

# the messenger

Mid-America Reformed Seminary

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AND VOCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY**  
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# THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

## “STEWARDS OF THE GOSPEL”



*“This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.” 1 Cor. 4:1-2*

Of all the Scriptural passages that speak to the task of a minister of the Word, my favorite go-to passage is 1 Corinthians 4:1-5. When I sustained my ordination examination at Classis Southern California in 1982 (a few years ago!), the chairman of classis impressed this passage upon my conscience. It has lived with me ever since.

The main theme of this passage is that the minister, as a servant of Christ, is a steward. In some ways this is the most basic description of a pastor's identity. For that reason, John R. W. Stott, in his fine book, *The Preacher's Portrait*, gives his attention to this description of a minister before others like “herald,” “witness,” “father” and “servant.”

The occasion for the apostle Paul's instruction to the Corinthian church as to how they ought to regard those who minister the Word was an unseemly division within the congregation. Some were saying, “I follow Paul” or “I follow Apollos” or “I follow Cephas” (1 Cor. 1:12). They were quarreling among themselves as to whom among these ministers of the Word was the greatest.

Against this background, Paul reminds them that ministers are merely “servants” of Christ, their Master. In comparison to Christ, they amount to little. Indeed, he goes so far as to say that “neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth” (1 Cor. 3:7). That's quite a sobering reminder to any minister or student who aspires to the ministry. Don't forget that the gospel of Christ and the God whom you serve are everything. You are nothing more than a lowly servant whom God is pleased to use to accomplish His purposes.

In the world of the New Testament, the position of a steward was well-known. Stewards were household managers, authorized by the master and owner of the household to exercise authority on his behalf, dispensing his goods to all the household's members. Thus, in 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, the apostle Paul encourages the Corinthians to regard their ministers as trustees to whom God has given His “mysteries,” that is, the good news concerning Jesus Christ and His saving work (cf. 1 Cor. 2:7). They are custodians of the joyful message of the gospel that is summed up in His cross and resurrection “according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3-4).

After identifying the office of a minister as that of a steward, Paul underscores the one requirement that sums up his calling: he must be a “trustworthy” or “faithful” minister of the gospel Word that has been entrusted to him. Roughly translated, Paul says: “In this connection, then, what is sought after is that they be found faithful.” The one thing needful or indispensable to the work of a steward is that he convey the gospel message to his hearers just as he received it. As Calvin puts it: “they hand over to men, ‘from hand to hand’ as we say, not what suits their own taste, but what the Lord has committed to their charge.”

Because a minister is a servant of Christ and a steward of the gospel entrusted to him, the apostle Paul concludes the opening section of 1 Corinthians 4 with a focus upon who ultimately takes the measure of their work. If a minister is God's trustee, he will not ultimately be examined by others, even by himself, but by the One who entrusted him with his calling. There will be assessment of his stewardship, but the assessment that finally matters is the one given by God Himself. A judgment upon his faithfulness will be given and “then each one will receive his commendation from God.”

There is much in this for us to ponder, whether as Christians, as ministers, or as students who are preparing for the ministry. Do we have a proper view of the minister and his calling? Do we who are ministers know to Whom we are ultimately accountable in the ministry? For those who teach seminary students, we are obliged not only to acquaint our students with the “mysteries” of the gospel Word but also to impress upon them the awesomeness of the task to be faithful to the trust given them. In your prayers for the on-going work of Mid-America, then, make it your priority to pray that we will “keep the faith” (1 Tim. 4:7).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cornelis P. Venema".

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

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## MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

“Back to school!” “Can you believe how fast the summer has gone?” “Where on earth did summer even go?”

If your community is like mine, and I suspect that it is, these are a few phrases we've heard uttered over the last several weeks. Here at Mid-America, our students are returning from their summer internships, and new students are just getting their feet wet in a brand-new semester. It's great to be back in session, doing what we love – preparing our students for a lifetime of faithful, God-glorifying ministry.

In this issue, you'll get introduced to our incoming class of Juniors, as well as reacquainted with alumni. You'll get a sense of our financial situation and join us in bidding farewell in some sense to a beloved professor of 40 years. You'll catch up on the news of the summer and take a deep dive into Dr. Compton's recent dissertation on Ezekiel.

As we begin a new academic year, we step forward in faith – that our Lord would equip our professors with what is needed to continue to offer a robust educational experience augmented by practical opportunities to develop their ministerial abilities. We entrust our financial needs to our Heavenly Father and hope that He will further stir in your hearts the desire to joyfully steward the resources He has entrusted into your care towards the vital work being done here.

It's a pleasure to update you on all things “Mid-America.” Thanks for reading, and thanks for your support. Now, turn the page, and enjoy!

**Michael B. Deckinga**  
Vice-President of Advancement



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### Editor

Michael Deckinga, Vice-President of Advancement

### Contributing Writers

Dr. Cornelis P. Venema, President

Michael B. Deckinga, Vice-President of Advancement

Brian Blummer, Director of Enrollment Management

Dr. R. Andrew Compton, Associate Professor of New Testament Studies, M.T.S. Director

Dr. J. Mark Beach, Professor of Ministerial and Doctrinal Studies, Faculty Secretary, Managing Editor of MAJT

Ken Anema, Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament, Divine Hope Reformed Bible Seminary

### Layout and Design

Rachel Luttjeboer, Secretary of Media & Publications

### 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.

### Website

[www.midamerica.edu](http://www.midamerica.edu)

### Address

Mid-America Reformed Seminary  
229 Seminary Dr.  
Dyer, IN 46311

### Phone:

219-864-2400

# DEVELOPMENT REPORT: “RECAP, RECHARGE, & RENEW”

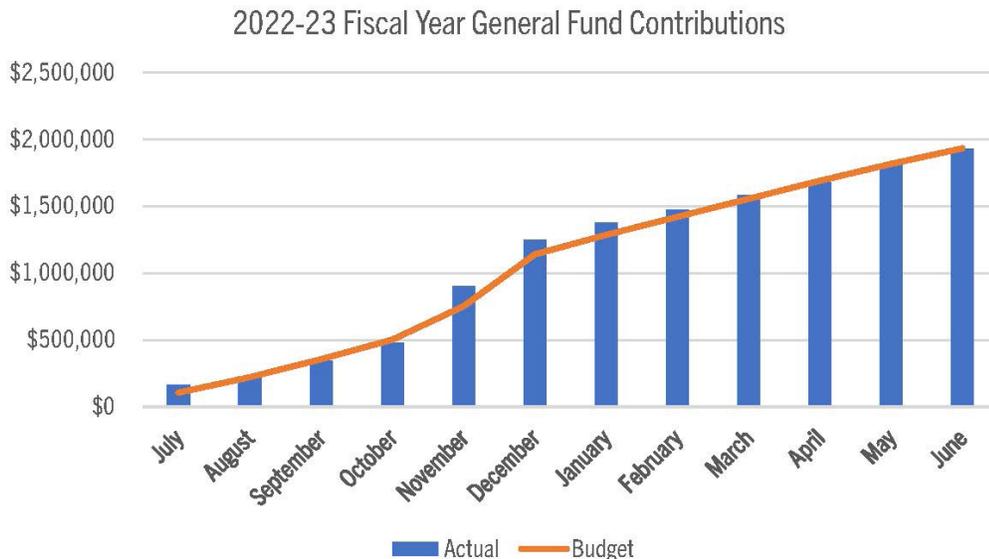
People often ask me, “So, what do you do all summer?” Knowing I work at an educational institution, albeit higher education, people still default to when they were in school – “School’s out for summer!” as the anthem says. I’ll admit, after a flurry of activity in mid-May, with our Board of Trustees on campus, coupled with commencement, there is a kind of “Ah, we’ve made it” sentiment. We’ve checked those boxes, and now we can breathe a little easier. We trade the sport coats for sport shirts, enjoy lunch breaks outside sometimes, and even fire up the Seminary grill occasionally. But no, our work isn’t on cruise control for a few months. Those of us who remain on campus are busy with plenty to do! We look at the year gone by (don’t forget our fiscal year resets on July 1st), grab moments of rest and recreation, and then shift to the year ahead. We recap, recharge, and renew.

## Recap

Last fiscal year was nothing short of a testament to the Lord’s gracious hand upon us as He used you to provide for our daily needs. We projected one of our most significant year-over-year budget increases, and our needs were met!

You’ll notice we chased budget in the early fall of last year and again picked up our chase in April, but look how we finished. That is pretty much right on target. We were \$2,215 under budget, for those who like to get technical with the numbers. A special thanks to our Canadian supporters who funded the Foundation at budget for two consecutive years!

In a typical year, my focus is heavy on the General Fund, but this year was quite non-typical. We have a “competing” interest to General Fund contributions this year in the form of our capital campaign, “Foundation for the Future.” Our campus expansion plan brings a price



tag of nearly \$5,000,000, and this year, gifts to the project (not including pledges) totaled \$722,000. We have enough to get started, with about 50% of the project costs raised.

All “buckets” combined, this year’s contributions total \$2,767,747 — \$500,000 more than last year. Praise God, and thank you!

## Recharge

Okay, we must take a moment to acknowledge that we use the beautiful weather here in Northwest Indiana and elsewhere when we travel, to enjoy God’s creation, and be with our families and loved ones. Our summer season affords time to do this, and many of us on the faculty and staff take our opportunities when we can. I have enjoyed camping with my family, but I’ve also enjoyed reconnecting with friends and alumni at various church assembly meetings and benefitting tremendously from professional development conferences with like-minded peers in the industry.

## Renew

We’re full steam ahead with our building plans – the campus will likely be a noisy mess when you read this article. We are hopeful for a mild winter (much like last winter) so that construction can continue. The project should take a little over a year to complete, but winter weather in the region usually complicates things. We’re still dealing with a few supply chain issues, and funding needs to keep

coming in.

Our General Fund budget increase is sizeable again – I know you’ve all seen the rising cost of living. The Seminary is not immune to this. U.S. and Canadian contributions need to total \$2,160,000 this year to meet our regular program costs.

While we at the Seminary are recharged and renewed in our efforts going into a new academic year, please renew your commitment to us. We have not wavered from being a confessionally reformed seminary, faithful to the truthfulness of the Word of God. From that position, we offer a robust academic and practical education at an industry-low, affordable tuition rate. Why the elevator pitch? Sometimes in a world where higher-education institutions – even seminaries – are seemingly in a race to the bottom, we like to remind ourselves, and you, that we are thankful the Lord has preserved us through diligent and faithful trustees, faculty, and administrators, and that we are pleased to be held accountable by you, our loyal supporters.

Thank you for last year – are you with us this year?

**Michael B. Deckinga**  
Vice-President of Advancement

*To make or plan for a gift today, contact Michael Deckinga, VP of Advancement, at [mdeckinga@midamerica.edu](mailto:mdeckinga@midamerica.edu)*

# NEW STUDENTS

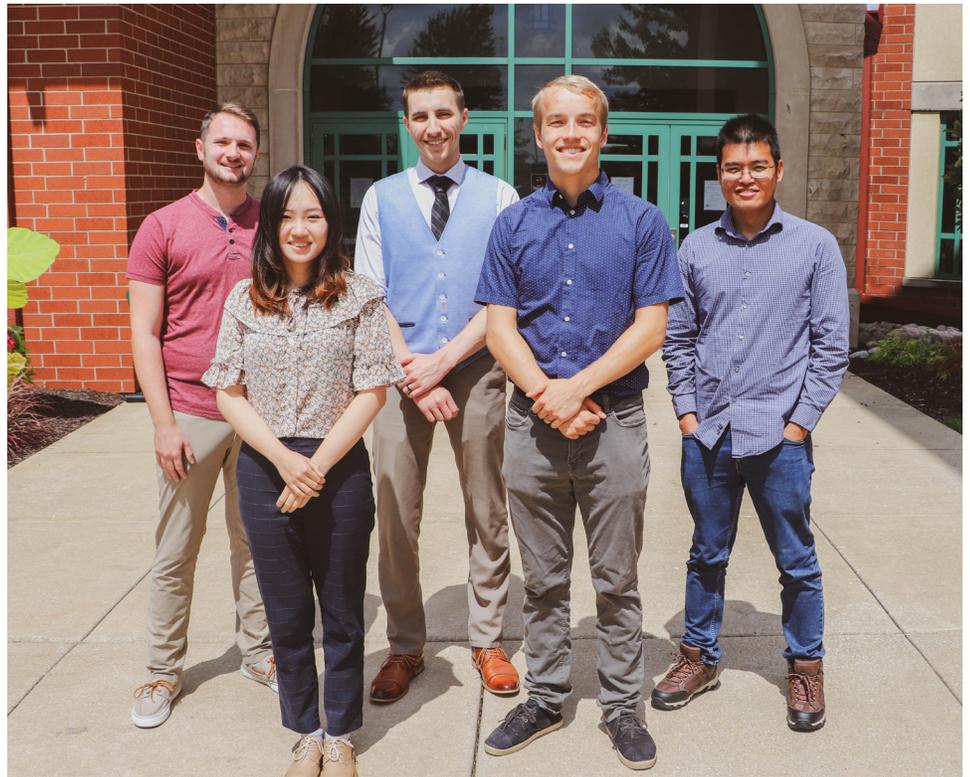
**Dane Bothun** (M.Div.; OPC) graduated from Wheaton College, studied math, and sensed the calling to seminary and “changing fields.” Dane is originally from Rochester, Minnesota, and he married Olivia just weeks before Mid-America’s Summer Greek. Dane has a passion for ministry, including street evangelism. He and Olivia are members of Covenant OPC (Orland Park, IL; Rev. Iain Wright).

**Ruth Huang** (MTS) comes from Guangzhou, South China. Her work in Guangzhou was urban planning, and she holds a previous Master’s degree in Human Geography from Lund University, Sweden. Ruth is a freelance translator of theological and sermonic materials into Mandarin Chinese. She hopes to grow her Reformed understanding in seminary and then continue her translating work for Chinese Christians.

**Hannah Hwang** (MTS; Korean independent church) has a passion for children’s ministry. Hannah’s home is Seoul, South Korea. She’s a pastor’s daughter and comes to Mid-America from the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. Hannah already serves as Children’s Director for her church, Korean Naperville Church (Naperville, IL; Rev. Kihwan Choi), and she hopes to enter foreign missions or education after graduating seminary.

**Leonardi Joewono** (M.Div.; URCNA) became unwaveringly Reformed while studying at a fundamentalist Baptist seminary. Leo is an Indonesian citizen, though most recently he was living and working in Ontario, Canada, upon completing his Doctor of Musical Arts degree. Leo has served as an Elder for New Horizon URC (Scarborough, ON; Rev. Mitchell Persaud), which he says has helped him test his sense of call and learn to walk alongside God’s people.

**Bryce Klassen** (M.Div.; URCNA) was driving supplies to refugees in Ukraine, when he also made connection with Rev. Vander Hart in Latvia, and Rev. Richard Bout in Poland. Both friendships have



*Left to right: Jonathan Vos, Ruth Huang, Ezekiel McMurtry, Dane Bothun, Leonardi Joewono.  
Not pictured: Bryce Klassen, Hannah Hwang*

helped Bryce start discerning future ministry paths, and he began at Mid-America in Spring 2023. Bryce’s home is Winnipeg, MB (Providence Reformed Church; Rev. Richard Anjema). He returned to Lithuania in Summer 2023, serving International Reformed Church, Kaunas, as part of Mid-America’s Ministerial Apprenticeship Program.

**Ezekiel McMurtry** (M.Div.; URCNA) did musical performance and youth ministry prior to Mid-America. He sensed being truly converted in university and changed majors to theology, starting then to drive nearly an hour to the only Reformed church near him—Redeemer Reformation Church (Regina, SK; Rev. Brian Cochran). Zeke met Rebekah at church, soon marrying her, and now the couple expects their first child in November 2023.

**Greg Ritzema** (MTS; OPC) was born in Russia and adopted by a family in Wisconsin. Greg grew up in Reformed faith and later attended the Moody Bible

Institute in Chicago, where some of his friends had gone on to Mid-America and encouraged Greg to join them there. Greg wants to translate and evangelize among the Caucasus people in Russia and plant a church. Greg met his wife Abigail at Moody, and they are members of Covenant OPC (Orland Park, IL; Rev. Iain Wright).

**Jonathan Vos** (M.Div.; OPC) first sensed in middle school that he would study to be a pastor. After high school, a friend reminded Jon to return to pursuing pastoral ministry. Jonathan graduated from Reformation Bible College in Sanford, FL, and is married to Elyssa. They are members of Reformation OPC (Oviedo, FL; Rev. David Chilton). Jon and Elyssa are proud parents of daughter Evie, and they are expecting another child in December 2023.

**Brian Blummer**  
Director of Enrollment Management

# REV. MARK VANDER HART, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES, EMERITUS

On the evening of May 10, 2023, an appreciation dinner was held at the Briar Ridge Country Club in Dyer, IN, to celebrate Rev. Mark Vander Hart's forty years of service to the Seminary. Board members, faculty, staff, family members, friends, and spouses gathered to give thanks to the Lord for his unique and invaluable contributions to the ministry of Mid-America.

Rev. Vander Hart began his work at the Seminary in June, 1983, and spent his first year preparing to teach courses in Old Testament studies and Hebrew. During the early years of his tenure at the Seminary, Rev. Vander Hart also taught a considerable number of courses in other divisions of the Seminary curriculum. More recently, after the appointment of Dr. Andrew Compton to teach Old Testament studies, he has devoted most of his time to teaching Hebrew and Greek, together with a number of electives.

In addition to Rev. Vander Hart's

long history of teaching at Mid-America, he has ably served the Seminary as the Director of the Ministerial Apprenticeship Program (MAP). As he describes it, "one day in October 1983, Dr. Peter Y. De Jong walked into the Faculty room, carrying the manila folder with all the field education materials, plopped them down on the table in the room, and said, 'I don't want to be in charge of this anymore. The Faculty will have to find someone else to oversee the MAP.' Faculty eyes all looked at me, the newest and youngest member of the Faculty, and said that I would have to do this job. This is how I became the MAP Director for almost 40 years at the Seminary!"

Though Rev. Vander Hart was granted emeritus status by the Board of Trustees in May, I am happy to



report that he has agreed to continue to teach Hebrew and Greek at the Faculty's request. He also hopes to have time to write more Bible studies for use in church education classes.

On behalf of his faculty colleagues, the Board, supporters of the Seminary, and, most significantly, Rev. Vander Hart's students, I express our heartfelt gratitude for his faithful service to this institution.

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

## LIFE AT THE BEACH—DR. BEACH'S SABBATICAL



Sabbaticals for professors, and increasingly for pastors too, are supposed to be a time of rest, writing, and refreshment, a break from the ordinary routine of responsibilities to allow time for other projects and tasks. As it turned out, my sabbatical (which commenced in February)

was partly marked by illness. Without boring readers with the details, my increasing lack of energy and inability to work for more than an hour or two per day brought me to the doctor (multiple doctors) for a spate of tests and procedures. Fortunately, by about

Father's Day (thus mid-June), I was on the mend. After some modest vacation time and some necessary household repairs, I was able to complete an article on the great Genevan theologian Francis Turretin (1623-1687) (and continue to make good progress on another article about him). This year marks the 400th anniversary of Turretin's birth. I also completed some chapters for a book on divine election. Despite being ill for half of my sabbatical, it wasn't unedifying. My illness allowed me to gain some perspective. (1) Life is a gift and is not in our hands. Being sick (even if temporary) reminded me that I am quite expendable. (2)

When the cause of an illness is not immediately apparent, uncertainty teaches humility. It is not a bad thing to be reminded that age will chase us down. And (3), as the saying goes, "Man proposes; God disposes." That's okay. I'm eager to return to regular duties. I wish to thank the Board of Trustees and my faculty colleagues for the opportunity to pursue a sabbatical. I also wish to thank those who taught courses for me in my absence. And I thank God for improved health!

**J. Mark Beach**  
Professor of Ministerial and Doctrinal Studies | Faculty Secretary |  
Managing Editor of MAJT

# EZEKIEL, THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS, AND VOCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

USING UNFAMILIAR ACADEMIC TOOLS TO STUDY FAMILIAR TOPICS

Dr. R. Andrew Compton

The word “psychology” elicits a negative response from many. Some of the more bizarre theories or diagnoses that go under the label “psychology” are to blame for that. Yet not all psychology is practiced in this way. Social psychology studies how people interact with one another in a variety of environments. One such social psychology is “vocational psychology,” the study of how

human beings think about and engage with their work.

The Reformation is known for its rich theology of vocation. *All* believers, not just clergy, have a calling, a doctrine called “the priesthood of all believers,” rooted in such passages as Genesis 1:28: “And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the

sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” And 1 Corinthians 10:31: “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

In his book *God at Work: Your Christian Vocation in All of Life*, Gene Edward Veith explains that the priesthood of all believers “did not make everyone into church workers; rather, it turned every kind of work into a sacred calling” (p.19). This means that it is especially important

for reformed Christians to think deeply and theologically about the work they do every day.

Recognizing the potential danger of referring to all work as a calling, Veith states the following:

The Reformation notion of “the priesthood of all believers” by no means denigrated the pastoral office, as is often assumed, or taught that pastors or church workers were unnecessary, or taught that everybody could come up with their own theology for themselves. Rather, it taught that the pastoral office is a *vocation*, a calling from God with its own responsibilities, authority, and blessings. But it also taught that lay people as well have *vocations*, callings of their own that entail wholly responsibilities, authorities, and blessings of their own (pp.18-19).

Sometimes, however, people feel strongly led to a particular vocation—whether pastoral or not—but find they are unable to pursue that call. Vocational psychology, in its oftentimes unrecognized indebtedness to the Reformers, has affirmed the importance of work for one’s overall well-being. It has observed that those who find their hoped-for or trained-for work thwarted ordinarily engage in “job crafting,” seeking ways to practice or at least approximate the work to which they feel called in their current work or leisure time.

Priestly themes in Ezekiel have long puzzled scholars. Interestingly, the prophet Ezekiel also faced a “thwarted calling.” Ezekiel 1:1 & 3 reveal his vocational situation: “In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month,

on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the exiles by the Chebar canal, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.... the word of the LORD came to Ezekiel the priest....” Most interpreters view the number “30” as Ezekiel’s age, putting him in a difficult occupational position. Numbers 4 recounts that those who served in the tabernacle (later the temple) were to begin their work at age 30 (see 4:3, 23, 30, 35, 39, 43, and 47). Yet here, at age 30, Ezekiel is *far from* the temple, in Babylon.

Remember that in the ancient world as well as in many cultures today, one does not simply choose a job from the smorgasbord of opportunities. One enters the family business. This is especially the case for priests in ancient Israel. Men from particular families in

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the tribe of Levi were set apart for work at the altar almost from birth. Having spent the past three decades anticipating beginning work at the altar in his 30th year, how does Ezekiel handle this unexpected “career change”—from priest to prophet?

Among the various ways vocational psychologists have observed people coping with seemingly unanswered callings, two seem particularly fitting for Ezekiel:

- Task crafting—modifying aspects of the work one currently has that enable them to practice elements of the calling they are unable to pursue

full-time.

- Cognitive crafting—mentally associating some aspects of one’s current job alongside similar aspects of their hoped-for job to encourage themselves to engage in their work more meaningfully.

Ezekiel, though called to be a prophet, does not abandon his priestly role. Chapter 1:3 seems to underscore that by calling him “Ezekiel, the priest.” But he engages in something like task crafting to do his prophetic work in a distinctively priestly manner.

Priests had many responsibilities besides sacrifice at the altar. Though ritual work of sacrifice and cleansing were central for Old Testament priests, teaching God’s law to the people was another distinctively priestly task.

Deuteronomy 31:9-11 is a classic example of priestly responsibility for teaching:

Then Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. And Moses commanded them, “At the end of every seven years, at the set time in the year of release, at the Feast of Booths, when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing.

This chapter depicts Israelites and sojourners of every age as students, learning God’s law by this priestly reading and teaching. And since teaching God’s law did not require proximity to the temple in Jerusalem, Ezekiel could *and did* craft his work by focusing almost exclusively on this. What is more, in his teaching, Ezekiel emphasized teachings of God’s law that keep Israel informed of distinctively priestly concerns like purity. For example, in Ezekiel 22:26, the prophet

excoriates Israel’s priests for neglecting purity:

Her priests have done violence to My law and have profaned My holy things. They have made no distinction between the holy and the common, neither have they taught the difference between the unclean and the clean, and they have disregarded My Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them.

This language comes directly from the instructions to Aaron and his sons in Leviticus 10:10-11:

You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean, and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the LORD has spoken to them by Moses.

Scholars have long observed that Ezekiel’s prophetic message is more closely related to priestly concerns as described in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, than any other OT prophet. Moreso than others, Ezekiel applies the language of purity to Israel’s sin and lawlessness (see Ezek 22). He even uses a unique, purity-related word for idols, *gillulim*, which is associated with excrement. Ezekiel not only mocks the idolaters by referring to their idols as “dung-gods,” but it relates ceremonial sins of excrement-impurity to the social and spiritual sin of idolatry (cf. Ezek 4:12-15; Deut 23:9-14).

Another kind of job crafting Ezekiel appears to use is cognitive crafting; emphasizing specific images associated with the temple and tabernacle when making larger theological points. This is most evident in two main ways:

First, Ezekiel often uses the language of God appearing in His glory (e.g., Ezek 1-3, 8-11, and 43), which is a visual manifestation of God most often connected with the tabernacle and the temple. Several of these manifestations happen in the context of priests

performing duties in the tabernacle or temple (e.g., Exod 40:34–35; Lev 9:23; 1 Kgs 8:11; 2 Chr 5:14; 7:1–3). It is also highly significant that God’s appearance in glory highlights His mobility—leading His people through the wilderness—something especially important for a people in exile being told by scoffers back in Jerusalem and in Babylon that their God is far from them.

Second, Ezekiel describes the heavenly city, new Jerusalem from Revelation 21, as a temple. From Ezekiel 40-48, Ezekiel’s future hope is revealed in a vision where Ezekiel is led on a tour of a magnificent temple, more fortified and expansive than anything that ever existed

**“It is especially important for reformed Christians to think deeply and theologically about the work they do every day.”**

in biblical history. The vision ends with the river of life, pouring forth from the temple, growing larger and larger and turning brackish to fresh water, with life-giving trees lined up along the bank. While trees and water invoke the temple menorah and Jerusalem’s Gihon spring, this vision ratchets them up even further, painting a picture of the new creation of Revelation 21, though one that is temple-shaped. Ezekiel, the priest-prophet hereby provides eternal hope for Israel with the tools of the priestly trade learned in his youth.

Keep in mind, God himself revealed these things to Ezekiel; he did not practice “cognitive crafting” precisely like people today adjusting their work expectations. But as God’s revelation of his word to the prophets and apostles

is organic, using their individual gifts and backgrounds, cognitive crafting is still a helpful way of describing Ezekiel’s unique emphasis.

Of course, Ezekiel’s message is not really about job crafting or wrestling with one’s calling. Ezekiel continues the biblical-theological storyline of God’s covenantal dealings with His people. It continues to further the theme of the seed of the woman crushing the seed of the serpent (Gen 3:15). It draws our attention to the greater prophet and priest (and king!) who will restore his elect from the greater exile of slavery to sin. Nevertheless, it is significant that Ezekiel’s life and ministry do seem to reflect the importance of work as seen in Genesis 1:28, and that his approach to his priestly identity and prophetic call are quite similar to what vocational psychologists observe in others who have found themselves unable to pursue work for which they had long prepared. This is especially true among modern-day refugees and exiles from places like Syria, Central America, and beyond.

Job crafting is an important resource Christians can use when they are unable to pursue their vocation of choice. This unfamiliar academic tool of vocational psychology helps illustrate the biblical doctrine of work and its implications for the priesthood of all believers.



**Dr. R. Andrew Compton**  
Associate Professor of Old Testament Studies | M.T.S.

Program Director

# ALUMNI PROFILE: REV. KEN ANEMA

## MAKING JESUS KNOWN

It's hard to believe that it's been 32 years since I graduated from Mid-America Reformed Seminary. When I first entered seminary, I expected that I would become a cross cultural missionary. But after my first summer assignment in the Dominican Republic, the Lord seemed to close that door. What I didn't anticipate was how the Lord would involve me in outreach in other ways.

When I began my pastoral ministry at the Messiah's Independent Reformed Church in Holland, MI in 1993, I was pleased to join Elders with a vision for planting a church in Mexico. By 1998 we called our first missionary pastor. That began annual visits to Mexico to aid our missionaries who eventually planted two churches there.

During that time, I also received an invitation to give a weekly chapel message at the local homeless shelter in Holland, MI. Following each Wednesday morning chapel service, I ate breakfast with the men. Across the breakfast table I shepherded and disciplined many men who had been in and out of prison. Some even became members of our congregation. Unbeknownst to me, God was preparing to transition me to Divine Hope Reformed Bible Seminary in 2014.

Divine Hope is a prison discipleship ministry. Inmates do not have to be Christians to enroll, and they are not being trained to be ministers of the Word and sacraments. Instead, they are learning how to submit to Jesus Christ and be followers of Him.

When I first began prison ministry I tended to notice dilapidated cell houses, ugly uniforms, and shameful chains. Increasingly, I see people – real people. I look through crass tattoos and shady backgrounds to see men and women with eternal



*Rev. Ken Anema with his wife Renee and their children.*

souls who are trying to sort through deep hurts. It is exhilarating to watch the grace of God blossom the lives of former gang members, struggling drug addicts, and people broken by the curse. Even after teaching and counseling for 10 hours behind bars I often feel more energized than when I started the day.

Looking back, I can now see how God was preparing me for the work that I am now doing. It has led me to this little anecdote: "Be faithful wherever God has placed you and He will open the doors for where you need to serve next."

Recently that open door came from an unexpected venue. In July I had the privilege of being one of the keynote speakers at the Reformed Youth Services convention. In many ways the audience was much different than my typical prison classroom, but at the core their deepest issue was still the same. What brings hope to prison inmates is the same that brings hope to teenagers who are in the process of making sense out of their lives and figuring out where they fit in

this world. Both audiences have a craving to belong. When they find hope in Jesus Christ, they realize they belong to God's family as His children.

Over the past year God has opened another door of mission opportunity – Cross Cultural Missions Training (CCMT). I teamed up with the missions coordinator of the United Reformed Churches and a few missionaries to create an annual training program. It is designed to expose young adults to a foreign mission context. The purpose is for them to discern whether God is calling them to that line of service. We held our first month-long training session earlier this summer with 20 young adults – including two Mid-America students and their wives. What a treat it was for me to lead a week's worth of training in Mexico.

Serving for 30 years in the ordained ministry has only intensified my desire to make Jesus known.

**Rev. Ken Anema**  
Class of 1991

# ALUMNI UPDATES



On August 11, 2023, **Jeremy Baker** (2016) was installed as the Senior Pastor at New Covenant Community Church (OPC) in Joliet, IL. “We are excited to be back in the area!”



**Nathan Bloechl** (2023): “Since graduating from MidAmerica in May, my family and I have moved to beautiful Mbale, Uganda, to complete a year-long internship. While here, I will serve both as a pastoral intern at the Church plant (All Nations Presbyterian Church) and assistant teacher at Knox Theological College under the oversight of Dr. Charles Jackson.”



After graduating from Mid-America with a Master of Theological Studies degree in 2018, **Jared Luttjeboer** was hired by Mid-America Reformed Seminary as their Director of Marketing. In this role, Jared enjoys the creativity and variety of his responsibilities,

which include designing promotional and social materials for the seminary, exhibiting at conferences, collaborating with faculty to produce podcasts, and fostering an enjoyable work environment with his colleagues in the front office.” Be on the lookout for Jared’s independent passion podcast called *The Church History Project*, premiering October 31, 2023. Outside of his professional life, Jared is an active member and Elder at Beacon Light Community Church, part of the Christian Reformed Church. As an Elder, he occasionally preaches and fulfills other duties to shepherd the congregation. Jared is married to his wife, Maria. Together they find themselves constantly on the move with their busy little one, Hendrik (1).



**Timothy R. Scheuers** (2013) and his wife Amanda welcomed their second child, Michael Timothy, on July 20. Dr. Scheuers also published his first major academic volume with Oxford University Press, entitled, “Consciences and the Reformation: Scruples over Oaths and Confessions in the Era of Calvin and His Contemporaries.”



**Rev. Steve Swets** (2007) was installed as the new pastor at Redeemer

URC in St. John, IN. Drs. Venema, Beach, and Rev. Paul Ipema were involved in the service. Steve, Rachel, and their 4 children moved to Indiana in July 2023. He previously served 7.5 years at Rehoboth URC in Hamilton, ON.



**Peter Yoo** (2022) “At the writing of this, Jane and I have been married for four months, and God has been so gracious towards us. We’re thankful for all the ways God has blessed our marriage, but also our relationships with others. As for me, my year-long vicariate is nearing its end and I’m approaching my preliminary exam on September 9. Please pray for me as I continue to lead services and continue in other ministry duties, that I would be humble and lean upon Christ and trust in His work. Please pray for me as I prepare for my exams, that God would grant me strength, encouragement, wisdom, and humility in my preparation and in my examination.”

## Alumni!

Send us your updates  
any time to Rachel  
Luttjeboer at  
[rluttjeboer@midamerica.edu](mailto:rluttjeboer@midamerica.edu).



**MID-AMERICA**  
REFORMED SEMINARY

229 Seminary Drive | Dyer, Indiana 46311-1069

Tel: 219-864-2400

Fax: 219-864-2410

[www.midamerica.edu](http://www.midamerica.edu)



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