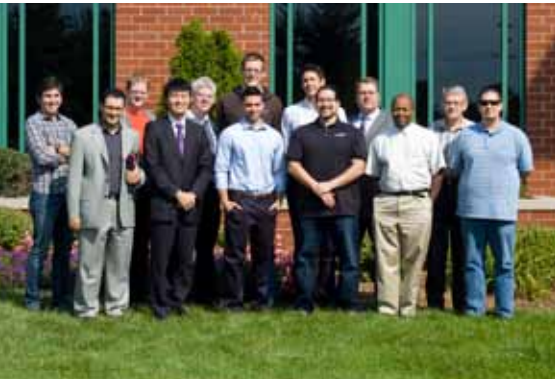


THE MESSENGER

MID-AMERICA REFORMED SEMINARY

New Students by Glenda Mathes



New students (back, left to right): Pablo Martinez, Pete Van't Hoff, Arjen Vreugdenhil, Joshua Flinn, Bryan Punter, Dan Nicholson, Jaap Vreugdenhil; (front, left to right): Moody Wasif, Sung hwan Kan, Daniel Ragusa, Moses Sanchez, Danny Dumont, Jeremy Baker

New students attending Mid-America represent every continent but Antarctica. In addition to several juniors from the US, students hail from Canada, New Zealand, Egypt, Chile, Korea, Haiti, as well as a father and son from the Netherlands (see sidebar).

Two M.Div. students, Jeremy Baker (AZ), and Joshua Flinn (NZ) are former teachers who felt drawn to preaching after seeing their limits in ministering to students' spiritual needs. Jeremy hopes to serve in OPC churches within the US. Joshua plans to minister in New Zealand.

Two M.Div. students recently graduated from colleges on opposite coasts: Daniel Ragusa

from CUNY Baruch College in Manhattan, NY, and Bryan Punter from Providence Christian College in Pasadena, CA. Both men hope for ordination in the URCNA.

Another M.Div. student also belongs to the URCNA. Pete Van't Hoff from Leduc, Alberta, owns a business that helps companies use 3D modeling software to develop ideas. He hopes his degree will further enable him "to share the gospel with those who need to hear it."

An MTS student, Moody Wasif, has a dental practice in Cedar Lake, IN. He was born in Egypt and lived only a mile from the Giza pyramids. "I had a deep desire for missions and apologetics since I was very young," he says. "I have taken many beatings for my faith from Muslims, and I was stoned several times for carrying a Bible and walking in the streets of Egypt very boldly, not ashamed of my faith." He desires to obtain a Ph.D. in order to uphold the faith.

Pablo Martinez also would like to obtain his Ph.D., perhaps teaching in a seminary setting and pastoring a church in the US or his native Chile. He has lived in the US for nine years, working at various jobs, but has led Bible studies in Southern Baptist churches in Georgia and pastored a Spanish-speaking congregation as its ordained minister.

Sung hwan Kan has worked among the poor and handicapped in Korea. He has been in the US for a year while completing a Th.M. degree in Old Testament at Western Theological Seminary. He seeks familiarity with original biblical languages while learning more about conservative theology and its application in pastoral ministry.

Part-time student Daniel Dumont, originally from Haiti and now a Canadian, pastors First Evangelical Haitian Baptist Church in Evanston, IL. He hopes to train pastors in Haiti.

Another part-time student, Moses Sanchez, is a phlebotomist who recently graduated from Moody Bible Institute. A member of Gospel Life Church, an OPC mission work in Chicago's South Loop, he hopes for eventual ordination as a gospel minister.

Dan Nicholson returns to seminary as a full-time M.Div. student after having earned his B.A. and having been a part-time student.

Father/Son Student Duo

by Glenda Mathes

It often happens that the son of an alumnus or even faculty member attends Mid-America, but this is the first year a father and son are students at the same time.

Arjen Vreugdenhil is enrolled in the M.Div. program while his father, Jaap, is working toward his MTS degree. Arjen had considered ministry for years, but the time didn't seem right. He taught at the middle and high school level in the Netherlands before coming to the US in the wake of 9/11, just three days before his marriage. A member of Bethel URC in Jenison, MI, he has taught physics at the university level for the past nine years.

His father, Jaap, retired a few years ago from an IT programming and consulting career in the Netherlands. Jaap and his wife have been active members of the Reformed Churches (liberated) in the Netherlands with keen theological interests. As they considered further study, Mid-America attracted them.

"One of the reasons to choose Mid-America is the possibility to study both Greek and Hebrew, and yet graduate in two years," explains Jaap. Seeing Arjen and his family more often was an additional draw, although the couple left behind five other children and their families.

Arjen muses that taking classes with his father should be "interesting." He adds, "When my parents called with the crazy idea (their words, not mine) to take the plunge together, I took this as a sign that it was time now. And may I mention the definite benefit of a free babysitting 'oma' close to home?"

Arjen (left) and Jaap (right) Vreugdenhil



President's Message: "Seminary Education in Service to the Church"

by Dr. Cornelis Venema



"You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. 2:1-3, ESV)

When presenting the work of Mid-America Reformed Seminary, I am occasionally asked about the relationship between the seminary and the church. The question is sometimes put in terms like these: is your school "independent" or does it belong to a particular church or denomination? Since I am not known to give short answers to simple questions, let me explain why this question requires an answer that steers a course between the two alternatives that it poses.

While it is true that Mid-America is not a denominational school, I am unwilling to concede that this means it is an "independent" seminary in the usual sense of this term. Unlike seminary education in North America that is often dis-connected from the churches, the aim of Mid-America is to provide the kind of training for the ministry that answers to the nature of the church's calling in the world. There are several features of our approach to ministerial training that exhibit a keen sensitivity to the church's need for well-trained pastors.

First, Mid-America recognizes that it is the task of a Reformed seminary to do exactly what the apostle Paul admonished his spiritual child, Timothy, to do in his ministry among the churches in Ephesus. When Paul instructs Timothy to "entrust to faithful men" the apostolic Word, he does so in a context that stresses the importance of "guarding the good deposit entrusted to you" (2 Tim. 1:14). Timothy was obliged to keep the trust that was his as a steward of the good Word of the gospel. So also Mid-America Reformed Seminary is obliged to "follow the pattern of sound words" (2 Tim. 1:13). Strict fidelity to the standards of the Word of God and the Reformed confessions must be the hallmark of a Reformed seminary that aims to serve the church as "a pillar and buttress of truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). For this reason, all of the professors at Mid-America must be ordained ministers of the Word and sacraments, and adhere strictly to the classic confessions of the Reformed churches.

Second, since the aim of the seminary's instruction of its students is to prepare them for the gospel ministry, Mid-America's service to the church requires not only that students be furnished with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures and confessions, but also that students be equipped to minister effectively in the church. For this reason, the Ministerial Apprenticeship Program has always been an integral feature of our curriculum. Students are expected to take courses in all the aspects of the pastoral ministry (preaching, leading public worship, catechetical instruction, pastoral care, evangelism and missions, etc.). And they are expected to engage in these tasks under the watchful eye of their professors and local church pastors to whom they are apprenticed throughout their study in seminary. The rigor of academic study is not an end-in-itself, as so often happens in schools that are detached from the life of the church. Rather, such study provides students with the tools required for ministerial service.

And third, all of the professors at Mid-America are encouraged to engage regularly in preaching among the churches, serving their local congregations as associate pastors, employing their gifts for the benefit of the churches of their particular denomination, and the like. To put it a little differently, they are expected to be "church men" in the best sense of these terms. Rather than exhibiting the traits of the proverbial "ivory-tower theologian," they are expected to employ their gifts wherever possible in service to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

For these reasons, I would prefer to say that Mid-America Reformed Seminary, far from being an "independent" seminary, is an institution that self-consciously views itself as arising from the church and serving its calling to propagate the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Upcoming Events

Stay up to date with Mid-America's events by going to www.midamerica.edu. More information will be posted a few weeks prior to each event.

October

3-4: Board Meeting. The annual Fall Board meeting will be held at the Seminary on October 3-4.

17: Michigan Dinner. A Michigan promotional dinner will be held at The Bluff in Grand Rapids, MI, on October 17 at 6:30 p.m. Watch your church bulletin for more details. To register email registration@midamerica.edu or call the Seminary at 219.864.2400.

Oct. 22 & 29, Nov. 5 & 12: Fall Evening Class. This semester's Fall Evening Class entitled *Forgiven and Forgiving: The Christian's Struggle to Seek Forgiveness and to Forgive* will be led by Dr. J. Mark Beach. Classes will be held at the Seminary on the four consecutive Tuesday evenings listed above at 7:30 pm. To register email registration@midamerica.edu or call the Seminary at 219.864.2400.

24-28: Reading Recess. The annual fall reading recess gives students time to break from classes and focus on papers and projects.

November

13-14: Fall Lecture Series. Dr. Jason Van Vliet, Professor at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary, will speak on the Heidelberg Catechism. The lectures will take place at the Seminary. Look for more information on our website in the upcoming weeks. These lectures are free and open to the public.

14: Illiana Promotional Dinner. A promotional dinner for Illinois and Indiana residents will be held at The Center for Visual and Performing Arts in Munster, IN on November 14 at 6:30 p.m. Watch your church bulletin for more details.

December

9-13: Exam period. Mid-America students will take final examinations during this period. Please pray for these students as they study and prepare for these exams.

Golf Outing 2013 by Keith LeMahieu

The 9th annual Mid-America golf outing was held on September 7. This year's outing was hosted once again by Lincoln Oaks Golf course located in Crete, IL. Lincoln Oaks was designed by renowned Scottish golf course architect Tom Bendelow who also designed several other Chicago area courses that have hosted major championships.

This year's winning team consisted of Grant Dykstra, Ryan Worries, Rich Tameling, and Mid-America student Joel Worries. They shot an 8 under par 63. Each player received a \$75 Visa gift card. The second place team, coming in at 6 under par, included Hank Huizenga, Marsha Huizenga, Jerry DeYoung, and LuAnn DeYoung. They received a \$50 Visa gift card.

Golfers at the outing had the opportunity to take home a variety of prizes for winning various competition holes. Dale De Wit won the longest drive competition and LuAnn De Young hit the longest drive for women. Dave Beezhold hit the longest drive using a classic driver. Bert Worries took home honors for the straightest drive.

Mark La Reau, winner of last year's straightest drive contest, was the winner of this year's longest putt. There were three prizes for closest to the pin. These were won by Paul Beezhold, Rev. John Vermeer and Sheryl Beach. A new competition was added this year for the chance to win a Chicago Blackhawks jersey. Each golfer whose tee shot managed to hit the green on hole #13 had their name placed in a drawing for the jersey. Darren De Boer's name was selected.

Following the outing, Mid-America provided a lunch to all the golfers. We thank the participants and all the generous sponsors for making this event possible. Mark your calendar for next year's outing scheduled for September 6, 2014.



Gathering for prayer before the golf outing starts

Tax Saving Strategies to Consider by Keith Le Mahieu

On January 1, 2013 the U.S. Congress passed the American Taxpayer Relief Act (ATRA) of 2012 (also known as Fiscal Cliff legislation). ATRA provided little tax relief and, in fact, enacted more burdensome tax policy on almost everyone. First, the Social Security Payroll tax increased 2% for everyone. Second, couples with a modified adjusted gross income of \$250,000 or more pay a higher Medicare payroll tax. Third, the amount of a couple's allowable itemized deductions will be reduced by 3% for each dollar earned above an adjusted gross income above \$300,000. Finally, the tax rate for taxpayers with taxable income greater than \$400,000—\$450,000 for couples—will rise to a new 39.6% top marginal income tax rate.

Here are a few suggestions that could help mitigate your tax burden as we approach year-end. First, the Fiscal Cliff legislation preserved the IRA charitable rollover which allows persons at least 70 ½ to donate up to \$100,000 of their minimum IRA distribution directly to charity. This allows you to avoid paying tax on this distribution if you don't need to use it.

Second, consider a gift of appreciated assets to significantly reduce your tax liability. By giving appreciated assets such as stock, mutual funds, real-estate, etc., you will not owe capital gains tax and will also receive an income tax deduction for the full market value of the contribution.

Third, if you are engaged in agriculture, you may want to consider a gift of commodities such as corn or soybeans. A gift of commodities may help you avoid federal, state and self-employment taxes, and the process is very simple.

Finally, you may wish to consider creating a Donor Advised Fund. A donor advised fund can be used to split large appreciated assets between multiple charities over the course of several years while taking the charitable deduction in the year the DAF is funded. You can also name your heirs as fund advisors and pass your legacy to the next generation.

More information on these ideas and others can be found under the donors section on the Mid-America website. Additionally, Mid-America is a member organization of the Barnabas Foundation which helps Christian donors make sound, biblically-based charitable giving decisions. Contact me if you would like more information on these or other charitable giving options.





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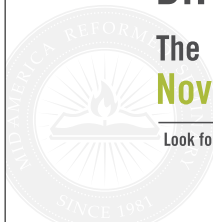
featuring

Dr. Jason Van Vliet

speaking on

The Heidelberg Catechism November 13-14, 2013

Look for more information at www.midamerica.edu



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◆ CAMPUS UPDATES

Seminary Retreat by Glenda Mathes



Students and Faculty singing at the retreat

The annual Seminary retreat was graced with rich fellowship and excellent teaching that overrode unusually high temperatures and humidity. Faculty and students, with spouses, attended the retreat on August 27 at Cedar Lake Conference Center.

Rev. Greg Bylsma, a Mid-America alumnus and pastor of Living Water Reformed Church

(URCNA) in Brantford, ON, spoke on “The Basis for Pastoral Ministry” and “The Power of Pastoral Ministry.”

“Rev. Bylsma’s talks were among the best I’ve heard at a retreat,” Prof. Alan Strange said. “Everyone was refreshed in hearing the gospel so beautifully set forth and applied to all of our lives and ministry.”

The retreat also featured hymn-singing, an extended time of introductions, and organized games.

“The lakeside setting is beautiful and invigorating, the food is good, and the fellowship is always rich and rewarding,” Prof. Strange said. “It’s a way to begin the year together, getting to know each other in an informal and relaxed setting, focusing on ministry and being led by a gifted pastor, the professors being students for the day along

with all the other students.”

In a coup of creative planning, Rev. Bylsma’s adjunct teaching schedule coordinated with his speaking engagement. The day following the retreat, he began teaching the first session of a course on “Twentieth-Century Preaching in the English-Speaking World” at the Seminary.

Two- or three-hour classes have been scheduled for two days in August, three in September, and three in November. Students will read, listen to and discuss various types of English sermons since 1900. Objectives are to immerse students in great modern preaching, teach an inductive manner for powerful preaching, study trends while assessing benefits and dangers, learn to appreciate and discern other preaching, and become more comfortable and free in personal preaching.