always all about him. Don’t be deflected from that, will you?

It’s a fascinating time to be alive. It is an exciting and exhilarating time to be embarking on a life-time of full-time gospel ministry. Our world has been in turmoil for some time but the shocks have just kept coming this year, haven’t they? The fractures and tensions and frustration have come to the surface time and again. It has been hard this year, when looking at the world of liberal democracy, when watching its belligerent opposition to the sovereignty of God wrapped up in make-believe tolerance imploding at point
after point — hard not to be reminded of the first stanza of that poem by William Butler Yeats:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

There is a real sense that over the next months and years things are not just going to go on as they did before, with business as usual. New voices are being heard and those who have been used to controlling the message and the direction of the most influential nations on earth are still reeling from the shock. First Brexit, then
Trump, and what’s next? Listening to the news the other day I heard the word most often used to describe the mood of this moment is ‘fearful’ — even though the markets have recovered rather quickly. Still fearful.

And into a world like that we have a gospel to proclaim, the gospel of hope and forgiveness and unimaginable love from the one we have so insistently spurned and derided. For those fearful, here is a lasting answer to fear: ‘all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me’ and ‘behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age’. For those uncertain, and who feel the ground has been pulled out from under their feet, here is some solid ground: ‘teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you’. The reason why giving yourself to this ministry is exhilarating, at this and any moment in history, is
that this centre will hold – it will always hold. There is no one who can overthrow the authority of the Lord Jesus, no one who can overpower him, no one who can outvote him or thwart his purpose. What you have been taught, the message you have to share, is the one solid rock that can withstand the maelstrom. Before his throne no voice will prevail against his people and his mercy and grace are a cause of never-ending praise. This is an adventure with a certain outcome. And you and I have the immense privilege of being part of it.

At the end of another academic year there are many people I need to thank. First of all, I want to thank you, the graduating students. Your teachers and the entire College community have been enriched by your presence among us. You may think that you in particular have gone
unnoticed over the last year or two but I can assure you that’s not true. I want to thank every one of you.

I want, in front of you all, to thank the staff of our College. There has been considerable upheaval throughout this year and yet our staff has been constant in their focus on our common goal: to do all we are able so that our students might be fully and properly prepared for the work God has in store for them. In the library and in the kitchen, in accommodation and property, in IT and in finance, in communications and in the registrar’s department, and in the general administration — every contribution has made a difference. And, again, I thank you, every one of you.

Thank you too to the Faculty. I count it an enormous privilege to serve alongside each one
of you in this critical work that has been entrusted to us. A blend of the highest possible standards of scholarship with genuine humility and unswerving commitment to the practice of Christian ministry and mission has long been a characteristic of our College, and never more so than at present, and for that I thank you. I trust the Lord will grant us to work together for many years to come.

Finally, thank you to the Governing Board, many of whom have joined us tonight. Only some people get to see all that you do, but I can certainly testify to the single-minded commitment to the College and its mission that has motivated your many hours of work with humility and generosity. In particular I want to thank the President of our Governing Board, Archbishop Davies. Archbishop, we really do
appreciate all that you do to support and encourage the work of the College. I, personally, owe you a very great debt.

Only one more thing to go, after tonight: the joy and celebration of ‘Final Friday’ tomorrow. I hope those of you and your families who can make it will come and share the Lord’s Supper with us at 10.30am tomorrow and then enjoy a BBQ with us afterwards. Last time I checked the weather was expected to be fine and sunny. It should be a wonderful time of rejoicing in our salvation and in the community of saved men and women brought together by the Spirit as the people of the risen Son.

So now I’d like to close by praying for those finishing their study at College this year and especially for the relationships begun and developed here over the past four years.