

THE MESSENGER

MID-AMERICA REFORMED SEMINARY

The Tuininga family and Christ's family in Uganda by Glenda Mathes



Life in Uganda is very different for the Eric and Dianna Tuininga family, but God's Word and truth remain the same.

"The power of Christ's blood and the life-changing work of the Holy Spirit are the same," they say. "People are still people—they are still sinners in need of a Savior—just like us. Our missionary status doesn't automatically change us into super Christians. We are simply beggars, showing other beggars—now in another

country—where they can find bread."

Since July of 2012, the Tuiningas have offered the Bread of Life to the people of Mbale and remote villages nearby. Rev. Eric Tuininga (Class of 2004) teaches and serves as principal at Knox Theological College (KTC) and assists pastors in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Uganda. The OPCU consists of the Mbale congregation and ten village churches. Although some have begun building mud-brick structures, none has a completed building and many meet outdoors.

Rev. Tuininga relates how gifts to these churches bring great joy and practical benefit, while showing the love of Christ and inspiring believers to press on. He also rejoices at the hunger for God's Word among the KTC students, which have increased from six to 23. "Many of these men are already pastors, who have received little or no training," he says. "It is a great delight to dig into God's truth with them, and watch them grow."

The Mbale congregation also has grown. When the Tuiningas arrived, it numbered about 30 people, including their family. Now about 130 people attend services most Sundays.

Also since the Tuiningas' arrival, two small presbyteries that had been estranged have merged into one. The OPCU had a reconciliation meeting with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Africa, which fostered unity. Two new church planting works have begun. Due to a recently-ordained minister and three new licentiates, trained men now proclaim God's Word weekly to nearly every OPCU congregation. Last year two churches began Christian schools, and two more are starting this year.

Living in Uganda presents constant challenges, but the Tuiningas enjoy it. A highlight has been building relationships with other believers and experiencing unity in Christ.

"We treasure the prayers of God's people," they say. "Live in an awareness that the body of Christ is one body around the world, and you have many brothers and sisters in nations such as Uganda. Look forward to the fellowship you will have with them for all eternity in glory!"

Ministers are invited to teach at KTC for three or four weeks, and young women are welcome to assist with homeschooling and child care as missionary associates. If interested, contact the Tuiningas. More information is available at the Tuiningas' blog: <http://www.tuiningasinuganda.blogspot.com>

Paul Berghaus: Teaching ethics to military officers

by Glenda Mathes

Chaplain (Major) Paul Berghaus (2004) serves as ethics instructor for the U.S. Army Maneuver Center of Excellence and assistant pastor at the Infantry Chapel in Fort Benning, GA.

Prior to this assignment, he obtained his M.A. in philosophy from Texas A&M University. He relates an aim of his thesis was to "critique the Army's current approach to professional ethics and provide concepts and practices to help soldiers combat what I believe is a significant threat to their moral development—the fragmentation of their moral selves."

At Fort Benning, GA, he continues to write on and present about military ethics and moral philosophy. *The Journal of Military Ethics* recently published an article he co-authored with a colleague from Texas A&M, who shares a commitment to the Reformed faith.

"After graduating from Mid-America, I did not anticipate doing the type of research and writing that my current assignment in the Army encourages. I'm very interested in continuing this type of work and am praying about how and when to pursue a Ph.D. in philosophy and a call to teach at the college or seminary level."

Chaplain Berghaus notes a tension between his gospel call and his institutional context. "I do not expect I will ever fully resolve the tension. I do know that the Lord has placed me at Fort Benning as an ethics instructor to care for soldiers as a means of His grace—whether saving or common. Their professional identities often eclipse their personal identities. I'm thankful for the opportunity to provide them with resources to mitigate that problem. I pray they will also consider their relationship to God and, if necessary, be reconciled to Him by grace through faith."

President's Message: The Word as Means of Grace by Dr. Cornelis Venema



At a recent conference on evangelism, I was struck by the speaker's (Rev. Paul Murphy of Messiah's Reformed Fellowship, Manhattan, NY) emphasis upon the office of believer. While Reformed believers properly emphasize the principal importance of the ministry of the Word of God in preaching, they also recognize the prophetic calling of all believers to know and proclaim the truth of God's Word. Although the ministry of the Word of God is a means of grace, we may not narrow the scope of that ministry to what the ordained minister does in the context of public worship. Indeed, the ministry of the Word of God, in all of its forms, aims to furnish believers for their threefold office as prophets, priests, and kings.

At Mid-America Reformed Seminary, we have always emphasized the centrality of preaching in the pastoral ministry. We teach our students that the primary calling of a pastor is to feed the flock of Christ (cf. 1 Pet. 5:2). There is no place in the ministry for a pastor who neglects the study and the careful preparation of sermons that open up and apply the riches of the Word of God. This is the *sine qua non* ("that without which not") of a faithful ministry. Like spokes radiating from the hub of the wheel, the pastoral duties that belong to the ministry are all, each in their own way, a ministry of the Word of God to the people of God.

However, there is a temptation that attends this emphasis. Ministers can begin to view their preaching ministry in the narrowest of terms. The Word of God as means of grace is reduced to the official preaching of the Word of God at the public worship services on the Lord's Day. All of the other ways in which a minister is called, together with the elders, to equip the people of God for their daily service to the Lord are diminished. When this happens, ministers can easily fall prey to the mentality that my father used to sum up in the formula—"all you need to do is preach, and everything else will fall into place!" The spectre emerges of what I would call a kind of "Reformed sacerdotalism." In the same way that historic Roman Catholic teaching ascribed power to the sacraments to work by their mere performance, Reformed pastors can ascribe an almost magical power to preaching in isolation from other ways in which the Word of God is communicated.

I am reminded in this respect of a wise comment of Herman Bavinck. In his treatment of the Word of God as means of grace, Bavinck observes that the Word of God is communicated not only in public worship but in many other forms as well. He observes that "the public administration of the Word falls far short of encompassing all the power that proceeds from that Word. . . . [T]he word of God comes to people in all sorts of ways, in all kinds of forms, from all directions, and it comes to them from their earliest childhood onward."

The Word of God that the minister proclaims is communicated in a variety of ways, and it is always communicated in order to furnish the people of God for every good work (cf. 2 Tim. 3:17).

What Was She Thinking? by Keith Le Mahieu



My pastor and former Mid-America Board member, Bruce Hollister, recently preached on John 12:1-8, the familiar passage of Mary anointing Jesus' feet. This sermon fed my thought process for this article and I want to give credit where credit is due.

John's account of Mary's act of devotion to her Lord and Savior is striking. She takes perfume worth about a year's wages and anoints Jesus' feet. It does not appear Mary was concerned about what others thought of her for doing so. We know Judas thought it was wasteful, although we also know his motive. John does not tell us what the other disciples thought, but I would guess at the very least there was empathy for Judas' opinion. "What a waste," they must have thought, "to spend all that on a single act of worship!" Or perhaps they thought Mary was just being overly emotional since Jesus had, after all, just raised her beloved brother from the dead. Either way, they must have wondered about Mary.

The truth is that at that moment Mary had perfect clarity! Total devotion is what Jesus deserves, and total devotion to Him is the most rational thing one can do. In Mary's case, she believed Christ when He said He was going to die, and she wanted to show her devotion before His death. What would you do for a family member if you knew they were soon to die? What are you willing to do for your Lord knowing that He died for you? Jesus commended Mary for having her priorities in proper

order. How we pray that the Holy Spirit would properly order our priorities!

I encourage you to listen to Pastor Hollister's message. Go to sermonaudio.com and search for the sermon entitled "An Extravagant Love."

Senior Profiles by Rev. Alan D. Strange

Five seniors are set to graduate in May 2014 from Mid-America Reformed Seminary. Perhaps a profile for each of these men will serve to guide those who pray for our students and help all to get to know them a bit better.

Anthony (“Tony”) Domanik has recently become engaged to Collette LeMahieu (the youngest daughter of our Development Director, Keith LeMahieu, and his wife, Lauren). Tony is a member of the Presbyterian Church in America and hails from Racine, Wisconsin.

Tony writes, “Mid-America Reformed Seminary has been, for me, both challenging and opportune. Challenging, because I’ve been mentally, spiritually, and emotionally stretched far more here than at any other point in my life. Opportune, because God, in His great wisdom, has seen fit to put many of life’s natural burdens into place since arriving here a few short years ago. Originally, I was looking at a host of seminaries throughout the country, but was led to pursue Mid America Reformed Seminary because of its uniquely pastoral/academic blend of focus.”

Andrew Knott and his wife, Amanda, have one child, and come here from Dorr, Michigan and the URC. As for his background, Andrew notes: “I spent a few years as a builder in the work force contemplating entering the ministry. During this time I went on two mission trips and led a weekly Bible study at a local food pantry. All this prompted me to move in the direction of seminary and seek confirmation of my call from the church.” With respect to his time here, he

writes, “My experience at MARS has been great. The professors are close with the students and sincerely care about our growth both spiritually and academically.” As for his future, Andrew notes, “At this point I am looking toward being ordained as Minister of the Word in a URC congregation. This summer I will be doing an internship at New Haven URC in Vermont.”

Jeff Munive is a URC ministerial candidate who came here from Providence College in California, where his home town is Ontario. Jeff has been quite involved in prison ministry during his time here, writing, “Mid-America is committed to graduate passionate and informed ministers of the gospel for the service of the Church. I’ve enjoyed the number of opportunities I’ve been able to exhort and receiving guidance to improve.” As for the future, Jeff writes, “I hope to have a year-long internship and am also open to Hispanic ministry somewhere down the line if the Lord wills.”

James Roosma, also of the URC and also from Providence College in California, is married to Providence alumna Jeni, with a child on the way. James is from Everson, Washington, where his family has a dairy farm. He writes, “My wife and I have thoroughly enjoyed our time at Mid-America. I have learned a lot from the faculty as they have displayed knowledge and humility

as well as a genuine concern for their students. The staff also exemplifies this love in their service to the students.”

And, finally, we have a local URC man, **Joel Worries**, married to Kayla, father of Ainslee and Halle, who writes of his time at Mid-America: “Mid-America has been a tremendous blessing in developing my spiritual growth and further knowledge of the Scriptures, as well as solidifying what it means to be a pastor. The professors have been a tremendous blessing in instructing me in this regard, and I reflect on God’s faithfulness throughout my seminary career with great joy.” In speaking of the value of his education here, he notes, “Perhaps the greatest benefit of the education I have received at Mid-America is gaining a better understanding and appreciation for the timeless truths of God’s Word which are so instrumental in the lives of God’s people. Seeing each portion of Scripture in light of its redemptive-historical context, and how it all points to Christ, will undoubtedly help keep me from the pitfalls of moralistic preaching and shepherding.”

We thank God for these men and invite you to join us in this thanks and in praying for them and their usefulness in the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Seniors: (back row, left to right) Andrew Knott, James Roosma, Anthony Domanik; (front row, left to right) Jeff Munive, Joel Worries



2014 Commencement

You’re invited to join us for the
2014 Commencement,
held at

Bethel Christian Reformed Church
3500 Glenwood-Lansing Road
Lansing, IL

on
Thursday, May 15, 2014
at 7:30 pm

Reception following



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◆ CAMPUS UPDATES

Student Conference by Amanda Knott



Dr. Leland Ryken

How do you read the Bible? Like a history book? Is it a compilation of moral statements? Dr. Leland Ryken, the speaker for this year’s student conference, says that when we ignore the literary features of the Bible, we reduce it to a mere “theological outline with proof texts.” On February 20, he was invited by

the students at Mid-America to present the importance of reading the Bible as literature.

Dr. Ryken began his address by highlighting Jesus’ use of literary devices such as parables, analogies and symbols. God trusted the medium of literature to convey truth as only literature can, by communicating “universal, recognizable human experience.” Ryken unabashedly stressed, to a room full of aspiring preachers, that reliving a story, rather than generalizing its main points, is how to learn the message of the Bible.

“The Bible answers more questions than what I must do to be saved,” Ryken asserted in his explanation of literary hermeneutics. When we study the Bible, we must give all the details appropriate space, rather than simply merging them into a single main thought.

If the only point of the story of Ruth is to show a link to Christ, Ryken asked, “what is all the extra baggage for?” Ryken is clear: the most important message of the Bible is Christ, but not every passage is chiefly or only about Him.

In his final address, Dr. Ryken covered the significance of keeping concrete vocabulary when translating the Bible. “If we want to know what an author meant, we should look at what he said.” The biblical authors wrote a literary Bible under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, trusting that by it, their readers would see the truth as real and relevant.

Dr. Ryken is professor of English at Wheaton College. He has authored several books and was a contributor to the ESV Study Bible.