

THE MESSENGER

MID-AMERICA REFORMED SEMINARY

Marcus Mininger appointed as New Testament Instructor by Glenda Mathes



Marcus Mininger with his wife, Chandra, and children: Hans, Anastasia, and Malena.

After months of work on the part of the Faculty Development Committee, Mid-America's Board of Trustees is pleased to announce the appointment of Mr. Marcus A. Mininger as an instructor in New Testament studies, beginning in January of 2011.

Mr. Mininger is a lecturer and Ph.D. candidate in New Testament studies at Westminster Theological Seminary (PA), who has taught at St. Joseph's University (PA) and at Princeton Theological Seminary (NJ). He received his B.A. from Covenant College, his M.Div. from Westminster Theological Seminary, and his Th.M. from Princeton Theological Seminary. He is a licentiate in the Presbytery of Philadelphia of the OPC.

"Marcus is an outstanding addition to our faculty," says Dr. Cornelis P. Venema, President of Mid-America, "with great academic ability and a fine pastoral heart. I am delighted that he has accepted the appointment."

Mr. Mininger and his wife, Chandra, have three children: Hans (9), Anastasia (7), and Malena (1). The Mininger family hopes to move to the Dyer area in January.

"My wife and I love that we are joining an institution where people are fully invested, not just with their time, but with their lives, because of the eternal value of their common calling," says Mr. Mininger. "When it comes to ministerial formation, a highly trained, close-knit group of churchmen with a rich history is priceless."

The high caliber of the faculty and the theological balance of the Seminary were aspects that attracted Mr. Mininger to Mid-America Reformed Seminary.

"Some of the hallmarks of Mid-America include its theological balance and discernment, an ecclesiastical focus on the powerful ministry of Word and sacraments, and a unified faculty," he says. "When you combine these with a deep commitment to redemptive-historical interpretation, it produces a remarkably well-constructed Reformed seminary."

Mr. Mininger's duties will commence with teaching "New Testament Canon, Environment, and Interpretation" this spring for first-year students. He will assume teaching responsibilities for the remainder of the New Testament courses in the fall of 2011.

As Mr. Mininger anticipates fulfilling God's calling at Mid-America, he seeks to shape students into receptive readers of God's Word. "A Christian minister must be a careful, receptive reader in order to be truly Reformed according to the Word," he says. "So my greatest hope for my own work is that students will become highly sensitive and skilled readers of the New Testament and then walk away ready to exposit it for the Church, to God's glory."

Christmas Meditation

by Dr. J. Mark Beach

Christmas hardly has a chance nowadays! The community of unbelief has trampled underfoot the meaning of Immanuel—*God with us*. The community of faith, of course, still knows the meaning of Christmas. Luke 2—the more earthly perspective on Christmas—shows us David's descendents (Mary and Joseph) scurrying off to Bethlehem because the Roman king ordered them to do so. Caesar taxes them to oppress them. It's a story of humiliation and obscurity which highlights the ordinary *humanness* of Christ's birth, *of God come in the flesh*, even amidst the stench of a barn.

By contrast, Revelation 12—the more heavenly perspective on Christmas—presents David's descendents (the woman about to give birth) shining forth with the glory of the celestial bodies and crowned as royalty. She gives birth to the Ruler of all nations, the Seed of the woman who crushes the head of the Serpent. Here we witness the power and divinity of this birth. Luke's swaddled infant is Revelation's head-stomping Sovereign.

So what is Christmas? Does it still have a chance? Against the voice of unbelief Scripture gives us two perspectives to console us and to consign us to action. Our Savior walks with us in humility in order to bring us to glory. The newborn lying in a feed-trough is the Savior-King who heals the nations—even you!



Excelling in the Grace of Giving

by Keith Le Mahieu



Do you know anyone that excels in the grace of giving (2 Corinthians 8:7)? Most of us do, and we derive pleasure from knowing them because they are joyful. Great givers are not just those who give large sums since great giving is not defined by the amount of the gift, but rather by the amount of the sacrifice. One does not have to be rich to be a great giver. Paul commands the Corinthians to excel in faith, speech, knowledge, earnestness, love and giving. Paul knows there is joy and freedom in life lived in service to Christ.

But why is giving often so difficult? Because we battle against the Devil, the flesh and the world. In 2 Corinthians 9:7 Paul tells us that each must give from the heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion because God loves a cheerful giver. Proper giving is first and foremost a matter of the heart. Jesus commands that if you are offering your gift on the altar and remember that your brother has something against you that you must be reconciled to your brother before bringing your gift (Matthew 5:23). Christ is saying that giving involves the whole person. Giving is a spiritual matter of the heart. So start by first examining your heart.

 When we give out of love, we model Christ who gave all out of love so that we could gain everything.

Next, make sure you give in love. “If I give away all that I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned but have not love, I gain nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:3). True giving is an act of love. It is not done for tax incentives, notoriety (consider Ananias and Sapphira), or to obtain something in return. If I give but have not love, I gain nothing. Sadly there are those who would rather give money than love. When we give out of love, we model Christ who gave all out of love so that we could gain everything. Our giving should be motivated by this love.

To what should our giving be directed? Christ’s giving was directed to His bride, the church, made up of those elect for whom His sacrifice was made effectual. There are many causes we stewards of God can give to, but it is the faithful ministry of the church and the effective preaching of the Word that undergird any cause of any other ministry. Therefore our primary giving should be to the church and the faithful ministry of the Word.

How should we give? Our giving should be deliberate and planned. We give by commitment and intentionality. The giver should give what he has decided in his heart (2 Corinthians 9:7). A giving plan should begin with the settled conviction that what I have earned or received is not mine but God’s, and I am to be a faithful manager of these assets. The manager is obligated to obey the wishes of the owner, and in this case God calls us to bring a minimum of one-tenth (the tithe) to Him (Malachi 3). If your present situation makes it impossible for you to bring a tithe, then you must at least pick a reachable percentage and begin working toward the day when you can exceed the tithe.

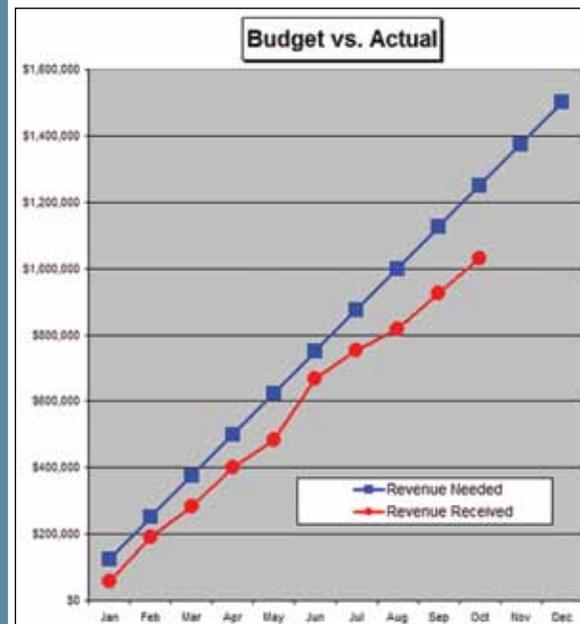
Finally, follow through with your giving plan. Finish your plan “so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing out of what you have” (2 Corinthians 8:11). Give generously from a heart that loves earnestly and your giving will be transformed.

Financial Update

As we approach the end of the 2010 calendar year we want to update you on our financial picture. As this article is written we have financial results through October. As we reported previously, Mid-America carries a reserve equal to two months of operating expenses. Portions of this reserve are used to manage fluctuations in Mid-America’s revenue stream since approximately 20-25% of Mid-America’s revenue is received the last two months of the year. To remain financially robust Mid-America must replenish the reserve each year and start the new year with a surplus in the general fund.

Mid-America did not end 2009 with a surplus in the general fund and in fact ended the year with a \$70,000 deficit in the reserve fund (equal to about 30% of the reserve). The Board of Trustees has not increased the budget for two years and the Seminary is doing all it can to limit costs.

The following graph illustrates budgeted versus actual revenue through October, 2010. The straight blue line indicates the monthly need while the red line shows actual income received. As you can see revenue has not kept pace with the budgeted need. We estimate we will need revenue of approximately \$300,000 in November and December to close the budget gap. While this is a significant amount, God has provided for similar needs through the generous giving of his people. Would you consider a special gift this year to help us achieve financial equilibrium once again?



Dr. Kloosterman's new avenues of service

After more than 25 years of service at Mid-America, Dr. Nelson D. Kloosterman is leaving the Seminary at the end of this calendar year to pursue other ministry opportunities.

Dr. Kloosterman has seen a lot of changes over the last 25 years, particularly in technological methods for disseminating information.

“Since the Seminary’s beginnings, significant changes have occurred both in the school itself and among the constituency it serves,” he says. “Although the ideal continues to be ministerial training provided through the church, modern processes and technologies have opened up avenues and delivery systems that hold promise both for the school and the churches.”

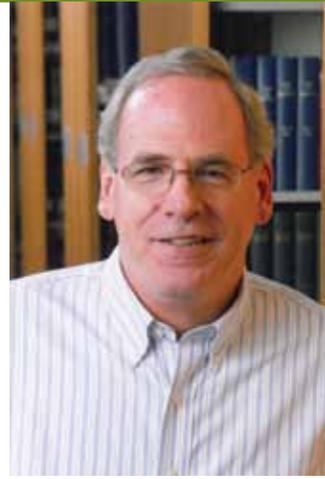
Those new avenues are what Dr. Kloosterman intends to explore in a global context as he continues kingdom service outside the Seminary’s walls.

“My goals include concentrating on translating and consulting activities in service to the church on a global level,” he says. “The

interconnectivity of resources, both personal and institutional, obligates us to ‘look over the fence’ of our own small garden to discover what the Lord is doing with the gospel of grace and power around the world today.”

Dr. Kloosterman plans to preach and teach among the churches, prepare a multi-volume commentary translation project, and develop materials for applying a Christian worldview to contemporary ethics issues. He also plans to write a blog featuring devotional materials, teach church polity at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary, and lecture in ethics and homiletics at international venues.

“By God’s grace and with the churches’ encouragement Mid-America has remained focused on preparing men for the preaching ministry,” he says. “The demands and needs associated with that ministry continue to develop as time moves on.”



Board of Trustees Meeting Report

At its October meeting, the Board of Trustees welcomed several newly elected and re-elected members: Mr. Darrell Kuiper from Buckeye, AZ, Rev. Ed Marcusse of Allendale, MI, Rev. Henry Van Olst of Mt. Hope, Ontario, Canada, Mr. Charles Dykstra of St. Catharines, Ontario, and Mr. Ken Dykstra of Highland, IN.

One of the first items on the Board’s agenda was the election of the following Board officers: Rev. Rich Kuiken, president; Rev. Bill Pols, vice-president; Mr. Paul Anema,

secretary; Mr. Everett Hoekstra, treasurer; and Mr. Charles Dykstra, vice-all.

In addition to a number of routine items of business, the Board addressed several important issues:

The Board appointed the following alumni to the first Alumni Council: Rev. Paul Ipema and Rev. Harold Miller for a three-year term; Rev. Greg Bylsma and Rev. Lou Slagter for a two-year term; and Mr. Corey Dykstra and Rev. Phil Vos for a one-year term.

The Seminary President, Dr. Cornelis P. Venema, and the Director of Development, Mr. Keith LeMahieu, led the Board in a discussion of the nature of the Board’s responsibility for the Seminary and role in promotional and development work.

The highlight of the Board meeting was an interview of Mr. Marcus Mininger for an appointment as instructor in New Testament Studies. After an interview conducted by Rev. Rich Kuiken, the Board voted unanimously to appoint Mr. Mininger to this position.

Annual Fall Lecture Series



Every year the Faculty of Mid-America Reformed Seminary invites a distinguished scholar in his field to give a set of three lectures. This year that speaker was K. Scott Oliphint, Professor of Apologetics and Systematic Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadelphia), where he has taught for almost twenty years. Prior to that, Dr. Oliphint pastored in Texas for seven years as a ministerial member of the OPC. Dr. Oliphint has particularly concentrated on the Reformed epistemology of Alvin Plantinga, who is one of the greatest contemporary Christian philosophers, and who has enjoyed success at getting Christians a place at the table and arguing against naturalism and evolutionism.

Dr. Oliphint’s first talk, entitled “The Focus of Reformed Epistemology in Contemporary Philosophical Discussions,” honed in on Plantinga’s epistemology, particularly his argument that there is philosophical justification or warrant for Christian belief as properly basic. In this talk, Oliphint set forth what he saw as the strengths and weaknesses of this approach, focusing critically on Plantinga’s use of the *sensus divinitatis* (sense of the divine) that we all possess, as Calvin argues, by virtue of being created in the image of God. In the next talk on “The Foundation of Reformed Epistemology,” Oliphint set forth from Romans 1 what he takes to be the proper foundation of epistemology: all persons know God, but, as fallen, we suppress that truth in unrighteousness. He concluded, in “The Future of Reformed Epistemology,” by seeking to bring together all that he had previously established from the standpoint of consistent Calvinism as set forth by Cornelius Van Til.

Alumni Association Formed

At the recent meeting of the Board of Trustees on October 7-8, 2010, the Board appointed the first members of the Alumni Association Council of Mid-America Reformed Seminary. With this decision the Mid-America Alumni Association was born.

In the introductory overview to the Association's bylaws, the purpose of the Alumni Association is described as follows:

The Mid-America Reformed Seminary Alumni Association is the body of alumni constituents whose purpose is to promote a unified fellowship among the alumni family and to cultivate the interests and advancement of the seminary for the purpose of training students for Christian ministry that glorifies the Triune God. ...The Mid-America Reformed Seminary Alumni Association will encourage its members to support the mission of Mid-America Reformed Seminary through prayer, student recruitment, financial support, godly representation of the school, and interaction with the Board of Trustees and faculty and staff regarding matters of interest to the well-being of the seminary.

In addition to the service the Alumni Association may render on behalf of Mid-America, alumni will also benefit in a variety of ways. Among the benefits for alumni spelled out in the provisional bylaws of the Alumni Association are: complimentary subscription to the *Mid-America Journal of Theology*, discounted prices for purchases from the Seminary bookstore, access to the seminary's library and electronic resources, and assistance in maintaining contact with fellow alumni.

At the first meeting of the Alumni Council, the following alumni were elected as officers: Rev. Paul Ipema, president; Rev. Harold Miller, vice-president, and Rev. Greg Bylsma, secretary.

The formation of an alumni association is an exciting development in the history of Mid-America Reformed Seminary. Alumni are encouraged to contact any member of the Alumni Council with suggestions for making the Alumni Association as effective as possible. Among ideas already being contemplated are an alumni page on the Seminary's website, which might include a newsletter on alumni activities and events.



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