

# THE MESSENGER

MID-AMERICA REFORMED SEMINARY

## Rev. Jeff De Boer appointed to new Director of Enrollment Management position

by Glenda Mathes



Mid-America is pleased to announce the appointment of Rev. Jeff De Boer to a new position at the Seminary, Director of Enrollment Management (DEM). He will be responsible for recruiting and retaining students as well as reviewing summer assignments, connecting with alumni, and teaching an occasional class.

A 2000 graduate of Mid-America, Rev. De Boer served the RCUS congregation in Garner, IA, and currently pastors the PCA congregation in North Liberty, IA. He and his wife Karen anticipate moving to the Dyer area with their five children shortly after the first of the year.

“As a graduate of Mid-America intimately acquainted with our approach to training students for the gospel ministry, Rev. De Boer will provide prospective students with an ‘insider’s’ view of our program’s strengths,” Dr. Cornel Venema said. “His pastoral experience enables him to testify to inquirers about how the unique features of

our Ministerial Apprenticeship Program (MAP) form students for the challenging work of the pastoral ministry.”

Rev. De Boer hopes to accomplish three goals: “First, I believe Mid-America Reformed Seminary specializes in training men for the central way in which Christ builds His church. It does that work with excellence, confessional commitment, and at a cost to the student that is almost unbelievably affordable. An institution might define itself by a personality or theological uniqueness. I am glad that Mid-America has defined itself by its task. So, simply put, I want more potential students and supporters to know about the Seminary.

“Second, I believe that a seminary education should seek to shape the mind, build ability, and set the student on the path to spiritual maturity. In the past, I believe seminaries have done well with the first and second, but have not given sufficient attention to the third. I want to be part of an institution that intentionally introduces men to the necessity of spiritual maturity and provides them with categories for growth, which I believe Mid-America is uniquely equipped to do.

“Third, I want to recruit the best men to the Seminary. I hope to encourage men who might otherwise go to law school or be business entrepreneurs. I want men who sense that our times and our churches need the most capable to serve in pastoral ministry.”

## Board Report

by Rev. James Sawtelle

The Fall Board meeting of Mid-America Reformed Seminary took place October 9-10.

Six new board members were welcomed: Mr. Pete Bultema, Mr. Tom Kooienga, Mr. Ron Verburg, Revs. Jeff De Boer, James Sawtelle and Adrian Dieleman. Rev. Richard Kuiken was re-elected President; Rev. Bill Pols, Vice-President; Rev. Henry Van Olst, Secretary; Mr. Scott De Jong, Treasurer; and Rev. Ed Marcusse, Vice-All.

A summary of highlights from various reports is as follows: Dr. Alan Strange informed the Board that he was awarded a Ph.D. this past summer and thanked the Board for their support over the years. The recruitment of students to Mid-America continues to expand, with an increase in students attending from the PCA, and a first time student from the ARP. Mr. Keith LeMahieu noted the extensive improvements made in classroom technology and the new feature allowing people to audit evening classes and some lecturer classes remotely, using new classroom technology. This project was funded fully through fundraising efforts. The Board was updated on the progress of the applications of prospective candidates for the position of professor of OT studies. Dr. Venema informed the Board that there is one candidate being considered for an invitation to bring academic addresses before the faculty and student body.

Dr. Venema reported on the culmination of a lengthy process to establish a new position at the seminary, Director of Enrollment Management. A number of applicants were considered, but one outstanding name emerged for nomination, Mid-America alumnus Rev. Jeff De Boer. The Board voted unanimously to appoint Rev. De Boer for a two year term.

The Seminary’s financial position is healthy at this time, due to the generosity of God’s people. Praise be to God!

## The President's Message: "The Apostle Paul's Testimony to Christmas"

by Dr. Cornelis P. Venema



*"The saying is trustworthy and deserving of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost."* 1 Timothy 1:15

One of the most remarkable yet pithy summaries of the Christmas message is found in the first of several "faithful sayings" in the apostle Paul's pastoral letters (see also 1 Tim. 3:19; 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:11; Tit. 3:8). In this wonderful summary of the gospel, we are reminded that the message of Christmas focuses entirely upon Christ's coming into the world to save sinners. We are reminded that the gospel is not pious advice regarding how we ought to live moral lives and thereby obtain favor with God. Rather, the gospel is "good news" that heralds what God has done for us in Christ Jesus.

Notice how the apostle describes this summary as "trustworthy." Contrary to the speculative nonsense of false teachers who "devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies" (v. 4), this saying about the advent of Christ Jesus is altogether reliable. To put it somewhat colloquially, this is a truth that you "can take to the bank." Christ's incarnation and saving work are gospel truth, and must therefore be accepted by all whom Christ came to save. God's "yes" to His people in Christ requires that they respond appropriately with a heartfelt "Amen"! In an age and culture rife with unbelief and skepticism, it is good for us to be reminded that the Christmas story is not too-good-to-be true, but too-true-to-be-doubted.

The Christmas message summarized in this trustworthy message unfolds in three steps.

The saying begins by identifying the One who came as "Christ Jesus." Without explicitly speaking of the incarnation of the eternal Son of God (cf. John 1:14), the phrase "came into the world" leaves no doubt that the Savior pre-existed His coming in the fullness of time. He is the eternal Son of God, "Immanuel," God with us. What is clear, however, is that He came to fulfill His threefold office as the Christ, the One whom the Father sent and who was furnished by the Spirit's anointing to be our chief Prophet and teacher, our only High Priest, and our eternal King. And in the discharge of His holy office and calling, He lives up to His name ("Jesus") by saving His people from their sins (cf. Matt. 1:21).

The second step in this saying follows naturally upon the first. If the One who came into the world is "Christ Jesus," then His coming was for the sole purpose of doing what was necessary to save sinners. The great mission that prompted Him to come to us was to deliver those who were dead in trespasses and sins, and by nature objects of God's wrath (cf. Eph. 2:1ff.). By His vicarious life of obedience, death upon the cross, and resurrection on the third day, He saves His people from the guilt and corruption of sin. Though the pithy form of this trustworthy saying does not permit an elaboration of what precisely He did for us, it does powerfully emphasize that it was all done for a gracious, saving purpose.

However, the final step in the progression of this remarkable saying is the apostle Paul's own "Amen" to it. It is not enough to acknowledge its truth in the abstract. You must also accept it, and in doing so you must echo what the apostle Paul declares about himself. Among all the sinners whom Christ came to save, says the apostle, "I am the foremost." This is not an instance of apostolic hyperbole. It is the testimony of every sinner who once comes to be captivated by the Christmas gospel through the working of the Holy Spirit. Comparisons with other sinners fall to the side. What remains is this: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and when I contemplate this truth, I am unable to imagine anyone less deserving of it than me!

Don't you agree?

## Fall Lectures

by Dr. J. Mark Beach

Dr. William Evans, Younts Professor of Bible and Religion at Erskine College, Due West, South Carolina, was the lecturer for Mid-America's annual Fall Lecture Series, presenting three lectures on the theme "Union with Christ in Theological and Pastoral Perspective." In the first lecture Dr. Evans examined "Three Current Reformed Models of Union with Christ." Given the recent upsurge of interest in the theme of the believer's union with Christ, Evans evaluated current approaches to the theme, namely that which he called the bifurcation model (M. Horton), the pneumatological model (G. Vos, R. Gaffin), and the realistic-pneumatological-incarnational model (Calvin, W.G.T. Shedd, and Evans).

The second lecture, entitled "From William Ames to N.T. Wright: Resurrection Justification in Historical and Theological Perspective" explored the significance of Christ's resurrection for justification. Evans showed how Christ's resurrection has been utilized by a variety of thinkers to clarify the connection between union and justification. This lecture concentrated particularly on the work of Geerhardus Vos and the famed New Testament scholar N.T. Wright.

The final lecture bore the title "Where's the Beef?: Why the Theme of Union with Christ Matters Theologically and Pastorally." Here Dr. Evans demonstrated that a robust emphasis on union with Christ brings good results for theology and pastoral care, as it answers many struggles of the Christian life and solves certain issues in Reformed ecclesiology. By implication, it also calls for social transformation.



## Seminary Sunday: November 2 by Rev. Mark Vander Hart

This year the “Seminary Sunday” was held in many churches in southwestern Ontario. These “Seminary Sundays” are one way for the Seminary to maintain a more personal contact with the churches in its supporting community. Churches also have opportunity to meet, hear, and get to know (if even in a very limited way) some of the professors and students that work and study at Mid-America. These weekend excursions to the churches have occurred in the past in Northwest Iowa, Michigan, Wisconsin, New York & New Jersey, and the Lynden (WA) – Abbotsford (BC) areas.

Dr. Alan Strange spoke at the Reformation Day rally on Friday (Oct. 31) at Redeemer University College. He led a workshop on apologetics in the Immanuel United Reformed Church (Jordan, ON), and then preached in the Zion URC (Sheffield, ON) and the Immanuel URC (Jordan, ON).



Others from the Seminary traveled to Ontario on Saturday (Nov. 1) in order to lead worship services in the following congregations:

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|-----------------------|---|
| Rev. Mark Vander Hart | Adoration URC (Vineland), Trinity URC (St. Catharines), and Rehoboth URC (Hamilton) |
| Mr. James Oord        | Living Hope URC church plant (Waterdown), and Bethel URC (Aylmer)                   |
| Mr. Bryan Punter      | Bethel URC (Woodstock), and Providence URC (Strathroy)                              |
| Mr. Peter Van't Hoff  | Salem URC (Bowmanville), and Immanuel URC (Nobleton)                                |
| Mr. Arjen Vreugdenhil | Immanuel URC (Listowel), and Cornerstone URC (London)                               |

Although this was a quick trip, it was profitable in several ways. The weather was quite favorable, allowing the Seminary personnel to enter and exit Canada without difficulty in terms of traveling conditions.

Mid-America sincerely thanks all the congregations that opened up to us for this “Seminary Sunday.” We appreciate all those who helped to make it a success.

## Tax Tips by Keith LeMahieu



In 2006 the United States Congress passed legislation entitled the “Pension Protection Act.” This legislation introduced a provision known as the IRA Charitable Rollover (IRACR) provision. The IRACR allowed individuals who have reached the age of 70 ½ to donate up to \$100,000 to charitable organizations directly from their IRA without treating the distribution as taxable income. This provision has become a favorite of charitably inclined retirees because it helps avoid or reduce a host of taxes due on mandatory IRA distributions.

The problem with the IRACR provision is that it has never been a permanent part of the U.S. tax code. Congress had to keep renewing the IRACR. The IRACR expired on December 31, 2013, and there has been concern that Congress would not renew it or the President would not sign any legislation that contained this provision. The House of Representatives passed legislation on July 17 of this year entitled the “America Gives More Act” (AGMA) aimed to encourage increased charitable giving. This legislation has been sent to the Senate, but the Senate has yet to take action. It is believed the Senate will consider this legislation before year-end.

The good news is that AGMA includes both a retroactive and a permanent extension of the IRA Charitable Rollover which expired last December. Congressional watchers say the chance is high that Congress will resurrect the IRACR, but no one is certain whether it will be made permanent or if it will have another sunset provision. For more information on the benefits of the IRACR you can visit the donor section of Mid-America’s website – [www.midamerica.edu](http://www.midamerica.edu).

I reported last month that Mid-America is participating in the Amazon Smile charitable program. Several readers noted that the example I provide when describing Amazon Smile contained some “fuzzy math.” Thank you to all those sharp readers for catching my error. A zero was accidentally truncated so \$10 should have read \$100. The good news is we already received a \$55 donation from Amazon for the short time we have been in the program. Thank you for supporting us in this way.



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## Wanted: Men of Integrity

We are looking for a few good men (ministers and laymen) to serve on the Mid-America Board of Trustees. Do you know someone who is committed to the church and passionate about the preparation of the next generation of faithful pastors? We want to hear from you.

The 3-year term starts in the Fall of 2015. Please send the name and contact information of your nominee to

[cvenema@midamerica.edu](mailto:cvenema@midamerica.edu).

Nominations must be received by **March 15, 2015**.

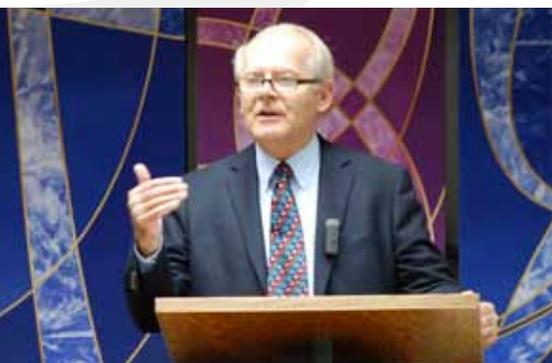
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## ◆ CAMPUS UPDATES

### Evening Class by Rev. Mark Vander Hart



Evening classes have been a part of Mid-America Reformed Seminary since its founding. Something new this year was that the class was live-streamed to people not on campus.

Rev. Mark Vander Hart led a four-session survey of the Biblical Psalms, entitled "Living in the Psalms." Class sessions opened and closed with

the singing of a psalm. The first session focused on wisdom as a kind of doorway into the Psalter. For example, Psalm 1 shows us that there are two ways in life, one that leads to death, but the other leads to life. By grace our lives are opened to see God's Word as a pathway on which to walk, while diverging from that way leads to death. Only Christ perfectly walked that road, but all those in Christ are led to walk in grace in that direction, ending with a doxology.

Session two was spent in reflection on the darker moments in life: lament psalms. Some psalms speak for the nation as it cries out to God because of communal distress. Other psalms speak for the person who is unfairly targeted by enemies, people who are friendly to the face but who plot the evil behind one's back. Christ also knows how

to sing these laments, since He took on our sins and was abandoned by God on the Cross. "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?"

The third session gave attention to the praise that God receives in these inspired songs. The Psalter is rich with terms for praise: worship, shout, bless, thank, etc. God is praised for who He is and for all the things He has done. "Let everything that has breath, praise the LORD!"

The last session looked at the royal or messianic element in the Psalms. Many psalms elevate the royal person, the king, and the royal and holy place, Jerusalem, or Mt. Zion. These psalms sketch for us something of the Lord Jesus Christ and the community of faith that is drawn to Him by grace. These beautiful psalms remain at the heart of Christian life and worship to this day.