

the messenger

Mid-America Reformed Seminary



MID-AMERICA FITS THE BILL

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THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

“CHRIST’S PERFECT ACTIVE AND PASSIVE OBEDIENCE ON OUR BEHALF”



Last time, we thought about the Advent and the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. The hypostatic union—the reality that our Savior is truly God and man—is the greatest mystery imaginable, second only to the Blessed Holy Undivided Trinity. The mystery continues, not only as we think of His person but also His work, particularly His state of humiliation. His state of humiliation is what we think about at this time of year when our thoughts turn to the saving work of our Lord, in His living and dying for us. We often speak of Christ dying for us in the season leading up to Easter, but I also want to focus on His living for us, being our substitute in keeping the whole law for us, as well as atoning for our sins on the cross.

It was humbling for our Lord to add humanity to His deity in the Virgin’s womb, as we noted last time, but further to be born in a low estate and live in such a low estate all the days of His earthly life until his resurrection. His humiliation consisted not only in His being born and living in a low condition, not as befitted a king, but also in completely submitting to the law. It is quite humbling for the prime lawgiver to become the chief lawkeeper.

Think of it: Christ lived the whole of His life in perfect obedience to the whole law of God—moral, civil, and ceremonial. He never had a wrong thought, said a wrong word, or did a wrong thing, no matter how insignificant. One might respond by saying, “Well, of course He lived this way. He had to live this way, or He would not be qualified to die for us as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” It is true: Had He sinned in any way, He would have had to die to pay for that sin, as all who die in their sin, under the wrath and curse of God.

Jesus, however, didn’t live in perfect obedience to the law of God only to qualify Himself to be the sacrifice for our sins. He lived this way because, as the last Adam, He came not only to undo what the first Adam did by dying on the cross for our sins but also to do what Adam failed to do. Adam was under obligation to keep the law perfectly in the covenant of works that God made with him and under which he operated in Eden. Adam failed to keep the covenant of works, eating the fruit forbidden to him, a willful and rebellious rejection of God’s right and just rule over him.

Christ came then as the last Adam to pay the penalty of Adam’s and our sins and live under the covenant of works perfectly, doing what Adam had failed to do in perfectly obeying God’s law for us. We commonly speak of Christ as a substitute for the sacrifice for our sins. He was also a substitute in keeping the law perfectly for us, the righteousness of which is imputed to us. Christ, in other words, died for us, as our penal substitute, and He lived for us, obeying the whole law in our place.

When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden, violating the terms of the covenant of works, God was pleased to announce a covenant of grace whereby the seed of the woman would crush the serpent’s head. The covenant of grace is possible for us only because Christ came and fulfilled the covenant of works on our behalf perfectly. Thus, we have full and free access to a holy God: by faith-union with Christ, His perfect law-keeping becomes ours.

Indeed, a just God demands not only the payment of the penalty for sin but also the upholding and keeping of the law, as He prefers obedience to sacrifice. We see this in common life: A child is censured for not cleaning his room but still has to clean his room, even as an adult for not paying taxes, assessed interest and penalties, but still must pay the tax. We need both perfect obedience to the law and full payment for our transgression of it. Thank God that Jesus doth both for us in His perfect obedience

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alan D. Strange". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light-colored background.

Dr. Alan D. Strange
Interim President of Mid-America Reformed Seminary

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MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

The first quarter of the new year is always an exciting time at Mid-America Reformed Seminary. We pause and reflect on the goodness of God as displayed through the robust year-end giving you provide (more on that in the development report), we welcome our students back from Christmas break and hear their stories of a refreshing time spent with their families and loved ones, and we set our sights on the semester ahead and all that it brings with it – laboring in and out of the classroom, completing our chapel (see our update on *Foundation for the Future*), sending off our graduating seniors, and making plans to welcome a new group of students, some of whom we’re still meeting.

Have you spent time praying for our future students? Have you helped us source new students? You play a vital role in student recruiting; after all, you know our prospective students better than we do. You taught them in Sunday School. You were their Cadet counselors. You attended their basketball games and took their homecoming pictures. You helped them move into college. They’re in your pews. They’re in your homes. Send them our way. Why? Interim President Dr. Alan Strange highlights a number of good reasons as he picks up where he left off on the importance of a robust seminary education in this edition’s feature article. We’re honored to be entrusted with the academic, spiritual, and practical training of the next generation of Kingdom servants.



Michael B. Deckinga
Vice-President of Advancement



Editor

Michael Deckinga, Vice-President of Advancement

Contributing Writers

Dr. Alan D. Strange, Interim President
Michael B. Deckinga, Vice-President of Advancement

Dr. Eric Watkins, Instructor of Ministerial Studies, Director of the Center for Missions and Evangelism

Jared Luttjeboer, Director of Marketing

Layout and Design

Rachel Luttjeboer, Secretary of Media & Publications; Assistant to the Registrar

Our Mission

Mid-America Reformed Seminary seeks to serve Christ and His church by assisting in the formation and preparation of servants for the Kingdom of God. Our primary purpose is to train men for the gospel ministry of Jesus Christ. Guided by this focus, we are also committed to providing solid theological training for others among God’s people whose life calling may be enhanced by theological education.

Website

www.midamerica.edu

Address

Mid-America Reformed Seminary
229 Seminary Dr.
Dyer, IN 46311

Phone:

219-864-2400

DEVELOPMENT REPORT: “NOW THAT’S ONE FOR THE BOOKS!”

Any of you tracking with the Seminary for a while will know that the last quarter in the calendar year represents the single greatest season of giving we experience. It’s the “rainy season” (financially speaking) that provides opportunity for our work to flourish and bloom throughout the rest of the year. The season begins with the Canadian Thanksgiving holiday and runs right up until New Year’s Eve, with many of you making gifts on the 31st of December right up until midnight. I know because I receive alerts in my email when a gift is received (electronically at least).

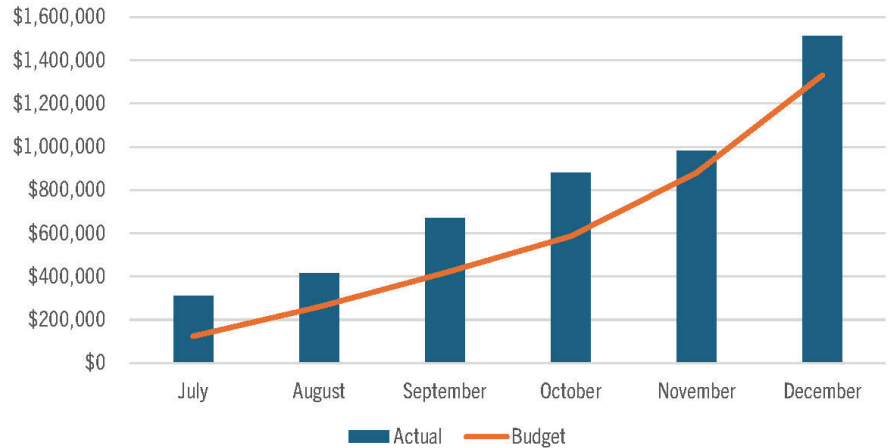
In particular, this December was quite significant, as U.S. gifts to the General Fund and to *Foundation for the Future*, Mid-America’s campus expansion project, totaled over half a million dollars, and Canadian donations (CAD) totaled nearly half a million dollars! The Canadian postal workers strike delayed the mail a bit, so December was more like a historic November and December combined, but at any rate, we’re setting records here, friends.

The Seminary is so grateful for your continued support. As we proceed into this new year, you’ll recall that since we operate on a fiscal year (7/1 – 6/30), the year is half over already. You’ll see from the graph provided, that through December, with U.S. giving and Canadian cost share combined, we are ahead of our general operating budgeted revenue by just under \$200,000.

As we shift gears from last year to the year ahead, there are a number of things I’d like to put before you for consideration and prayer:

- Our building remodeling and expansion project, *Foundation for the Future* is nearing completion. In fact, by the time you read this article, it will be complete. The Lord has graciously provided for our needs through your support over the last couple of years. We stand in need of \$1.2 million dollars to finish paying for the project. To date, we have paid out over \$4.5 million. Prayerfully contemplate how the Lord might use you to help us close our funding gap and cross the finish line, and please be in prayer that the Lord will move hearts (especially yours!) to cheerfully, generously, and sacrificially steward the resources He has entrusted into the care of His people.
- Our students (some of them graduating soon!) are

2024-25 General Fund Income: Actual vs. Budget



hard at work in the classroom, in their churches and communities, and building lifelong relationships with future ministerial colleagues at the Seminary. Pray the Lord sustains them and their families as they work to glorify Him through their studies.

- We exist to serve the church by training the next generation of pastors and other church leaders for a lifetime of faithful service. Please assist us in identifying prospective students in your congregations, and point them in our direction. A visit to Mid-America can make all the difference. Join us in prayer that the Lord would raise up laborers as the field is white unto harvest.
- Continue to be in prayer for Dr. Alan Strange, our Interim President, as he continues to lead our institution during a period of transition. The Seminary is currently writing a new long-range, strategic plan. Dr. Strange provides enthusiastic and helpful leadership. May God sustain him.
- Please be in prayer for our professors as they work diligently to teach our students to treat the Word rightly and exhort it boldly and effectively.

All of this is incredibly ordinary for us, but the Lord uses these ordinary means and achieves extraordinary results through your faithful partnership. Your continued support over the next days, weeks, and months, will continue to humble and encourage us as we seek to faithfully live out our mission for God’s glory.

Michael B. Deckinga
Vice-President of Advancement

To make or plan for a gift today, contact Michael Deckinga, VP of Advancement, at mdeckinga@midamerica.edu, 219-864-2406

FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE

Our campus expansion and remodeling project is set for completion in mid-February, so by the time you start turning pages here, we've already been using our new space! It's heartwarming to think about: years of planning and meetings finally culminating in a completed project. We look forward to "showing and telling" all about it in our June issue, Lord willing.

Chapel seating has just been installed, and we are now working towards the installation of several other finishing touches – acoustic and audio-visual features, additional trim work, flooring, and wall paint. We're nearing completion – the end is in sight!

This means the end is in sight for funding this project as well. You've been so generous in support of this effort, and the Seminary community is thankful. Through the Lord's provision of your cheerful stewardship, we've been able to pay out over \$4.5 million in draw payments to date. That leaves

us with only \$1.2 million to go. We need your additional gifts and pledges to get us across the finish line! There's not a gift too small or too large that won't help. We've funded this project little-by-little, with the occasional shot in the arm of a large gift now and then, and I can happily report that the Seminary has not incurred any debt along the way. We're dipping into Board designated funds at this time from other areas of our program which will need to be replenished after the project (with a modest, self-imposed, Board-approved interest rate of 5%). Help us avoid this scenario with a gift of any amount. Contact me directly to make or plan for a gift or pledge today: mdeckinga@midamerica.edu, or by my direct office line, 219-864-2406. Thank you!

Michael B. Deckinga
Vice-President of Advancement



2025 CME CONFERENCE PREVIEW

In the book of Acts, the people of God are frequently seen spreading the gospel in one form or another. Preachers can be found proclaiming the gospel in synagogues and on street corners. Lay people spread the good news like seed as they are scattered to the four corners of their region. And friends are seen graciously sharing the gospel informally with one another from house to house—often over food! In all these things, we see the church of God growing spiritually and numerically as the people of God “gossip” the good news of the gospel.

This year's Center for Missions and Evangelism annual conference (October 3-4) will be very focused—our theme is *growing local churches through evangelism*. While conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit, God gives gifts, wisdom, and means to His church to build up the body of Christ

spiritually and numerically. But knowing how best to go about this work together is not always easy to do. Thus, our desire is to help the body of Christ, young and old, to know what it looks like to “walk in wisdom toward those who are outside” (Colossians 4:5-6) in distinctively evangelistic ways.

This conference is not just for pastors or church leaders, but for everyone in the church interested in the work of reaching people for Christ. To that end, we have assembled a very competent lineup of speakers who will bring very practical suggestions for how our churches can strive to cultivate cultures of evangelism while still maintaining our reformed, confessional distinctives.

As our conference attendance continues to grow each year, we



would encourage people to take advantage of our “Early Bird Registration” and to consider promoting the conference to churches, youth groups, and friends to receive the “Group Rate.”

See you in October!

Dr. Eric Watkins
Director of the Center for Missions and Evangelism

SENIOR PROFILES

Mid-America Reformed Seminary is pleased to announce its 2025 graduation ceremony, which will take place on May 15th at 7:30 p.m., Lord willing, at Redeemer United Reformed Church in St. John, Indiana. This year, eleven students are set to graduate, having completed their rigorous and pastorally focused education. We thank God for their diligence and pray for His blessings as they step into their respective callings. Below, we highlight the graduates and their plans for ministry.



Jeremy Chong will begin an internship at Covenant Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) in Orland

Park, IL, after graduation, with plans to become a church planter in Chicago. Since 2018, he has led Reformation Chicago, a team sharing the gospel through conversations, open-air preaching, and tract distribution. This work has grown into a Bible study and is moving toward the launch of a church plant in April 2026, with a vision for planting multiple churches in Chicago. Jeremy valued Mid-America's proximity to Chicago, affordability, and emphasis on preaching. He and his wife, Hannah, are expecting their second child in April 2025, joining their son, Hudson.



Kevin Godsey is pursuing ordination in the OPC. He valued the Seminary's close connection between academic rigor and pastoral

application, particularly in preaching and counseling. Kevin also appreciated the Ministerial Apprenticeship Program (MAP) as key to developing pastoral sensitivity and expressed gratitude for the financial aid that supported his family throughout the program. Looking back on his time at MARS, Kevin treasures the friendships formed with classmates and faculty, which provided encouragement and accountability during his studies. Kevin and his wife, Cami, have two sons, Josiah and Timothy, and they eagerly anticipate the next chapter as they follow God's calling in their lives.



Daniel Hofland plans to pursue candidacy for ministry within the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) and

will remain local with his wife, Leah, and their four children—Lydia, Clara, Julia, and Micah—while preparing for his candidacy exam and awaiting a call. He appreciated the pastorally focused education at Mid-America and the relationships built within the Seminary community. He and his family are thankful for the prayers and support that made this a season of blessing, and they look forward to serving faithfully in the church.



Bryce Klassen plans to serve in the European mission field, with opportunities in both Eastern and Western Europe. He is also

considering further education. Bryce cherished his time at Mid-America, particularly the fellowship with fellow students, the instruction from godly professors, and his spiritual growth. As Bryce looks ahead, he is praying for discernment and asking for the Lord's provision as he steps into this exciting new phase of ministry. He also prays for God's continued blessings on his classmates and the Seminary's faithfulness in training future servants of the church.



Alexander Proudfoot, his wife, Esther, and their son, Adam, will return to Ontario, Canada, where he will prepare for his URCNA

candidacy exam this summer. He appreciated the balance between theological depth and pastoral training during his time at Mid-America, which equipped him well for ministry. Alexander found great encouragement in the collaborative environment at the Seminary, where he was able to sharpen his understanding of doctrine and ministry through discussions with professors and peers. He looks forward to using the tools he gained at Mid-America to serve the church and community, and is eager to embrace the challenges and joys of ministry.



Christian Ryan plans to pursue ordination as an Evangelist in the OPC's Presbytery of Wisconsin

and Minnesota and assess as a chaplain in the Wisconsin Army National Guard. He will also begin a Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) internship at a Milwaukee hospital. Christian valued the theological challenges, diverse perspectives, and pastoral care he received from Mid-America's professors. He and his wife, Megan, have two children, Bronwyn and Patrick, and are expecting a third. Together, they are prayerfully preparing for the exciting opportunities ahead, trusting in God's guidance for this new season of ministry.



Anthony Sato and his wife, Anna, along with their eight children—Logan, Ellie, Jolie, Graham, Owen,

Reed, April, and Ivy—are seeking the Lord's guidance for their next steps. Anthony appreciated the unique insights and passion that Mid-America's professors brought to their lectures, which were both engaging and practical for ministry. He and Anna are deeply thankful for the prayers and support from the Seminary community, and trust God's provision as they discern His will for their family and for Anthony's future ministry.



Josh Savage will pursue pastoral ministry after graduation. He found the Seminary's commitment to teaching confessional truths

both rigorous and rewarding. Josh appreciated the professors' pastoral care in preparing students for ministry and described his time at Mid-America as both challenging and enriching. He and his wife, Rachel, have two children, Owen and Emma, and they are excited to see how the Lord will use their family to bless the church and community they are called to serve.



Franz Stagl is in a season of discerning his next steps in ministry, yet his passion for preaching the gospel and growing the Reformed faith in

Northwest Indiana remains steadfast. He has a deep commitment to serving the military community and encouraging others to live out their faith in all aspects of life. Franz has found particular value in the professors' focus on academic precision and biblical fidelity, which, coupled with an emphasis on service to God's Kingdom, has shaped his approach to ministry. Franz and his wife, Kelli, are parents to three children: Elijah, Grace, and Anna. As they move beyond graduation, they eagerly anticipate how God will unfold His plans for their future, trusting in His wisdom, timing, and grace for every step of the way.



Joel Trinidad will complete a year-long internship at a Reformed congregation and is considering further

studies, possibly a Doctor of Ministry (DMin) degree. He expressed gratitude for the pastoral hearts of the faculty, the depth of the curriculum, and the hands-on experience provided by the Ministerial Apprenticeship Program. Joel and his wife, JC, have three children: Ioelle Aletheia, Ioanne Kharix, and Ioenne Theuios.



Jeremy Vander Lei will pursue gospel ministry in the URCNA after completing his candidacy exam in

Classis Pacific Northwest this June. He appreciated the wisdom of Mid-America's professors, who combined theological insights with practical ministry skills. Jeremy and his wife, Lindsey, have five children: Tracen, Julianne, Levi, Thomas, and Kynslee.

As we send off these graduates, we cannot stress enough the importance of the Seminary's mission to train faithful servants for gospel ministry. The Lord has equipped them through their studies, and we trust He will use them mightily in His Kingdom. Please join us in praying for these men, their families, and the churches and communities they will serve.

Jared Luttjeboer



MID-AMERICA FITS THE BILL

by Dr. Alan D. Strange

In a recent issue, I addressed the importance of seminary education. Of course, one may not argue that God's Word requires seminary, as if Moses came down the mountain with such a command. However, I argued in the September 2024 *Messenger* article, that the learning necessary for effective pastoral ministry is ordinarily secured by study in a theological seminary. Where else will one receive the wide range of theoretical and practical training needed for pastoral ministry besides studying at a theological seminary?

This leaves the question of which seminary one should attend unanswered. Unsurprisingly, as I indicated in that article, I believe Mid-America Reformed Seminary best fits the bill. Assertion, however, is not proof, and I acknowledge that I need to produce evidence to support the claim. Why Mid-America? I will seek in this article to demonstrate the validity of my contention that Mid-America, taken on the whole, stands head and shoulders above other confessional Reformed and Presbyterian institutions

and should be given the most serious consideration by all interested in kingdom service, particularly those pursuing pastoral ministry.

Let me say at this point that this should not be taken to be a criticism of like-minded seminaries. Some may take it that way because I maintain that Mid-America is the best qualified to carry out its task. I say this honestly and earnestly, and I hope, humbly, not to denigrate any fellow seminary but to set forth that Mid-America, in the aggregate, given its strengths, rises

to the top. Doubtless, other institutions could, at any point in this piece, aver, “We do that as well!” This article does not dispute that other institutions may do any number of the things I delineate as marking Mid-America; however, I believe that only Mid-America offers the whole package.

Historically, Mid-America has pursued a classical approach to theological education. The four divisions of theological seminary study have served to organize our curriculum: Biblical studies, ecclesiastical studies, doctrinal studies, and ministerial studies. We continue to employ this approach but, in more recent years, have thought particularly about how we might better equip our students not only in gathering the saints by preaching the gospel but also in discipling them through the means of grace regularly employed in the church. It is not enough, in other words, that folk merely be in the church, but that they grow and flourish in the Christian faith as a part of the church.

In our Reformed and Presbyterian churches, we should not settle for church growth simply because our already committed families have children, thereby adding to the numbers. Let there be no confusion: we welcome and cherish such church growth through family growth. We need, in addition to that, a commitment to be outreaching and ingathering so that we are not simply ingrown but also truly ingathering the lost, engaging in both fellowship and hospitality, the latter being a love that we show to strangers as well as to our friends.

This commitment to evangelism and discipleship has come to a particular expression in the development of our *Center for Missions and Evangelism*. The Center has several planks in its strategy for carrying out its purpose better to imbue our students and churches with a sense of all involved in the Great Commission, that call of the Lord, by his Spirit, to minister so that the church grows, both extensively, among all the nations, and intensively, God’s Word being applied to the whole lives of those in it. The Center intends to

carry out this training task through four methods, which I adumbrate: classroom instruction, conferences, cohorts, and practical internships. Perhaps it’s worth noting that while several constituent churches have outlined what they would like through theological education in their church orders, no seminary offers more to these churches than Mid-America. To take just one example of the churches that furnishes us with more ministerial candidates than any other, the URCNA: its seminary guidelines for ministerial candidates, as set forth in its Church Order, are fully met by Mid-America Reformed Seminary in its M.Div. degree program. I am not aware of another seminary that meets all the church order guidelines of the URCNA. Detailing this would be appropriate in another article.

“This article does not dispute that other institutions may do any number of the things I delineate as marking Mid-America; however, I believe that only Mid-America offers the whole package.”

In the first area of the CME’s contribution, classroom instruction, we have made some needed curricular changes, adding required and elective courses to our M.Div. program. We now have classes in pastoral leadership and spiritual formation, as well as classes in church renewal and revitalization, handling abuse in the churches, and a Reformed

assessment of and approach to social justice. The second and third areas, conferences and cohorts, include taking the message to the churches and working with them to better their church planting and missionary efforts and to assist them in those areas. The last area involves exceptional work that our students may be offered to do in the churches, including funded internships in church planting and foreign missionary contexts. All these courses are designed to equip our ministerial students to serve in our current culture better and to bring to bear the Word of God and the Reformed tradition to our needy world even in all its current confusion and darkness.

These courses and this commitment to missions and evangelism should not be seen as taking the Seminary in a new direction but as taking the Seminary better and more fully where, in its best intentions, it was always intended to go. This is part of our renewed approach to our historic and classic approach to theological education. Let us now focus on those four divisions and the new insights being applied to them.

The first, or biblical division, begins with multiple courses in the original languages. Some students come into the M.Div. program having all of their Greek, and even a few come with all of their Hebrew. If one already has that, ascertained by coursework and testing, one does not need to take it with us. Still, we find it essential to continue teaching the languages so that our students can gain sufficient competence to work in the Old and New Testaments in their original languages. All our courses in the actual Bible books require this as a prerequisite and continue to test students in the languages. Many schools no longer offer and require work in the original languages and do not teach their Old and New Testament courses working with the original languages in the classroom.

The courses in the Old and New Testament books seek to bring the best in exegesis, biblical theology, and related disciplines to bear, all with a commitment to a thoroughgoing Reformed hermeneutics. All of Mid-America's teachers are pastors, sometimes with many years of experience, so they bring the specialized knowledge of their subjects, reflected in their Ph.D. work and years of other research, together with proper pastoral and homiletic sensibility. They especially excel in redemptive-historical theology: putting all exegesis together in a chronological, developmental fashion that shows that the Bible is all about Christ in every period of the history of salvation, either in anticipation of redemption accomplished or in its being completed by our Lord and applied by the Holy Spirit.

In the ecclesiastical division, we have four courses covering all the significant periods of church history, including one's denominational history. Coupled with this, the last course includes work and testing in the respective church orders. Again, this is unusual as it is a requirement, not an elective course. We employ instructors considered experts in the history and polity of those denominations to teach these courses.

In the third division, doctrinal studies, we have systematic theology that takes into account the aforementioned disciplines of exegetical theology, biblical theology, and historical theology as well, all in seeking to treat each theological subject fully: prolegomena (including apologetics), theology proper, anthropology, Christology, pneumatology, ecclesiology, ethics, and eschatology. Unlike many other schools today, we do not have merely one or two theology courses that cover all these subjects, but we treat them with their due as separate courses. Our approach to apologetics, e.g., witnesses how we always seek to be informed in the encounter

of Christianity with all forms of unbelief, whether other world religions, Christian cults, and all the forms of modernism, post-modernism, and the like.

In the fourth division, our ministerial studies courses are taught by experienced churchmen seeking to integrate all the previously cited divisions in our homiletics (including rich application as part of our textual-thematic method) and pastoral practice, especially as that gets worked out in the field experience of our Ministerial Apprenticeship Program (MAP). I've talked about what the CME has brought to Mid-America, but MAP has also brought a bounty of field experience into our ministerial training.

Here is a recent description of the program we furnished to our accreditors (ATS). In addition to their faculty advisors, each student preparing for the ordained ministry is assigned to a local ministerial supervisor who will meet with, mentor, and evaluate them regularly. They are also required to perform ministry activities in a local church context during each academic year, including specific minimum amounts of teaching and preaching, as well as to have two summer internships in churches elsewhere. The details of the MAP requirements are fairly extensive compared to the practica requirements at many other seminaries.

Ministerial supervisors also meet with each student, the MAP director, and the student's faculty advisor at the end of the first and second years of instruction to review personal and professional progress and set goals for the future. This strong co-curricular component to education helps ensure that students are not only learning in the classroom but also being developed personally, spiritually, and in their vocational skillset and performance. MAP furnishes many analysis points, like a theological colloquium with various groups of students and faculty that reprises and responds to a problem that has arisen in field study.

The students in our M.Div. program are men recognized as gifted by the local church (they must be endorsed by their pastor and local body of elders). We seek to ensure they will not incur debt in their studies by having a generous student aid program and available scholarships. Those in the MTS program, which admits men and women, receive a two-year solid theological grounding for every profession (so that they can best live out their faith as they practice medicine, law, etc.), as well as for teaching, translating, counseling and other activities commonly associated with seminary training for the laity.

Every faculty member is an ordained minister in a NAPARC church, serving in his church and on its behalf in his call as a teacher in the Seminary. Some serve in the local pastorate, and all of them have some years of experience in local pastoral ministry, particularly those who serve in ministerial studies. Some faculty members serve and have served the church at levels broader than the local church, on committees, in leadership positions at the classis and presbytery levels, and at the synodical/GA level, especially on study committees and significant standing or program committees. Much more could be said here, but perhaps it's enough to note that the faculty are preeminently churchmen.

We've just begun to think together about how Mid-America excels in seminary education. Doubtless, future articles will explore this more, both by me and by others. For example, we could talk about why in-person education remains superior. In the past, Mid-America has been relatively modest about what it offers, sometimes painfully modest at the risk of selling itself short. It's time that we make our case for what we have to offer and do so clearly and fairly, not to the detriment of others, but to showcase what the Lord has given us here and share it with as many as possible.



Dr. Alan D. Strange
Interim President of
Mid-America Reformed
Seminary

ANSWERING A CALL: A JOURNEY TO SERVE AS NAVY CHAPLAIN

ALUMNI PROFILE: ROBERTO ROSSI (2013)

Rev. Roberto Rossi graduated from Mid-America Reformed Seminary in 2013. Since then, he has served a few congregations – most recently as the Pastor of Immanuel United Reformed Church in Demotte, IN. He has faithfully labored there since 2019. The Lord has been pleased to bless the church with spiritual and numerical growth over the years. Now, Rev. Rossi finds himself making plans to answer a new call – this one, perhaps a little less traditional: Chaplaincy in the United States Navy.

As he reflects on the question of why he would ever leave a fruitful ministry for the Navy chaplaincy, he can only point to one thing: God's call. "This was not something I sought out," Rev. Rossi remarks, "instead, the Lord opened my eyes and heart to the profound spiritual need among the men and women in uniform." The Lord is leading him toward a new chapter in a different field of ministry, and as Rev. Rossi reflects on his ministerial career thus far, he recognizes how the Lord has been preparing him for this moment.

Why the U.S. Navy? "Three years ago, our son, Matteo, enlisted in the Navy, which opened an entirely new perspective for us. Since then, I've had the opportunity to visit several Navy bases, engaging with sailors and marines from various backgrounds, cultures, and even countries. The military is a unique mission field with its own set of challenges, including spiritual struggles and a profound need for support and guidance," says Rev. Rossi.

During these visits, Rev. Rossi intentionally connected with sailors and marines, engaging in meaningful conversations to understand their family and religious beliefs. Some of them shared their struggles openly,

wrestling with the emotional toll of being separated from their spouse and children. While these personal conversations were significant, they were not the only things that shaped Rev. Rossi's decision. His awareness of the great spiritual need in the military deepened as he read articles about Navy chaplains and their work.

Many sailors face spiritual crises, mental health struggles, and even trauma, with a particularly high rate of suicide among enlisted sailors, marines and veterans. The use of psychedelic drugs to help those suffering from PTSD, depression, and other mental illnesses is common. These men and women, many of whom have never seen war, live with intense grief, despair, and hopelessness.

"There is a hunger for truth, for spiritual care, and for counsel in the military," Rev. Rossi comments, "yet I wrestled with the question: why would I leave a fruitful ministry? Why would I step out of the 'comfort' of the ministry we have here?"

With the encouragement of his family and close friends, Rev. Rossi took the next step: a physical evaluation at the Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) in Indianapolis. "At age 50, Carrie and I both thought that if I didn't pass the physical, it would be clear that the door was closed. But to our surprise, I qualified, and the door remained open to continue the application process with the Navy. Several months later, I was selected by the Navy Board of Chaplains and commissioned."

With God's call confirmed, Rev. Rossi stands ready to step into this new chapter, trusting that God is leading him to bring the hope and light of Jesus Christ to sailors – preaching, teaching, evangelizing, and counseling in His



name. "We are excited to see how God will continue to work through us," says Rev. Rossi, "knowing that the mission field in the military is vast, and the need for spiritual care is great. The mission field is ripe for harvest, and we are humbled to be part of the work that God is doing in the lives of the men and women who serve in our nation's military."

Michael B. Deckinga
Vice-President of Advancement



MID-AMERICA
REFORMED SEMINARY

229 Seminary Drive | Dyer, Indiana 46311-1069

Tel: 219-864-2400

Fax: 219-864-2410

www.midamerica.edu



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