

THE MESSENGER

MID-AMERICA REFORMED SEMINARY

Mid-America Library by Glenda Mathes



Roberto Rossi studying in the library

If you've ever visited Mid-America Reformed Seminary, you've noticed its spacious library. Filled with light on sunny days, the library is an architectural focal point and a popular study spot.

Students and faculty make frequent use of the approximately 40,000 books as well as millions of articles available there and through its online resources. But our students aren't the only ones taking advantage of the library's extensive collection: students from many other educational institutions utilize our resources through interlibrary loan services. According to Mr. Bart Voskuil,

Associate Librarian, Mid-America's library loans out many more resources than it borrows.

"The library sends materials to libraries all over North America," he says. "The ratio of our activity during the past academic year is almost 3.5 to 1; in other words, we loan many more items than we borrow. The institutions who borrow from our library vary widely. Constituents might predict that Mid-America would get requests for books and articles from colleges like Trinity, Wheaton, Calvin, and Kuyper. What is perhaps surprising is the number of requests from large schools. During the past few months, we have supplied materials to seminaries like Moody, Fuller, Baylor, and Asbury, in addition to research universities including Emory, Notre Dame, Duke, and the University of Wisconsin."

Mr. Voskuil explains that Mid-America belongs to a consortium that makes interlibrary loans possible. Students researching a particular topic often begin by consulting general or specialized dictionaries and encyclopedias in the reference collection. Entries in these volumes may suggest additional materials for further study.

"An essential step at every point in the process is close communication with faculty, who are invariably the most important source of recommended materials," he says. "Students also compile lists of useful books and articles when using the library's book and journal indexes."

Mid-America's library frequently supplies the materials students require, but they also may take advantage of interlibrary loan, borrowing from libraries throughout the United States and Canada.

"Whenever appropriate, libraries pool their efforts to avoid 'reinventing the wheel,'" Mr. Voskuil says. "Rather than taking the time to examine every book in the collection to determine, for example, applicable subject headings, libraries work together to catalog a book and then share that electronic record."

Mid-America's extensive library serves as the chief academic resource for students and faculty in the preparation of men for gospel ministry.

Profile: Bart Voskuil

by Glenda Mathes

Little did Bart Voskuil know, when he walked with a northwestern Iowa realtor in 1996 through the property previously occupied by a seminary that had relocated to Indiana, one day he would work for that very seminary!



Mr. Voskuil had just graduated from the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee with a Master's in Library and Information Science (M.L.I.S.) and had accepted a position with Northwestern College in Orange City. Although desiring country living, he realized the large property with a basketball court was impractical and unaffordable for a single young man.

Over the next dozen years, Mr. Voskuil worked in a variety of libraries in Iowa, Texas, Wisconsin, and North Carolina before becoming the Associate Librarian at Mid-America near the end of 2008.

His duties include maintaining the technical functions of the library as well as ordering and cataloging books and periodicals.

"I particularly enjoy working with students, faculty, and staff," he says. "I also enjoy the variety. At a large school, somebody working in reference may never get a chance to catalog a book. The best parts of my job are the people and the varied nature of my duties—not to mention being exposed to lots of great books."

Bart and his wife, Jana, and daughter Lucy are members of Community URC in Schererville, IN.

Fitting In by Keith Le Mahieu



The church of Jesus Christ is an amazing thing. It is a holy congregation of true Christian believers; it is preserved and supported against all enemies to the end of the world by God Himself; it is spread over the entire world and joined together by the Spirit of God, and it is the beloved Bride of Jesus Christ. In the church, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit protects, disciples, edifies and grows the elect through preaching, the sacraments, prayer and fellowship. What is equally amazing is that God gives the keys of the kingdom to fallible men and uses us as overseers or watchmen of the church. What an awesome privilege and responsibility (see Ezekiel 3).

If we are to be guardians of the truth as God has revealed it to us, what is primary to that guardianship? Since the Spirit of God makes the reading, but especially the preaching of the Word, an effectual means of convincing men of sin and drawing them to faith in Christ, the preaching and teaching of the Word must certainly be primary to the work and ministry of the church. Where does the seminary fit as it relates to the primary ministry of the church?

Perhaps it might be helpful to think of the church as a kind of ecclesiastical “ecosystem.” The term ecosystem came into use in the first half of the twentieth century and has come to be understood as a collection of various organisms that are inter-connected and dependent in a complex set of relationships. An ecosystem can vary in size and complexity, but everything that lives in that ecosystem is dependent on the other elements in the system. If one part of the ecosystem is damaged or disappears, the rest of that system is impacted. The health of the ecosystem is sustained when all the elements that make up that ecosystem live in a healthy balance.

For example, a forest may consist of variety of plants, animals, insects, soil, water, fungi, sun and rain, and many other elements – all dependent on a particular inter-connected balance to maintain an overall healthy ecosystem. Within this larger ecosystem are nested, smaller physical, chemical or biological systems that form interactive subsystems, all of which contribute to the health of the larger ecosystem.

Our local churches perform the work of bringing the good news of salvation to our local communities, but we are also part of a larger ecclesiastical organism, or ecosystem, that includes the regional church, a denomination/federation, and relationships with like-minded denominations/federations. In faithfulness to God’s Word, our churches also participate in the support of home and foreign missionaries, Christian schools and colleges, worldwide diaconal ministries, and much more. The health of the “ecclesiastical ecosystem” is reinforced through these many inter-relationships.

Since the faithful preaching and teaching of the Word is primary to the church’s guardianship of the gospel, and since the preparation of men for this preaching and teaching ministry is the primary function of the seminary on behalf of the church, the church must be interested in preserving healthy seminaries. Mid-America exists in an inter-dependent relationship with the church. While our work benefits the church, we are dependent on, and accountable to the church. It is easy to become preoccupied with the real and immediate needs faced by the local church and forget to nurture that which is crucial to its future well-being. Mid-America needs your financial and prayer support to continue to prepare those men who will one day fill your pulpits.

Rev. John Mallin

The Rev. John W. Mallin, who taught Applied Pastoral Counseling for Mid-America in 2010, is once again teaching this course in March 2012.

Rev. Mallin, ordained in 1981, is a ministerial member of the Presbytery of Connecticut and Southern New York of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and has labored as a pastoral counselor for twenty years, having served as pastor of churches in Maine and New York for eleven years.

Rev. Mallin brings a distinctly Christian approach to counseling, which he views as essentially a discipleship process, with change as the goal, and with the Bible as the standard for thinking and behavior. He seeks to apply the gospel to the heart of the counselee, viewing counseling issues as matters of faith, whatever the causes or factors influencing those issues. Thus, his approach is Christ-centered and builds on the work of the Christian Counseling and Education Foundation, Laverock, PA.

PS 232 (Applied Pastoral Counseling) is a required course designed to further the ability of upper division students to apply the principles of God’s Word to the hearts of God’s people on an individual level. Counseling, so understood, is simply the ministry of the Word applied on a personal basis to the challenges confronted by God’s people as they live out their lives in covenant community.

Rev. Mallin lives in Greencastle, PA, with his wife of thirty-four years and one of his four adult children.



Mid-America Website

Stay up-to-date with what’s happening at Mid-America, by visiting our website at www.midamerica.edu.

Seniors Ready to Serve by Glenda Mathes

Mid-America's seniors represent a variety of ecclesiastical fellowships and anticipate service in far-flung areas of Christ's kingdom.

Andrew De Young is a member of Trinity Lutheran Church (Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod) in Tinley Park, IL. While taking theology courses for his college minor, he felt God's calling to ministry.



Andrew De Young

"I chose Mid-America Reformed Seminary as it was close to home and I wanted to attend a conservative, confessional, orthodox Seminary," he says. "I would describe my Mid-America experience as being very challenging academically, but worth every moment I spent studying or in the classroom. I've received a sound education, made a lot of friends, and have grown as an individual."

Andrew was ordained as a Minister of the Word and Sacraments in the Independent Lutheran Diocese on February, 19, 2012, and hopes to plant a Lutheran church in the greater Chicagoland area. He and his wife, Celena, were married on March 19, 2011.



Nathan Tomlinson

requirements for licensure in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Following that, he and his wife, Holly, look forward to his ministry in the OPC.

Nathan chose Mid-America Reformed Seminary for its singular focus on training in the ministry of the Word.

"Other seminaries have fine programs, but few have as focused and dedicated an attention to preparing pastors as Mid-America," he says. "Seminary has been challenging and exhausting, yet it has stretched me exceedingly. I believe that now my understanding of confessional Reformed doctrine is more firm than ever, my love for the Scriptures has increased, and my desire to serve God in the gospel ministry has been reaffirmed."

Originally from British Columbia, **Robert Van der Woerd** belongs to Lynwood United

This summer **Nathan Tomlinson**, from Merrimack, NH, plans to serve as pulpit supply in churches that have supported him during his seminary career. He also hopes to fulfill

Reformed Church and hopes for a ministerial call in the URC.

Pastors and others encouraged him to attend Mid-America due to its scriptural commitment and experienced faculty.

"The faculty here is quite impressive," he says. "Their unique strengths complement each other well, and they are all very personable. This coupled with their, experience in the ministry, has made each member of the faculty an invaluable source for instruction, advice, and discipleship."



Robert Van der Woerd

believes the relationship between the Seminary and churches benefits students through supplemental instruction, financial assistance, and encouraging feedback.

Robert and his wife, Rachel, have a son, Simon, and expect a second child in July.

Robert appreciates the Ministerial Apprenticeship Program, in which students work beside local pastors, putting classroom instruction into practice. He

Sri Lankan Senior by Glenda Mathes



Ananda Jayawardene

After graduation, senior Ananda Jayawardene plans to return to his homeland for continued service as a pastor in the Christian Reformed Church of Sri Lanka. Rooted in the Dutch Reformed Church that originated during colonial days, the Sri Lankan CRC did not begin as a CRCNA mission work; however, it benefitted from the guidance of a few dedicated CRCNA ministers who came to the island nation

(formerly known as Ceylon) in the mid-20th century.

Ananda was born into a Buddhist family. As a child, he became interested in Reformed theology while attending English classes led by a native Reformed pastor who encouraged him to attend church services and Bible studies.

Although Ananda was hired by a prestigious company, he felt God calling him to theological study. He attended a Bible college and other institutions prior to serving about 20 years in ministry, but he still felt called to pursue a seminary education. Since Sri Lanka has no Reformed seminary, an internet search eventually led him to Mid-America.

"After I had a look on the webpage of Mid-America Reformed Seminary and had gone through its 'statement of faith,'" he says, "I felt this was a good Reformed seminary. By God's grace, I came here and I acquired an excellent knowledge from this esteemed seminary that I would never have obtained in Sri Lanka."

Faculty Update

Mid-America President Dr. Cornelis Venema was a featured speaker at a conference entitled “The Reformed Family.” The conference was held at First United Reformed Church in Chino, California, on February 24-25. The purpose of the conference was to strengthen and equip Christians and local churches as they seek to encourage families to live out the important role they play in redemptive history.

Dr. Venema began the conference on Friday evening with an address entitled “The Head of Christ is God: The Trinity as the Pattern for the Relationship of Husbands and Wives.” On Saturday morning Dr. Venema addressed the question of leadership in the church with an address entitled “Must the Children of Elders be Christians? Leadership in the Family and

Church.”

The conference was attended by approximately 150 individuals. You can obtain more information on the conference at the website of First United Reformed Church in Chino.

During the month of January, Dr. Venema spent some time in Southern Ontario, representing the work of Mid-America among its supporters and churches. In addition to preaching at two United Reformed Churches on Sunday, January 8, Dr. Venema gave an address at the Providence United Reformed Church on the evening of January 5 and at the Immanuel Orthodox Reformed Church in Jordan on the evening of January 9. Dr. Venema’s address, “Should the URCNA



Dr. Cornelis Venema

have Their Own Seminary? Taking Another Look at the Church-Seminary Relationship,” emphasized the importance of Mid-America’s relationship to and service among the churches.



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