

# THE MESSENGER

MID-AMERICA REFORMED SEMINARY

## Summer Assignments by Glenda Mathes



*James Oord*

This summer 14 Mid-America students served 15 congregations in five affiliations across the United States and in Canada. Some students plunged into the multi-faceted ministry of a large established congregation, while others discovered the unique challenges of a small church plant. One student split his time between two congregations and supervising ministers, one of whom was his father.

While James Oord gained experience exhorting, visiting, and teaching at Cornerstone URC in Sanborn, IA, he met weekly and interacted

daily with Rev. Dan Donovan. "He gave me a lot of good advice, provided helpful in-depth sermon critiques, and was quick to encourage me," says James. "He taught me not just the ins-and-outs of the pastoral ministry, but also what a pastor's heart looks like."

Although Rev. Donovan and James share many interests, Rev. Donovan says, "Ultimately, the common bond James and I had was the grace of God freely given through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Pablo Landázuri discovered cultural disparities at the "El Pacto de Gracia" church plant in Chicago Heights, IL, under Rev. Valentin Alpuche's supervision. "Most of the El Pacto brothers and sisters are from Mexico; I am Ecuadorian," Pablo explains. "Nevertheless, I love that regardless of differences we find common ground in Christ, His word, and worship of the same God."

"I saw the side of being a pastor that you only see if you are there," says Pablo. "Being a 'Hispanic church planter' requires a great amount of commitment and love, but above all great dependence in the Lord."

Nathan Tomlinson's internship was split between Jaffery Presbyterian Church (OPC), supervised by Rev. Stephen Migotsky, and First Congregational Church of Merrimack, NH, supervised by his father, Rev. Allen Tomlinson.

"Pastor Migotsky emphasized some aspects of New England church planting that I could not have received from a class," says Nathan.

"I prayed with and for him at each meeting," says Rev. Migotsky. "Some of our meetings lasted three hours of devoted, one-on-one time."

Rev. Tomlinson relates that working with his son "reinforced the covenant promises of the God of grace and the great value of the means of grace."



*Nathan Tomlinson and his wife, Holly*

## Ministerial Apprenticeship Program

by Glenda Mathes

Mid-America supplements comprehensive classroom instruction with practical pastoral experience in its Ministerial Apprenticeship Program (MAP), which pairs seminary students with seasoned pastors in mentoring relationships throughout their seminary careers. Although students assist local churches during the academic year, summer assignments immerse students in congregational life.

"A summer internship directly acquaints the student to the church's life," says Professor Mark Vander Hart, MAP Director. "Field education extends what is taught in the classroom to actual practice. The academic experience and the field experience serve very obvious complementary roles in the students' education."

Summer internships help students learn God's Word, sharpen exhorting skills, develop pastoral abilities, and share believers' lives. Professor Vander Hart says, "Students come back from these summers humbled—they don't know everything!—but also encouraged because their efforts at ministering God's Word, while not perfect, were appreciated by God's people."

Churches and pastors also benefit from summer assignments. "It was very helpful to me in getting certain long-term projects done," says Rev. Allen Tomlinson, who supervised his son, Nathan, in a part-time internship. "The ruling elders saw how this helped me and also how we could help ministerial students at the same time. It impressed the session sufficiently that we hope to fund a full summer internship from Mid-America in 2012."

Rev. Dan Donovan reflects on his church's summer internship with seminarian James Oord, "The words of Proverbs 27:17 come to mind when I think of our summer together, 'As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.'"

**Giving and Receiving – A Win-Win Charitable Gift** by Keith Le Mahieu



In 1981, the year Mid-America was founded, the United States economy entered a period of severe recession. As a result, unemployment rose to a national average of 10.8% by 1982. While the current unemployment rate is nearing that of 1982, today's economy is very different from the early 80's. The 1981 prime rate was 20.5% compared to 3.25% today. A 30-year mortgage rate was 18.5% compared to 4% today. Savers had a wide variety of high-return, safe haven options outside equity markets whereas it is estimated today there is approximately \$3.5 trillion dollars in money market funds earning about a quarter of a percent, and bank CD rates are not much better. It's not a fun time to be a saver, especially if you are dependent on investment income.

Today's economy may make a charitable gift annuity (CGA) worth a closer look. What is a CGA? A charitable gift annuity enables you to transfer cash or other marketable securities to a charitable organization in exchange for an income tax deduction and the promise of a fixed payment for the rest of your life. A CGA provides an immediate income tax deduction for the charitable value of the gift annuity, it provides a tax exemption for a portion of the annual income payment you receive resulting in a higher effective rate of return, and money in a gift annuity is not generally included in your estate for tax purposes. If appreciated property is used to establish the CGA, the donor pays capital gains tax on only a portion of the appreciation, and the capital gains tax is spread out over many years.

Annuity payments can begin immediately or they can be deferred to a future date, allowing the donor to realize a charitable income deduction immediately and receive a guaranteed income at a later date, presumably at retirement when the donor will be in a lower income tax bracket. A child who is providing financial support for a parent could establish an immediate CGA for the parent, and the child would receive an immediate income tax deduction while the parent would receive income for life. Annuity rates are set by the American Council on Gift Annuities and will vary based on the annuitant's age and whether the annuity is for a single individual or a couple.

For example, John Doe, age 75, gives a gift worth \$10,000 to Mid-America in return for a single life gift annuity. He would receive an annual annuity payment of \$650 for life based on the current 6.5% annuity rate for a single 75 year-old annuitant. Additionally, Mr. Doe would receive a tax deduction for a significant portion of the amount of the gift in the year it was given as well being able to exclude a significant portion of the annual payment from taxation. If a donor wishes to maximize their charitable deduction, they can request a rate lower than the maximum rate.

Mid-America is a member of the Barnabas Foundation that issues charitable gift annuities on behalf of its member organizations. If you want to learn more about a CGA, you can contact me or the Barnabas Foundation ([www.barnabasfoundation.com](http://www.barnabasfoundation.com)). If you wish to have us contact you about a CGA, you can email me at [klemahieu@midamerica.edu](mailto:klemahieu@midamerica.edu) or complete and clip the following form and send it to me at the seminary.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_  I am interested in learning more about charitable gift annuities.

**Golf Outing 2011**

Mid-America's seventh annual golf outing was held at White Hawk Country Club on Saturday, September 10. The weather for this year's outing was most comfortable despite some early morning fog.

After completing their round of golf, the participants enjoyed an all-American lunch and an awards ceremony. Last year's winning team of Gerry Swets, Dan Swets, Dan Zandstra and Mike Spender took top honors again this year with a 12 under par score of 60. They each received a \$75 Visa gift card. With a 7 under score of 65, the team of Grant Dykstra, Joel Worries, Rick Worries and Ryan Worries took second place and received a \$50 Visa gift card.

Winners of various competition holes chose from a variety of golf clubs as their prize. This year's winners were Dan Bruinsma – closest to the pin, Dan Zandstra – longest putt, Caleb Smith – straightest drive, and Mike Spender – longest drive. Subaru of Merrillville offered a three-year lease on a new Subaru Legacy for any golfer who hit a hole-in-one, but none of this year's golfers claimed the prize. A variety of other prizes were awarded to golfers in a drawing of names.

We thank all participants and sponsors for making this event possible. Mark your calendar for next year's outing on September 8, 2012.



**Emails**

*The Seminary office invites friends and supporters of Mid-America to provide us with your email address for our data base. In an age of information technology, email communication allows the Seminary to communicate more quickly and inexpensively with its supporters. You can email us at [info@midamerica.edu](mailto:info@midamerica.edu). Thank you!*

**Fall Retreat** by Rev. Alan D. Strange



*Playing Water Balloon Toss at the Fall Retreat*

The Fall Retreat was held once again at beautiful Cedar Lake, about twenty minutes south of the Seminary. The speaker, a 2002 graduate of Mid-America, was the Rev. Daniel F. Patterson, pastor of the Second Parish OPC in Portland, Maine. The day consisted of a time of refreshments, a devotional, introductions, two talks from Pastor Patterson, a delicious lunch and afternoon recreations.

Pastor Patterson's first talk was on John 3:22-30, with the theme: "In humility, John the Baptist exalts Jesus Christ. He does this by his confession of God's sovereignty; by his joy over Christ's exaltation; and by his desire to see

Christ increase." Pastor Patterson encouraged us all that Christian ministry is to involve not self-exaltation but Christ-exaltation: the greatest calling and privilege of the minister is to preach that liberating message. It is indeed liberating to be called away from the sin and slavery of self to the glorious liberty of service and sacrifice in which Christ waxes and we wane.

Pastor Patterson's second talk, entitled "Essentials of an Edifying Ministry," challenged us to "joy in our justification:" our chief identity should not be in ministry but in our calling as Christians. Furthermore, only joy in the acceptance that we have in Christ permits one to weather the storm of criticism that is bound to come in the course of faithful ministry.

Pastor Patterson quoted a minister from his presbytery who had pastored the same church for fifty-six years and who, when asked if he had one piece of advice for those starting in ministry, answered unhesitatingly, "know your Bibles." Our speaker then told us that we must be men of prayer, praying thoughtfully

and according to some plan. Lastly, Pastor Patterson said that we must be those who identify with our people so that our people know it: when we do that, our people become the most welcoming of our ministry.

In addition to these challenges, Pastor Patterson left us with two ringing charges with respect to our congregants: "love your people and know your people." This may seem obvious, but our speaker richly developed these points. Perhaps nothing demands more of pastors than these imperatives. The day was a good one as students and faculty alike were refreshed and prepared for the year of service ahead.



*Retreat Speaker, Rev. Danny Patterson*

**Scholarship Recipients**

- Russell Horton Ministerial Scholarship: Jeff Munive
- Iowa Falls Foreign Student Scholarship: Brian Zegers
- Albert M. & Eleanor Rodenhouse Scholarship: Nathan Tomlinson
- Gerrit & Kathryn Schiebout Tuition Scholarship: Andrew Minatelli
- Russell Sterken Memorial Scholarship: Roberto Rossi
- Tuininga Scholarship: Jim Oord
- Roger VanderVeen Memorial Scholarship: Robert Van der Woerd
- Albert & Janet Vedders Memorial Scholarship: Jeff Scott
- Carrie Van Surksum Venema Memorial Scholarship: Caleb Smith
- Kay Ribbens-Vogelzang Scholarship: James Roosma
- Bartel Zandstra Memorial Scholarship: Tim Scheuers

**Orientation/Registration**

by Rev. Alan D. Strange

Every year, a day before the Fall Retreat, and two days before classes begin, Mid-America holds New Student Orientation and Registration. The Orientation provides an opportunity for the new students to acculturate to the Seminary. The Registrar familiarizes them with policies and procedures, particularly as found in the Student Handbook, as well as in the principles underlying and involved in theological education. Other staff members join in in this effort, addressing a wide array of logistical and practical matters. The Student Body president also sets forth the work of the Student Association and welcomes the new students.

Additionally, the Seminary President welcomes the new students; so do other faculty members in their various functions and capacities, including the Ministerial Apprenticeship Program Director, who orients them to field education. The library staff give a library orientation that includes familiarizing students with its operations. The faculty and new students (and wives) join together at lunch for pizza.



## Seminary Women's Fellowship

Imagine leaving family and friends to move to an unfamiliar metropolis, where your husband immerses himself in study. One could easily feel isolated or lonely. But the Seminary Women's Fellowship fosters fellowship among women in Mid-America's community.

Nancy (Mrs. Cornel) Venema and Sheryl (Mrs. J. Mark) Beach are this year's faculty wives co-organizers. "Our goal as organizers and mentors," says Sheryl, "is to create a place for fellowship, support and encouragement for student wives and to assist future pastors' wives in taking responsibility for the group's leadership in order to prepare them for such positions in the church."

President Erika Smith is a student's wife and a student in the MTS program. She reports

that the group meets monthly "for a time of prayer, a short devotion, and typically a topic of 'study.'"

Meetings normally focus on issues pastors' wives are likely to face. November's speaker will address the subject of abuse. Although some years have been spent working through pertinent books, meetings are not designed as Bible studies since wives are encouraged to be involved in the church they attend.

The group emphasizes fellowship by creating community. The women plan social events (picnics, Christmas party, spring banquet) and provide support (child care or meals).

"We hope to provide a bit of community as well as encouragement," says Nancy. "Most of

the faculty wives can speak from experience as a pastor's wife. We encourage the women to attend as often as they can, realizing that this is a busy time for them, but also recognizing the need for fellowship at this unique time."



*Seminary Women's Fellowship members Erika Smith & Rachel Van der Woerd*



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CULTIVATE THE HEART.  
EXPERIENCE THE HARVEST.

Mid-America Reformed Seminary invites you to the

**2011 Fall Lecture Series**

with

**Dr. Hughes Oliphant Old**

"The Lord's Supper and the Piety of the Reformed Church"

Tuesday, November 8 at 1:30 pm  
Wednesday, November 9 at 8:30 am & 10:30 am

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