

THE MESSENGER

MID-AMERICA REFORMED SEMINARY

Summer at the Seminary by Glenda Mathes



“So what do you do all summer?” That’s a frequent question fielded by faculty and staff between academic years. Regular Seminary operations take no vacation. Bills must be paid, mail processed, and pulpit supply requests filled. The lull between academic years quickly fills with an annual audit, building maintenance, and technology upgrades. Summer is also when major church assemblies meet.

“Mid-America participated in four ecclesiastical assemblies this year,” reports Keith LeMahieu, Director of Development. In May, Seminary representatives attended the RCUS Synod in Rapid City, SD. At the OPC’s General Assembly from June 6-11 in Wheaton, IL, Mid-America provided ice cream for Monday afternoon’s break. At the URNCA Synod held in Nyack, NY, from June 11-15, the Seminary hosted refreshments following Monday evening worship. Mid-America was also present at the General Assembly of the PCA in Louisville, KY, on June 18-21.

In addition to recruiting duties and regular financial work, Grant Dykstra plans fall recruitment trips, prepares for an annual audit, orders textbooks, and updates handbooks. Office Manager Florence Kooiman and Grant supervise maintenance and landscaping projects and the student workers who are on campus.

Reporting and publications are also a key part of summer work. Extensive curriculum revisions this year meant extra time preparing the biennial catalog. Mid-America’s book on creeds and confessions is being updated.

While Administrative Secretary Tracy Whitfield continues answering phone calls, processing mail, and updating databases, she also handles summer mailings and database projects while preparing student IDs and mailboxes. Among Associate Librarian Bart Voskuil’s other duties, he’s been busy sending journals to the bindery, as well as ordering and processing books.

You may think no students are on campus during the summer, but Greek students are in class for six weeks. Arriving students require help, particularly those from other countries.

“Housing needs to be obtained for all incoming students,” says Flo, “but the staff is involved in a detailed way with international students. They generally arrive with only a few suitcases, so a home must be rented and completely furnished for them.” Attentive staff make sure these families acclimate to the US.

On-site staff members assist with new students, but two people work for the Seminary from a distance. Rachel Luttjeboer, Administrative Secretary of Media and Publications, helps with printed projects, assists with registration, updates the website, creates new brochures, and designs other projects. She puts together the Messenger, while Glenda Mathes writes many articles as its Contributing Editor.

Faculty Summer Activities

by Glenda Mathes

Dr. Venema observed the URCNA Synod Nyack and the 2012 OPC GA. He is writing book reviews and a “two-kingdoms” evaluation for Mid-America’s Journal, as well as a manuscript on the means of grace. During a sabbatical beginning August 1, he hopes to complete that manuscript and compile two essay collections.

Dr. Beach is editing the Journal and preparing new editions of Mid-America’s book on creeds and confessions. The book is newly titled, *The Good Confession: Ecumenical Creeds and Reformed Creeds and Confessions*. He is also writing articles on the covenant views of David Dickson and Calvin’s treatment of God’s attributes.

Rev. Mininger is working on his dissertation, refining the Seminary’s Greek instruction, arranging for the work of adjuncts, and preaching in local churches. He attended two days of the OPC General Assembly at Wheaton College, where he was encouraged by many expressions of appreciation for Mid-America and recommendations of the Seminary.

After representing the OPC at the URCNA Synod, Rev. Strange conducted extensive research in Charles Hodge papers found in special collections at the Firestone Library (Princeton University) and the Luce Library (Princeton Theological Seminary). Since this was his third research visit, he concentrated on personal correspondence, particularly Hodge’s letters to his brother.

Rev. Mark Vander Hart spent over eight weeks abroad. At the Baltic Reformed Theological Seminary in Riga, Latvia, he taught a course in Biblical Hebrew and a course on “The Messianic Revelation in the Old Testament.” He also spoke at a conference on Christocentric Bible reading from July 6-10 near Vanadzor, Armenia.

Serving the God of Abundance and Grace by Keith Le Mahieu



As the academic year ended for colleges and seminaries around North America, many of us found letters in our mailbox seeking financial support. Because many academic institutions end their fiscal year on June 30, you can anticipate seeing the “we need X thousand dollars to meet our annual budget” letter each spring. In fact, you may recall receiving a recent letter from Mid-America indicating that donations were running behind last year, and we needed to maintain cash reserves heading into the summer months.

Does it seem as though our Christian institutions operate in a perpetual atmosphere of scarcity? How can this be when they carry out a calling to serve the Lord of the universe who declares in Psalm 50:10 that “every beast of the field is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills.” We acknowledge God’s sovereignty over all of His Creation, and yet we fail to assume the abundance of God’s resources and grace.

It occurred to me that fundraising for Christian causes needs to take great care what image of God is being conveyed in the fundraising process. If fundraising becomes a never-ending series of appeals to fill a desperate need, both the institution and those that support it will eventually become so discouraged that we question God’s love and faithfulness to His ministries among us. Those who love the institutions they support will feel that no matter how much they give, it is never enough. This saps us of the joy we experience as stewards of God’s abundant resources and giving as an act of thanks for His unmerited grace.

By every measurement, contemporary or historical, North Americans are the wealthiest people who have ever lived. A recent study shows North Americans make up just over 5% of the world’s population but hold approximately 34% of the world’s net worth. Nevertheless, leading economic indicators suggest growing economic insecurity – a scarcity mentality that perceives there is simply not enough of almost anything – leading people to shelter their resources. While it is statistically true that charitable giving as a percentage of income has decreased over the past twenty years, it is staggering to consider what could happen if people of faith increased charitable giving by just one percent. The resources held by God’s people are so huge that even a small sliver is sufficient to meet all organizational needs.

Christian organizations like Mid-America that depend on the generous support of God’s people must do a better job of communicating the abundance of God’s blessing rather than just their need. We hope the pages of the Messenger serve to help you see how God is using Mid-America to build His church. You have learned of Mid-America students from around the world who come to study and then go to bring Christ to the lost. You have learned of Mid-America’s participation in the founding of a seminary inside an Illinois prison. You have met graduates serving not only the local church but, for example, as Chaplain at the United States Military Academy at West Point. You have learned about the impact Mid-America’s library has to those outside our seminary community.

While we are obliged to let you know when there is a financial need, we hope we also adequately communicate God’s abundant blessings that are not always reflected on the Seminary’s financial statements. Thank you for your support. Be encouraged by God’s abundant blessings on Mid-America and support with joy the blessings which result from the work being done.

8th Annual Golf Outing

Mid-America’s eighth annual golf outing is scheduled for September 8, 2012. This late-season golf outing is a favorite of many golfers for some years now. This year’s outing will be held at a new venue not previously used. The Lincoln Oaks Golf Course was founded in 1927 and designed by renowned golf course architect Tom Bendelow from Scotland. Bendelow also designed such celebrated courses as Olympia Fields and Medina Country Club. Olympia Fields hosted the US Senior Open in 1997 and the PGA Championship in 1961. Medina Country Club hosted the US Open in 1990, the PGA Championship in 2006, and will host this year’s Ryder Cup Championship.

Lincoln Oaks is known for its tree-lined, bent fairways and manicured greens and it is easy to find, located just off highway 394 in Crete, IL. The outing follows a scramble format with a 9:00 a.m. shotgun start. A delicious buffet lunch will follow where various gifts and prizes will be awarded to the winning teams as well as winners of the longest drive, the straightest drive, the longest putt, and closest to the pin competitions.

Mid-America has reduced the cost of this year’s outing to \$100. The registration price includes 18 holes of golf, a cart, lunch, gifts for all the golfers and prizes for the winners. You can register for the outing in one of three ways: use the golf outing brochure many of you will receive in the mail, call the Seminary, or register online at www.midamerica.edu. The registration deadline is August 24.



Mid-America Website

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

International Student Aid Fund by Glenda Mathes



Due to Mid-America's excellent global reputation, the Seminary receives more international applicants than its existing International Student Aid Fund can finance. This fund is specifically designated for students from countries other than the United States and Canada. Neither it nor the regular Student Aid Fund are included in Mid-America's annual budget; they consist solely of God's provision through His people's generous donations.

Since Mid-America believes the church is ultimately responsible for identifying and ordaining those with gifts for gospel ministry, all students (including those applying for international aid) must receive a strong recommendation from their church. Most home churches of international students, however, lack resources to finance a seminary education. Mid-America requests that the student's church be responsible for travel expenses, but in many cases the International Student Aid Fund covers the bulk of the student's expenses.

International students are required to prove their English competency is sufficient for graduate level study. They also must pledge their intention to complete their theological studies at Mid-America and return to minister within the church in their homeland.

Training ministerial students who will return to their homelands is a significant opportunity for spreading biblical truth throughout the world. Unlike cross-cultural missionaries, indigenous ministers do not face cultural, language, or racial barriers. Rather than requiring intensive training before beginning their ministry, they immediately begin (or continue) to train others in the precious doctrines of God's grace. Through the International Student Fund, Mid-America can provide three years of ministry preparation (including housing, food, clothing, books, tuition, and other living expenses) for about the cost of one year of support in a traditional missionary context.

Several alumni have benefitted from the International Student Aid Fund and returned to their homelands to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. Rev. Ananda Jayawardene recently returned to Sri Lanka where he instructs his colleagues and continues to serve the congregations of the Christian Reformed Church of Sri Lanka. Rev. David Khobal serves in Yangon, Myanmar (formerly Burma) as Principal of the Biblical Reformed Seminary, whose graduates serve Christ's church as missionaries, pastors, evangelists, and teachers, primarily among the Buddhist population. And in the Philippines, Rev. Vic Bernales preaches in local congregations, leads Bible studies, translates Reformed literature, and hosts radio talk show discussions of Reformed truth.

Mid-America Reformed Seminary seeks to create a network of visionary friends passionate about this particular aspect of world missions. Would you prayerfully consider how you or your church might become part of our international student aid network? If you wish to discuss how you may support an international student, please contact Mid-America's Director of Development, Keith LeMahieu, at 219-864-2400.

Alumni Association by Glenda Mathes

In 2010, Mid-America's Board of Trustees established an Alumni Association with the following Alumni Executive Council: Revs. Paul Ipema (President), Harold Miller (Vice President), Lou Slagter, Phil Vos, Greg Bylsma (Secretary), and Corey Dykstra.

Rev. Bylsma relates that the Association serves a two-fold purpose: "to encourage Mid-America in its ongoing task of training ministers and workers for Christ's gospel kingdom, as well as to encourage and serve the alumni in being faithful stewards of the gifts they have developed and honed through their time at Mid-America."

He details six specific tasks highlighted in the Association's by-laws: 1) to pray for the seminary, 2) to represent the seminary in a godly fashion,

3) to promote a unified fellowship among the alumni family, 4) to provide and encourage financial support, 5) to support the seminary in recruitment, and 6) to interact with members of the Mid-America Board of Trustees, the faculty, and the staff regarding matters of interest to the well-being of the seminary.

After contacting alumni to determine how the Association could best serve both them and the continuing work of Mid-America, three significant projects are being implemented.

First, graduates have pledged to begin an Alumni Scholarship to assist one or two students each year. The hope is that this scholarship will be initiated in 2013.

Second, the Seminary webpage will include

an alumni portal to promote contact among alumni and with Mid-America. Rev. Bylsma says, "Lord willing, this will facilitate alumni in keeping in contact with one another through the years, and sharing various joys (or even sorrows) in the area of service where God has called them."

Third, the Association has formed a sub-committee to explore the establishment of educational classes. Rev. Bylsma is excited about the possibilities: "When this is combined with Mid-America's connection to numerous Reformed and Presbyterian churches, this type of continuing education could serve not only its alumni, but also the efforts of Christ's church in serving together in Christ for the advancement of kingdom work."

Ministry in Armenia by Glenda Mathes



Rev. Vander Hart, Rev. Eric Kayayan, and Armenian church leaders

Rev. Mark Vander Hart relates that while Armenia was the first country in history to adopt Christianity as its official religion (AD 301), it currently has no Reformed congregations to his knowledge. “However, radio broadcasts and literature are reaching many Armenians,” he adds. “There is a desire

among many for more knowledge of what the Bible teaches and what is the true gospel of our crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ.”

He traveled on July 3 from Riga, Latvia, to Yerevan, Armenia, where he met Rev. Eric Kayayan from Pretoria, South Africa. Rev. Kayayan chairs “Christians for Armenia,” a ministry of Reformed Faith & Life, begun by his father, Rev. Aaron Kayayan (Back to God Hour’s former French Broadcast Minister), who was an Armenian.

According to Rev. Vander Hart, the outreach to the Armenian people is a radio and literature ministry, producing biblical and theological materials in the Armenian language. He and Rev. Kayayan first visited the city of Gyumri in northwestern Armenia, which had been devastated by a late 1980s earthquake. Then

they spoke on a Christological reading of the Bible at a July 6-10 seminar held in a rustic camp near Vanadzor.

Explaining the difference between Armenians and Arminians, Rev. Vander Hart says, “The word ‘Armenians’ refers to a people who are very ancient, who have suffered a great deal in the 20th century, and many of whom have been dispersed throughout the world. The word ‘Arminians’ refers to the followers of the Dutch theologian, Jacobus Arminius, whose gross errors in the early 17th century disrupted the Reformed Church of the Netherlands and were addressed by the international Synod of Dort (1618-1619). So, one can be a Calvinist Armenian or an Arminian Armenian! But the terms have no relationship, other than similarities in spelling and sound.”



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Upcoming Events:

- Orientation to Hebrew – August 22-24
- Registration & Orientation – August 27
- Seminary Retreat – August 28
- First day of Classes – August 29
- Golf Outing – September 8
- Board of Trustees Meeting – October 4-5

Stay up-to-date with Mid-America’s upcoming events by going to www.midamerica.edu

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