

the messenger

Mid-America Reformed Seminary

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THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: REPRESENTING THE "PERFECT SHEPHERD"



"I am the good shepherd. I know My own and My own know Me, just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep." (John 10:14-15)

One of the most important passages in Scripture for understanding a minister's identity and calling is Jesus' discourse in John 10. In this discourse, Jesus identifies Himself as the "Good Shepherd" who, unlike the hireling, truly loves His sheep. The Good Shepherd cares so much for His sheep that He willingly lays down His life for them, knows them by name, feeds them in the green pastures of His Word, and never fails to keep them safe from their deadly enemies.

Like several other "I am" sayings in the Gospel of John, this self-identification by Jesus has its roots in the Old Testament. In this and in the other "I am" sayings, Jesus is making the astounding claim that He is equal in power, glory, and being with the covenant Lord of Israel, who revealed Himself to Moses as "I am who I am" (Exod. 3:14). He is the fulfillment and embodiment of the Psalmist's declaration that the "Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Psalm 23:1). To use language found elsewhere in the Gospel of John, Jesus is the incarnate Word who makes the fullness of the Father's grace and truth known to us (John 1:14).

What distinguishes the Good Shepherd from the hireling is His willingness to lay down His life in order to ensure the safety of His sheep. Unlike the hireling or mercenary, who does what he does simply out of self-interest, Jesus selflessly and voluntarily lays down His life for His sheep. Though Jesus has the power to take up His life or lay it down, He willingly lays down His life for the well-being of the sheep. No wonder, then, that He will not allow anyone to snatch the sheep from His hand, or to come into the sheepfold to injure or scatter the sheep. Furthermore, because Jesus is a true shepherd and not a hireling, He knows the sheep by name. There are no nameless or unnoticed members among Jesus' flock. The Good Shepherd is familiar with His sheep, even as the sheep are familiar with Him. Accordingly, when Jesus speaks to His sheep, they recognize His voice. There is a true love and intimacy between the Good Shepherd and His flock, and between the flock and the Good Shepherd.

The implications of this discourse for the work of a pastor in Christ's church are not hard to discern. As "undershepherds," pastors are called to serve the perfect Pastor or Shepherd, representing His love and care for those whom He purchased with His own precious blood. As the apostle Peter exhorts his fellow elders, pastors are to "shepherd the flock of God ... exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you, not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:2-3).

However, there are two features of our Lord's teaching in John 10 that have special importance for seminaries in preparing students for the gospel ministry.

First, seminaries must cultivate not only the minds of their students, but also their hearts. By explicit teaching and example, seminaries should encourage their students to cultivate those habits of heart and life that are required for fruitful ministry. Students should be warned against entering the ministry for personal gain or prestige. Seminaries should also emphasize the importance of pastoral sensitivity in their students' ministry of the Word. Faithful preaching demands that the preacher know his congregation intimately. A pastor's familiarity with the flock is essential to preaching that "connects" with them and their world. A pastor who is aloof or indifferent to the challenges, struggles, trials, and life circumstances of his congregants will not have a voice that echoes the care of the Good Shepherd. The pastoral identity of the minister should be a pervasive theme throughout the seminary's curriculum.

And second, our Lord's teaching reminds all pastors and students of their own weaknesses and insufficiency. Pastors can easily be discouraged in their work, especially when they come to think that they must somehow be all that the Good Shepherd is in their ministry. Ironically, there is good news in this for pastors: you will never be the "perfect pastor" and so you don't need to try to be one! Just as pastors call their congregants to place all of their trust in the Good Shepherd whose grace and mercy never fail, they must do likewise. God willing, such trust will rescue pastors from undue discouragement in the pastorate. And it may even rescue them from an inordinate fear of congregants who are keen to remind them of all the ways in which this is true.

Dr. Cornelis P. Venema,
President of Mid-America Reformed Seminary

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MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

This is a wonderful time of the year at Mid-America Reformed Seminary! Not that there is ever a bad time of the year here, but we are excited about a few things on the horizon. Summer internships are already beginning to take shape for our first and second-year students. We are also looking forward to commencement. In this issue of *The Messenger*, you can read all about our Seniors who anticipate receiving their diplomas in just a matter of a couple months, and learn about their plans for the future. We're also in the middle of a busy season of student recruiting. With our largest number of applications coming in – possibly the largest ever – we have spent a lot of time discussing our strengths as an institution with prospective students. One of those strengths (and we are always seeking to be stronger in this area) is our ability to develop our students both academically and spiritually. Rev. Mark Vander Hart spells this out nicely in our feature article. It is important to keep in mind though, that while this is the work of the seminary, it is also the work of Christ's church. You'll see what I mean in the pages ahead. Enjoy, and thanks for reading!



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Our Mission
Mid-America Reformed Seminary seeks to serve Christ and His church by assisting in the formation and preparation of servants for the Kingdom of God. Our primary purpose is to train men for the gospel ministry of Jesus Christ. Guided by this focus, we are also committed to providing solid theological training for others among God's people whose life calling may be enhanced by theological education.

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DEVELOPMENT REPORT: MEANINGFUL MESSAGING

We live in a world with a 24-hour news cycle. It doesn't matter where in the world events are taking place – if it is of some significance, we will hear about it immediately after, if not while it is happening. Your phone blows up with notifications from your favorite news network all day long! Your Facebook news feed is constantly updating. Someone tweeted this, then someone tweeted that. Can you believe they just tweeted that? I'll re-tweet it to show my astonishment. Before you know it, you're Facebooking all day long. It should be telling enough that as I just typed the word "Facebooking," Microsoft Word did not think to offer any grammatical or spell check options beyond suggesting I use a capital "F". It's a real word, I guess.

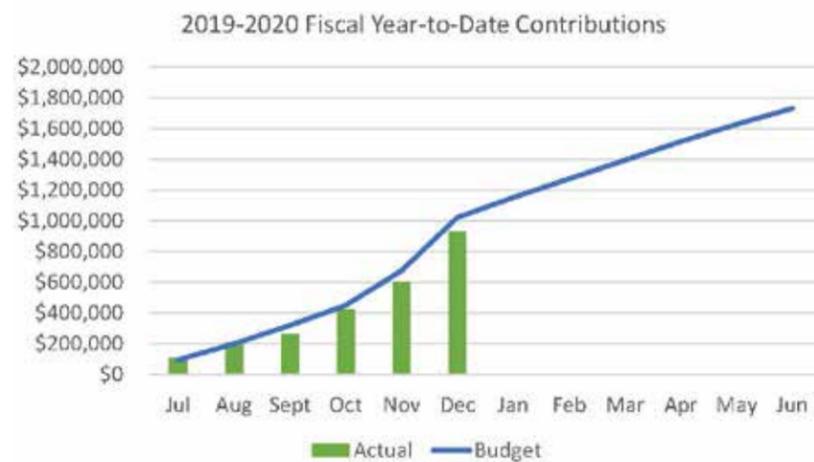
The problem (among many) with a constant news cycle, is that you pay far less attention to the stories than you would if you received occasional updates. What was designed to keep you in the loop, actually leaves you much less engaged. In addition to this, when every story is "breaking news," simple things become complex, and situations which would ordinarily require a bit of analysis and critical thinking become crises. Not everything really has the sense of urgency that the media, celebrities, or our political leaders would lead you to believe.

The same can be said of non-profits – even the ones you might really care about. I've heard it said many times – "If I give you a gift, then I get all the mail." While postage is a necessary expense of any non-profit, how many dollars are spent each month giving you the "updates" you so critically need? What's more, we've all read countless "the sky is falling" appeal letters. "If you don't give, we're going to have to shut/cut down on the very services you've entrusted us to deliver!" "Really?" you think. "I thought I read that last month, and maybe the month before." Pretty soon you're disengaged, and neither the non-profit nor you are being a blessing to one another.

Here's what I really enjoy about all of you. When we have a need, we invite you to participate, and you prayerfully and financially respond in such a generous way. I don't think you realize how much you humble and encourage us with your support. Every Monday morning at our staff and faculty meeting, we spend time in prayer, thanking God for the great things He has done – especially His provision of you. One thing we hope you appreciate about us is that we try not to flood your mailbox or inbox with "sky is falling" news. We intend our communications to be a blessing, as you have been a blessing to us.

Your response to our year-end appeal was very encouraging. We praise the Lord for a stronger Canadian Foundation response over the last several months. We are thankful for our partner churches, which continue to include us as an offering cause or budget line-item. We are particularly humbled by some recent estate gifts. All that to say, "Thank you, friends!" May the Lord bless our partnership for many months and years to come.

Michael Deckinga,
Vice-President of Advancement



We still trail our budget by \$95,000. If you'd like to get involved to help eliminate this shortfall, I'd be delighted to speak with you. I can be reached at mdeckinga@midamerica.edu.

OUR GRADUATES

We thank God for the hard work of these students and pray for them as they go on to new places and ministry. On May 7, at 7:30 pm at Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Lansing, IL, Mid-America will graduate (the Lord willing) the following seven students.



After graduation, **Cristian Garcia**, his wife Carolina, and two children (Mikaela and Judah) hope to go back to their home country of Ecuador to minister to those in the northern part of the country. They "are talking to some indigenous Reformed churches in Ecuador to work with them, seeking ordination and oversight so [they] can plant a mission there." For Cristian, Mid-America is an institution with a great balance between personal and covenantal godliness and rigorous academic training that is so essential for a future pastor. These are things he will never forget.



Carl Gobelman, a native of the greater Chicago area, hopes to serve either a year-long internship with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) or seek a call to pastoral ministry. Regarding his experience at Mid-America, Carl really appreciated the Biblical Studies courses, particularly in how they dug into the issues of exegesis in order to properly preach from Scripture. Furthermore, Carl is "grateful for the availability of the faculty and the deep, lasting friendships developed amongst the student body." Carl is married to his wife, Linda, and has three children, Matthew, Lauren (who recently got married), and Jeremy.



Arnold Lavaire's ultimate goal after seminary is to be involved, along with his wife Jessie and their three young boys (Anthony, Jeremy, and Eli), in a ministry that works with Hispanics, teaching them the Good News of Jesus Christ. Arnold, when reflecting on his time at Mid-America, is grateful for the emphasis on the Ministry of the Word, and "for the humble attitude, patience, and care provided by each professor who day-by-day directs each student to be a servant of Christ.



Cary Gephart, his wife, Karese, and four children (Peyton, Keagan, Amarese, and Eleanor) plan to stay in the Chicago area, where Cary will continue to serve Cottage Grove Christian Reformed Church (in South Holland, IL) as Commissioned

Pastor. He expects to be declared a candidate in the CRCNA at Synod 2020 and will then be eligible for a call. About his training at Mid-America, Cary says, "I have been most grateful about the time and energy put into not only my theological education but pastoral preparation. I have seen this expressed in the pastoral character of all my classes and in the availability of the professors for counsel and advice on classroom related issues and life as well."



Three things stand out for Canadian **Scottie Wright**, regarding his seminary experience: Professors, students, and preaching opportunities. The availability of the professors to chat, an excellent student body that cultivates close friendships, and the opportunity to get behind a pulpit and preach, all contributed to Scottie's satisfaction with Mid-America. He and his family (wife, Vanessa, and five children – Levi, Troy, Izak, Jake, and Tessa) are looking to serve a church in fulltime pastoral ministry, with an emphasis on evangelism.



Elijah DeJong, his wife Greta, and their baby daughter Beatrix, are planning to do a yearlong internship at the OPC church in Grants Pass, OR, which will be helpful as he pursues ordination in the OPC. When he thinks about his time at Mid-America, Elijah remembers "the kindness of the faculty in caring for spiritual needs as well as training me in doctrine and pastoral skills. I appreciated the friendly learning environment and the high level of academic expectations that really stretched me over the course of my time here."



Another fellow Canadian, **Daniel Hamstra**, is currently pursuing ministry within the United Reformed Churches in North America. He and his family (wife, Elizabeth, and four children – Hannah, Jaden, Judah, and Emma) will head back to Canada, specifically to St. Catharines, Ontario, where an internship has been arranged with Trinity United Reformed Church, starting in June of this year until the end of December. Daniel is "thankful for the open access to, and relationships with, the professors" that he had during his time here at Mid-America Reformed Seminary.

Jared Luttjeboer
Manager of Marketing, Digital Media and Publications

COMPTON PURSUES PH.D.

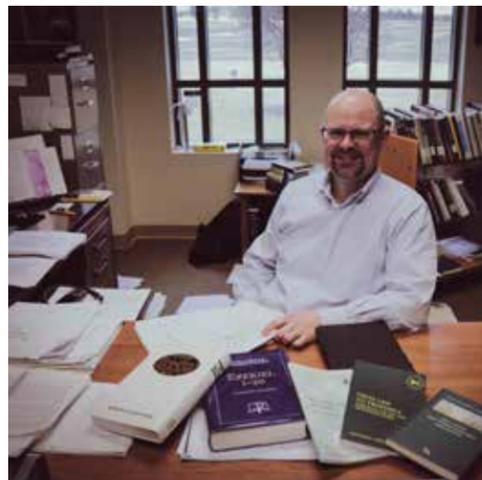
Much debate exists about the degree to which Ezekiel – upon receiving a prophetic commission – retained a priestly identity. Critical scholars since Julius Wellhausen have contrasted the priesthood (a rigid, legalistic institution) with prophetic religion (purported to be fresher and more vibrant). Even where Wellhausen’s simplistic (and even anti-Semitic!) positions are rejected, many feel that a priestly and a prophetic identity cannot meaningfully coexist. A flurry of studies from 1998-2005 centered on this debate, and yet this discussion arrived at an impasse. Is there a way to move the discussion forward? My dissertation seeks to do just that.

Since scholars have seen in the Book of Ezekiel a prevalent concern for purity, sacrifice, and other themes that relate to priesthood, and as several scholars have noticed a significant sharing of words and phrases between Ezekiel and Leviticus, there is a clear retention of priestly categories and language. And as Ezekiel is singled out as “the priest” (in 1:3) and as he received God’s call in “the thirtieth year” (in 1:1), the very same year he would have entered the priesthood at the Jerusalem temple had he not been exiled to Babylonia (see Numbers 4), the book invites us to consider how Ezekiel might be functioning as a distinctively priest-prophet.

The modern day work of career counseling (drawing on vocational psychology) has observed that people do not relinquish their work callings very easily. And many working with modern day refugees and exiles have noted ways in which displaced professionals adjust their work to retain professional elements they hold dear in the midst of a changed situation. This work, I believe, gives us helpful categories for understanding how being a priest and a prophet can fit together very comfortably in Ezekiel’s own calling. My dissertation will provide scholars with a new set of tools for understanding the intermingling of priestly and prophetic themes throughout Ezekiel’s book.

Rev. Andrew Compton

Assistant Professor of Old Testament Studies & M.T.S. Program Director



FALL LECTURES SERIES: DR. CRAIG G. BARTHOLOMEW

The 2019 Fall Lectures were held on November 26-27 and featured Dr. Craig G. Bartholomew. Bartholomew is a leading Old Testament (OT) scholar who is firmly grounded in Reformed confessional, theological, and philosophical categories and commitments. His work in biblical studies is noteworthy for being rigorous and engaging, yet not veering off into the anti-supernatural biases of many contemporary scholars.

Bucking against trends in academic OT scholarship, Bartholomew showed the great value and vitality of the OT for our distinctively Christian, Triune beliefs. His first lecture, “Listening for God’s Address: A Communicative Hermeneutic for the OT,” oriented us toward the implications of the proposition “God has spoken” for our attending to the OT as divine address. In his second lecture, “A Threefold Cord is Not Easily Broken: The Historical, the Literary and the Theological,” Bartholomew showed the disastrous results of trying to pursue only one of these three kinds of exegetical approaches in isolation from the others. In his final lecture, “Myth in the Ancient Near East [ANE] and the Old Testament: Broken and/or Transcended,” he noted that “myth” is no mere genre label, but is more fundamentally worldview. Rather than try to assimilate the OT to ANE mythical sources, the OT must be read as fundamentally challenging those worldviews with the true story of the world.

Rev. Andrew Compton

Assistant Professor of Old Testament Studies & M.T.S. Program Director



DISCIPLESHIP: BEING SHEPHERDS AND SHEEP

REV. MARK D. VANDER HART

The Apostle Paul’s second letter to Timothy is almost certainly his last letter that we have in hand. Paul is imprisoned in Rome, and his life is soon to end. So he tells Timothy that the young pastor in Ephesus is to take what he has heard from Paul “in the presence of many witnesses,” walk in “the pattern of sound words... in the faith and love that in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 1:3) and then entrust that holy tradition of teaching to “faithful men who will in turn be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). We can see four generations of pastor-teachers here: Paul trained Timothy, who should train others, and they in turn would train the next generation.

Timothy was a younger pastor in Ephesus, but he was not a novice to the reality of being trained and shaped by the faith. Timothy exhibited a sincere faith, a faith that was evident in both his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5). This faith was modeled and taught to Timothy from his own childhood, with not only the personal dimension in his instruction (grandmother and mother), but also his acquaintance with the “sacred writings,” i.e., the books of the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament (2 Tim. 3:15). Here is a living example of what Deuteronomy 6:6ff., Psalm 78:1ff., and other passages enjoin upon God’s covenant people, namely, teach these vital truths to the rising generation so



that they will know the great things God has done for us and might thus walk in God's covenant ways: trusting and obeying the faithful God of the covenant.

The Apostle Paul himself was also a major "father figure" in Timothy's development. In a sense, Paul picks up where Timothy's upbringing left off, and now Paul's life and teaching provided the discipleship in ministry that Timothy needed to have. Paul's own experience in his ministry was instructive to Timothy, namely, the fact that Paul suffered in gospel ministry (2 Tim. 1:8; cf. 2:9). Timothy needed to learn from an experienced pastor that the ministry can have moments of suffering, intense pain, and great disappointment. Paul himself is suffering imprisonment (2 Tim. 2:9). Some who walked with Paul at one point later turned away and abandoned him (see 2 Tim. 1:15; 4:14-16). Timothy is told to be strong as there would be some who would disrespect him because of his youth.

Timothy, having been trained by Paul, now needs to fill the Apostle's sandals as a pastor and shepherd in turn. "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth... flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart" (2 Tim. 2:15,22). The younger pastor in Ephesus has followed Paul's teaching, his conduct, etc. (2 Tim. 3:10ff.). Timothy, now a shepherd among God's flock in Ephesus, must give disciplined attention to his office (careful instruction in the gospel) and to his life (setting a pattern for others in godly walk of life).

Challenges to Christian discipleship

No one would dispute the inspired, wise instructions that Paul gives to Timothy. As most noble goals, these words sound fine and admirable, things worthy of pursuit. But in reality, it is hard work, and the goals are not regularly achieved, certainly not in any even way. First of all, in many Reformed and Presbyterian church communities, what has helped "carry the day" with regard to discipleship is the force of tradition, community and social mores, and strong structures already in place—all those have helped to shape the church membership in general and office-bearers in particular. At least in many instances this was so. One grew up knowing, in general, what was expected. Years ago, if one felt a call to the ministry, he might turn to a pre-seminary course of study in college, graduate with a degree having majored in philosophy, history, classical languages, and the like. Then he moved on to take up seminary studies, and by the time he was 25 or 26 years old, he would become a candidate for the ministry. He grew up knowing Christian patterns of thought and behavior. And, it is to be sincerely hoped, he sincerely believed in the Christian verities as confessed in the Reformed confessions. The church examined him and judged that he knew the truths and that he was competent to carry out the calling of the pastoral office.

That process is not totally gone, of course, but it is challenged today in several ways. The Christian family, in which there is present a father and a mother who take a very active interest in the development and education of their children, still exists, but a greater and greater variety of familial arrangements now exist. In many Western countries, the clamor for individual rights has led to legislated and court-directed redefinition of what constitutes a marriage. Families today are under greater pressures in terms of time commitments (demanded by congregations, local schools, etc.). Do parents, especially fathers, today have the time and wherewithal to disciple their families? Do we have the resources and the godly willpower to disciple all of our covenant youth in general? If we spot a gifted youth (or older youth) for that matter, are we shepherding him in an intentional way? Are the young people of the church open to accept, to receive, the guidance that shepherding involves? Sadly enough, I suspect that the desire to shepherd, to lead in the way of knowledge and lifestyle, may well be there, but we lack good and consistent models in far too many instances.

Discipleship at Mid-America

So where does Mid-America fit in? Mid-America is a seminary, a school, an academy. As such its focus is to equip students with academic tools and abilities in several divisions that belong to a seminary's curriculum: biblical, ecclesiastical (e.g., church history), doctrinal, and ministerial studies. With that comes, as one might expect, reading of books and articles, listening to lectures, writing of papers and exams, etc. Timothy was trained in the sacred Scriptures of his youth, and part of his calling was the "reading" of Scripture, studying it and expounding it for his hearers. Part of discipleship is training in a variety of academic disciplines. The pastor who is to shepherd God's people must know the Bible in order to be adequately equipped to minister to others (cf. 2 Tim. 3:14 – 4.5).

At the same time, Mid-America is not merely a school. It is also a community of Christians: students, staff, and faculty members. We interact in classroom settings, to be sure, but we also interact in so many areas of our day-to-day lives. Mid-America Reformed Seminary is not a local congregation, and yet the life of a Christian community cannot be excluded from what we do here. Nor *should* it be excluded! Part of the life of Mid-America involves students being assigned a Faculty member who is the student's counselor. Faculty and students meet minimally once a week on Thursday mornings for a time of conversation, Bible reading, prayer, and fellowship.

Discipleship in the Seminary community is also fostered by a student's involvement in a local congregation. Students in the M.Div. degree program are assigned to a local pastoral supervisor, and in a number of cases that is actually their home pastor (for students who come from the greater Chicago area). Students meet with a local pastor to discuss nearly anything and everything that pertains to the life and work of the ministry. Having been involved in teaching at Mid-America for over three and a half decades, I have witnessed the benefits of such a relationship. Some local pastors and the seminarians become very closely involved in a relationship of discipling. Something similar might happen during summer (or longer) internships. The pastoral supervisor in a summer setting may be very ready and willing to provide the kind of input that shapes the mind and carves the life in very helpful and healthy ways.

In more recent years, there have developed in the Mid-America student body discussion groups that focus on purity matters and the whole matter of "reset," that is, engaging in practices that "recharge the batteries," so to

speak in the spiritual, emotional, and physical dimensions in our lives. No one wants to be a pastoral casualty in the ministry, part of the sad statistic of those who drop out of the ministry for a potential host of reasons. If we have bad "habits of the heart," we need to spot such now and work to remove any hindrance at all that might stand in the way of faithful and fruitful service to the Lord Jesus Christ and His church.

"Mid-America is not merely a school. It is also a community of Christians: students, staff, and faculty members."

So we face challenges in the whole matter of discipleship. Things do not always work out in the way intended. There are shortcomings on all sides. Sometimes the church's shepherds are not the best equipped to do this focused and intentional work. There may be instances where a seminarian is not so open to have his life and doctrine scrutinized by church leaders, especially by men already ordained to the pastoral office. After all, let's face it: this requires a great deal of trust, love, and genuine concern on all sides. Do I as a seminarian really believe that pastoral supervisors, faculty counselors, local elders, etc., really have my best interests at heart? Are they willing to listen to my own personal concerns and fears? Are they willing to come alongside of me, not just to admonish me when needed, but also to help me make real progress? Am I as an ordained pastor willing to take risks myself and let others see my own shortcomings and weaknesses? A shepherd must genuinely love the sheep; the sheep must trust the shepherd and his leadership. Without love and trust, the entire matter of "successful" discipleship can be called into question.

So, there is room for improvement – a great deal of it. We can always expect that in this life. The challenge to improve in the entire matter of discipleship on the seminary level really is a kind of microcosm of what belongs to the church in general. In the Christian life, who is mentoring you? That can be one, or many, godly people in the faith. But whom are you mentoring, instructing, and leading? The holy tradition of the Reformed faith and life must be passed on. *Semper reformanda!* The church, having been Reformed, faces in every generation the challenge to be even more Reformed, of being brought even more into line with the whole counsel of God.

Rev. Mark D. Vander Hart
Associate Professor of Old Testament Studies &
Ministerial Apprenticeship Program Director





ALUMNI PROFILE: REV. GREG BYLSMA

This month, alumnus Rev. J.P. Mosley ('10) caught up with alumnus Rev. Greg Bylsma ('05):

What were some of your favorite experiences while at MARS?

I enjoyed the strong relationships and camaraderie within the student body. I loved seeing the balance they brought to Reformed doctrine. They were solidly confessional, but they didn't tout a merely traditional line. They taught us a winsome, humble and compassionate Calvinism that I greatly appreciated. I also appreciated the close relationships developed with the professors.

What have you found to be some of the most rewarding parts of ministry?

I'll give three. First, seeing people grow in the things of the Lord is certainly the most rewarding. Sometimes it's watching people grow in victory over sin, or coming to new knowledge of the Lord, and how that applies to their lives, or seeing people grow in serving Christ, the church, and the lost with greater fervency. It is exceptionally

rewarding when you see people "coming alive" in the things of the Lord, and discovering delight in living for Him.

Second, working with unbelievers. I have found it a great joy to work through kids' clubs, sports outreaches, and other means of discipleship and outreach, particularly among young people. Being able to show love to people outside the church is a very rewarding aspect of the Christian ministry.

Third, working alongside other dedicated men in Gospel ministry. Seeing others with a passion for Christ, and benefiting from cooperation in ministry has been a great blessing.

Where are you currently serving, and what is some of the work that you have done for the broader church?

I am currently serving as a pastor at Living Water Reformed Church in Brantford, Ontario, where I have served for just under 10 years. Additionally, I serve as Adjunct Faculty at Mid-America, and serve on a

committee exploring the development of their Missions Training Institute. I also serve currently as the chairman of the URCNA Missions Committee. I speak occasionally for various conferences, youth groups, and the like.

You recently taught an interim class on Advanced Preaching at Mid-America. What did you enjoy about teaching that class?

I really enjoyed the opportunity to build relationships with the students. I enjoyed my time with them and it brought back fond memories of my days as a student.

I also enjoyed challenging them (and seeing them grow) in the freedom to preach Christ in an applicatory way from their chosen text. We wrestled with how the substance of each text addresses the lives of the people to whom we speak. We also spoke about how we can preach in a way that is more accessible for a broad spectrum of people in the pews. I sincerely pray the best is yet to come – seeing growth in the men as preachers after I mark their final assignments!

Rev. J.P. Mosley
2010 Alum

ALUMNI UPDATES



Tim McClymonds
(2007) served from 2008 to 2012 as Pastor of Garst Mill

OPC in Roanoke, VA. From 2012 to 2013 he took a sabbatical to care for his late wife Nancy, who went home to be with the Lord in 2014. From 2013 to 2019 he worked as a workplace chaplain for Corporate Chaplains of America. In 2017 he married his wife Anlle who is a native of Ecuador. In September of 2019 he began serving as pastor of Christ Covenant OPC in Sheridan, Indiana. "We praise the Lord for the marvelous love and faithfulness He has shown to us in our earthly journey."



Vern Picknally
(1999) serves as pastor of Bethel

Reformed OPC in Fremont, MI. In November of 1999, Vern, with his family, moved to Carson, ND to serve Bethel OPC as stated supply and then later as pastor. April 28th marks the 20th anniversary of his ordination. In September of 2011 he took a call to serve as a church planter at Fremont OPC in Fremont, MI, under the oversight of Little Farms OPC in Marne, MI. On February 5th, 2016, Fremont OPC was organized as a new and separate congregation of the OPC, changed its name to Bethel Reformed OPC, and Vern was installed as her first pastor. Vern and his wife, Lena, have been blessed with three children: Vera, Ivan, and Nadia. Their oldest, Vera, was married in February at Covenant OPC in Orland Park with Vern and Rev. Iain Wright officiating together.



Nathan Voss
(2019) married Lauren Kuipers on October 12, 2019. He finished class

work at Calvin Seminary and hopes to be approved by synod and eligible for call in the CRC this spring/summer. Nathan is currently working at Faith CRC in Elmhurst, IL.



Brian Zegers
(2013) works with Word of Life Ministry (supervised by Salem URC,

Bowmanville, ON) as full-time home missionary to the Muslim community in Toronto, Ontario, since 2015. By means of semi-annual Christian-Muslim Forums, two monthly Christian-Muslim discussion evenings, one-on-one Bible studies, distributing Christian literature, building relationships through hosting and visiting, writing for Muslim newspapers and websites, and various other means, he shares the Gospel, which is the power of God unto the salvation for everyone who believes (Romans 1:16).

Stay connected!

Alumni, help keep the Mid-America community informed by sending your life updates to Rachel Luttjeboer at rluttjeboer@midamerica.edu.

IN MEMORIAM: REV. KNOTT



Rev. Edward J. Knott, age 97, was called home to meet his Lord and Savior on November 29, 2019. The Mid-America community

mourns his death, and remembers gratefully the key role Rev. Knott played in the founding of the Seminary as well as his years of service as a member of the Board of Trustees (including service as Board President). Rev. Knott was ordained as a minister in the Protestant Reformed Churches in 1947. After a number of years of service in the PRC, he accepted a call to Beverly Christian Reformed Church (Wyoming, MI), which he served from 1961-1971. Rev. Knott considered the highlights of his ministry to include the meeting at which Mid-America was formed (April 22, 1981), the meeting at which the United Reformed Churches was established (November, 1995), and attendance at the first synod of the URCNA in 1996. We extend our condolences to the Knott family in their loss. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord ... that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!" (Rev. 14:13)



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MID-AMERICA REFORMED SEMINARY'S

2020 COMMENCEMENT

THURSDAY, MAY 7, 2020 AT 7:30 P.M.
BETHEL CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH, LANSING, IL