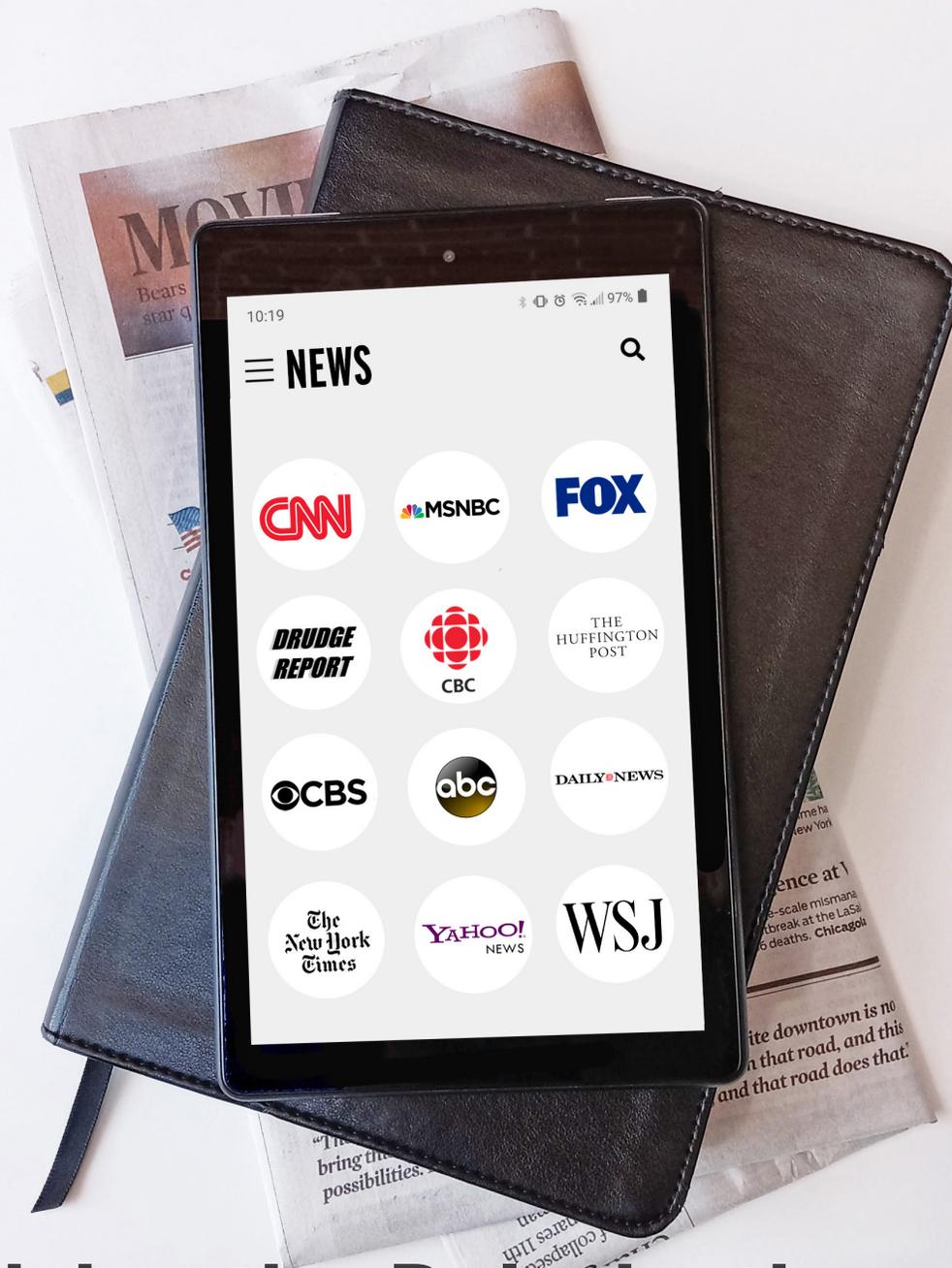


the messenger

Mid-America Reformed Seminary

June 2021 | Volume 39 Number 4



Surviving the Polarization Pandemic p. 8

p. 5: Commencement

p. 6: Summer Assignments

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

“A FIELD HAND IN GOD’S HARVEST FIELD”



In the opening chapters of 1 Corinthians, the apostle Paul vigorously chastises the Corinthian church for its “fleshy” assessment of those who ministered the gospel to them. Though he begins the letter on a high note, thanking God for graciously “enriching” the Corinthians “in all speech and all knowledge” (1:5), he soon descends to describe them as “people of the flesh” due to the jealousy and divisions that obtained among them (3:1-5).

What was the occasion for Paul’s displeasure with the Corinthians?

We are told in the first chapter that there was an unseemly “cult of personality” that had taken root in the church. Paul had received a report from Chloe’s people that they were quarreling about their ministers. As he puts it, “each one of you says, ‘I follow Paul,’ or ‘I follow Apollos,’ or ‘I follow Cephas,’ or ‘I follow Christ’” (1:12). Apparently, in conformity to the standards of the surrounding culture, the Corinthians were taking the measure of their ministers, prizing some for their lofty speech and wisdom while decrying others (including Paul!) for their weakness and inadequacy. Among the Corinthians, there was an unholy tendency to boast about the excellencies of their preferred ministers while simultaneously “roasting” those whose deficiencies by comparison were easy to catalogue. Spiritual elitism and self-aggrandizement were corrupting the ministry of the gospel in their midst.

The apostle Paul’s response to the Corinthians’ boasting is palpable. It would not be an exaggeration to say that he is horrified by it. Such boasting dishonors Christ. For this reason, Paul sarcastically asks, “Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” (1:13). And he proceeds to remind the Corinthians of the nature of the gospel itself. The word of the cross that ministers preach is “a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles” (2:23). Therefore, how dare they boast in the power and wisdom of those who minister this gospel? To do so is utterly incongruent with the word that they minister. Indeed, the worldly wisdom and power of their favorite ministers stands in shocking contradiction to preaching a Savior who was crucified in weakness and shame to save His people from their sins.

In the course of his reply to the Corinthians misplaced boasting in their preferred gospel ministers, Paul offers a remarkably different portrait of gospel ministers than the one that captivated the Corinthians: “What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God gives the growth” (3:5-7).

There are several features of this portrait that require notice.

First, when he uses the impersonal pronoun “what,” rather than “who,” Paul underscores how mindless it was for the Corinthians to celebrate their favored ministers. Paul’s language expresses disdain, even disrespect, for their unseemly attachment to one minister above another. You might paraphrase his language this way: “What on earth are you thinking? Why would you ascribe such importance to us, when we are merely servants through whom you believed?” Ministers are merely instruments *through whom* God works. They are not those “in whom” the Corinthians believed. Nor are they persons “from whom” the Corinthians were brought to faith.

Second, the term Paul uses for ministers was originally used for those who wait upon tables, providing those whom they serve with food that they neither produced nor prepared. By using this term, Paul underscores the lowly position of those who minister the gospel in relation to the one on whose behalf they serve. The field in which they labor is “God’s field.” They are merely “field hands” who plant and water the seed or gospel word that is entrusted to them by the owner of the field.

And third, the primary emphasis of the apostle Paul rests upon God who alone is the “Lord of the harvest” (cf. Matt. 9:38). Though Paul planted and Apollos watered, only God gave the growth! Just as God alone calls ministers to be His servants, so God alone graciously and powerfully grants them fruitfulness. Neither the one who plants nor the one who waters amounts to anything. They have no power to ensure a rich harvest. Ministers may be those “through whom” faith is given, but they are not God “from whom” such faith stems. So, if the Corinthians wish to boast, let their boast be in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

The church of Jesus Christ also needs to remember this in our day, as the “cult of personality” is very much alive in our culture. The ministry of the gospel is indispensable, to be sure. God has appointed ministers of the Word as His servants “through whom” we come to believe. But our expectation for a plentiful harvest rests upon God’s power and wisdom, not theirs. That’s good news for ministers and congregational members alike.

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

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

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

NEWS

- 4 Development Report: A Snowman in the Summer
- 5 Commencement
- 5 Board of Trustees Meeting
- 6 Summer Assignments
- 6 Spring Conference
- 7 Two Weeks to Flatten the Curve: One Year Later
- 7 Spring Class on Ethics: Christians in a Sin-Stained World

FEATURE

- 8 Surviving the Polarization Pandemic

ALUMNI

- 11 Alumni Updates

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

While we never really struggle plugging in content for each issue of *The Messenger*, the June issue always seems to come together so easily. There is so much happening on campus in the late spring – conferences, graduation, the Board meeting, summer assignments – it's enough to fill a whole issue and then some! I occupy a bit of space in this issue updating you on how the Seminary has weathered COVID-19. God was pleased to preserve us through this pandemic. While COVID-19's effects on our lives still remain largely intact, we find ourselves in another pandemic – one of "Polarization." Dr. Marvin Olasky, Editor-in-Chief of *WORLD* magazine, and recent on-campus Spring Lecture speaker sheds some light on what he refers to as "POLARIZATION-20." His challenge to journalism today: Print what is true, not what you'd like to be true. We've all questioned journalistic integrity, especially over the last 15 months. We read, we watch, we listen, but we also need to discern. What standard are we using to evaluate current affairs? Our political leanings? Our peers? The reactions to what we share on our social media accounts? Or God's Word? Thank you, Dr. Olasky, for shedding some light on an important topic, but especially through a lens we can trust.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Deckinga".

Michael Deckinga
Vice-President of Advancement

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Michael Deckinga, Vice-President of Advancement

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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: “A SNOWMAN IN THE SUMMER”

Being the father of 6 young children, I have been made to endure more than one kids' movie from time to time. Have you ever seen Disney's *Frozen*? If you have children, or grandchildren under the age of 10 (and maybe older), there's a good chance you have. I must admit, the soundtrack is well done. Okay, and the story is interesting. Alright, I laugh at some of the jokes. I like the movie! There, are you happy?

One character, Olaf, is a real-life walking and talking snowman. He has a limited understanding of the world around him, and he innocently discovers various elements about life as he goes along. He is a refreshing dose of blind optimism as the story intensifies and draws kids (and maybe a dad or two) to the edge of their seat in anticipation of what's next. For example, he sings a delightful tune about how he would love to enjoy Summer. As a snowman, all he's known is the freezing cold. What he doesn't realize (and the other characters do) is that his very existence depends on the cold with which he has become disenchanted. Summer! He can't wait! Blind optimism.

Blind optimism – a personality trait found in most children – works well in entertainment, but it doesn't bode well in reality, does it? Being optimistic is a healthy state of mind, but for things to pan out, you need a plan. The same is true in higher-education – a strategic, long-range plan is key to long-term sustainability and effectiveness in which an institution's mission is

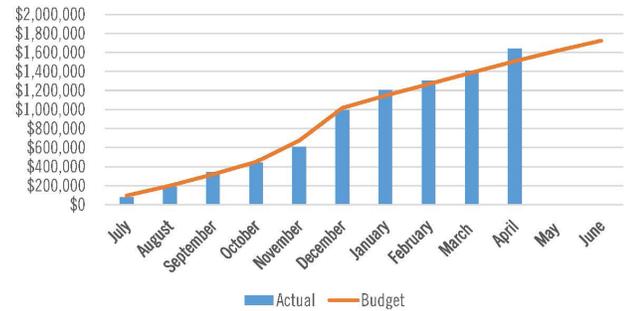
carried out.

I began working at the Seminary five years ago. When I arrived, Mid-America was two years into writing a strategic plan. Three years ago, the Board of Trustees adopted a final draft, and the various committees and key personnel responsible for its implementation were formed and identified. I was coming into this planning season from a fast-paced, big corporate structure. In other words, I was used to being on the move, making decisions in real time. I found myself getting anxious as time progressed with seemingly little action on our long-range plan. The more work we did towards implementation, the more I began to appreciate our balanced and thorough approach.

Our plan – graciously established by our Lord – is bearing much fruit. Our incoming class for the fall of 2021 is once again large, and seemingly capable. Our operating expenses are being provided for as the Seminary is receiving funds sufficient to satisfy our budget. With new initiatives underway such as a Center for Missions and Evangelism, and a facilities expansion project (more on both at a later date), as well as better exposure in the greater reformed seminary community, and an increased partnership with churches in a broader context, both within NAPARC and without, there is reason to be optimistic here at Mid-America. Our optimism is the byproduct of careful, strategic planning.

I don't mean to suggest that our only source of optimism is from our own plans. We rightly recognize that we operate each day and are sustained by God's

2020-2 Fiscal ytd Contributions, Actual vs. Budget



hand, through your generous gifts and faithful prayers. Of course, no one knows the future, but as I consider our monthly financial reports, it looks increasingly likely that we will finish ahead of our budgeted revenue once again this year. The graph illustrated shows fiscal year-to-date financial contributions vs. our budgeted numbers. It's important to note that the figures are accurate at the time of writing this article.

Join me in praising God for His goodness and for providing for our needs this year. Your response to our appeals and reports have allowed us to be strategic – to make plans to further aid the church in the preparation of her pastors – and have encouraged us tremendously as these plans are established by God and brought to fruition.

As you may be aware, we are amidst a 2-year commemoration of our 40th anniversary. We treasure our past, and I assure you, some very exciting days are ahead. I can't wait to update you soon on how we're channeling our optimism – which is not blind. You've helped us see so clearly the direction we need to go. Will you join us?

Michael Deckinga
Vice-President of Advancement

To make, or plan for a gift today, contact Michael Deckinga, VP of Advancement, at mdeckinga@midamerica.edu

COMMENCEMENT

Mid-America Reformed Seminary's Thirty-Sixth Commencement was held Thursday, May 13, 2021, at Redeemer United Reformed Church, St. John, IN. Dr. Camden Bucey, Executive Director of Reformed Forum and member of the Mid-America Board (as well as pastoral mentor to graduates), delivered the commencement address from Colossians 1:28-29.

President Cornelis Venema welcomed all, and Dr. Alan D. Strange, fellow churchman of Dr. Bucey, introduced our speaker. Dr. Venema also later gave special recognition to the wives of the graduates for their support during the arduous training of their husbands. President Venema was joined by the Board President, Rev. James Sawtelle, for the conferring of the degrees. This year, three students received M.Div. degrees. We also recognized all seven students that graduated last year, when we had no

formal ceremony due to COVID-19; three of those students were able to join us.

After receiving their degrees, and the hearty applause of the audience, the graduates received a charge from President Venema. The faculty takes turns giving this annual charge. The graduates enjoyed hearing final words from Dr. Venema, who gave a stirring call to preach the pure gospel that renders the message and messenger welcome.

Drs. J. Mark Beach and Marcus Mininger also assisted in the ceremony, placing academic hoods on the new graduates. Additionally, Professor Mark Vander Hart led in a responsive litany and Dr. Mininger offered a prayer for the blessing



of the new graduates. Adding to the festivity and beauty of the ceremony, Nancy Venema (organ) and Lauren LeMahieu (trumpet) accompanied the singing of the hymns as well as played the processional and recessional (in addition to prelude and postlude).

Dr. Alan D. Strange
Professor of Church History,
Registrar & Theological Librarian

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

The Mid-America Board of Trustees conducted their annual spring meeting on May 13-14. This year's meeting included about 2/3 of the Board meeting on campus and the rest via video conference. The Board interviewed and reappointed faculty members Rev. Mark Vander Hart, Dr. Alan Strange and Dr. Cornelis Venema. The Board also reappointed Dr. Camden Bucey, Brian Holstrom, Dr. Edwin Kreykes, Rev. Paul Murphy, Herb Sinke, and Rev. Harry Zekveld to serve an additional three-year term on the Board of Trustees. Finally, the Board approved the nominations of Rev. William Pols and Rev. John Van Eyk to the ballot to fill a Board vacancy for western Canada. The Seminary Association (all friends of the Seminary) will vote to select one of these two men.

The Board received and approved a request from Dr. Alan Strange that he be granted

a sabbatical in the spring of 2022. Dr. Strange plans to use this time to work on several projects, including a sermon commentary on the Westminster Larger Catechism and a commentary on the Form of Government of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

The Board received reports on the work of a variety of individuals and committees. Notably, the Facilities Expansion Committee reported on its exploratory work on expansion of the current facility to include a new chapel/classroom and additional office space. To answer the need for additional library space to accommodate the Seminary's growing student body and library collection, the



Board approved a plan to install mobile shelving units and additional study carrels. The Finance Committee presented a 2021-2022 budget of approximately \$2,079,000 which the Board approved.

The Board is scheduled to meet again in mid-October.

Keith LeMahieu
Vice-President of Operations

SUMMER ASSIGNMENTS

Fifteen Mid-America students were able to go out to serve summer internships this year. These will likely look somewhat more “normal” compared to last year, when the coronavirus pandemic caused many institutions to be quite restricted in terms of their communal activities. The seminarians will experience the wide range of ministerial activities, learning to be flexible at times when the situation calls for such. In any case, we desire your prayers for these students, seeking the Lord’s blessing upon their labor of bringing God’s Word to bear in the lives of their hearers. Below is the list of the students and their places of service:

Nathaniel Bloechl	Covenant Presbyterian Church (OPC) Hammond, Wisconsin	David Myhren	Nampa United Reformed Church Nampa, Idaho
Joshua Carpenter	Grace Church (PCA) Lansing, Illinois	Praveen Phinehas	Hills United Reformed Church Hills, Minnesota
Caleb Castro	Trinity United Reformed Church Visalia, California	Matthew van der Woerd	Redeemer United Reformed Church St. John, Indiana
Andrew Chang	Bethel Presbyterian Church (PCA) Palatine, Illinois	David Voytek	First Reformed Church (RCUS) Aberdeen, South Dakota
Stephen Corbitt	Honolulu Bible Church Honolulu, Hawaii	Michael Wall	Cornerstone United Reformed Church Hudsonville, Michigan
Jae Kim	Pipestone Christian Reformed Church Pipestone, Minnesota	Ken Wojnarowski	First Church (PCA) Lansing, Illinois
Joseph Kim	Bethel Presbyterian Church (PCA) Palatine, Illinois	Peter Yoo	Highland Korean Presbyterian Church Highland, Indiana
Israel Ledee	Brainard Avenue Baptist Church Chicago, Illinois		

SPRING CONFERENCE

On Thursday, April 22, 2021, Dr. Marvin Olasky delivered a three-part series of lectures entitled, *Christians and American Journalism*: (1). Introduction to Journalism, (2). Journalism Highlights Reel, (3). From Theory to Practice.

Lecture one was a rapid-fire introduction to journalistic practice. He emphasized on how we can report at “street-level,” not “suite-level,” and how we can combine sensational facts with understated prose; so we are not just “yelling at each other.”

Lecture two was a journalism history highlights reel, where Dr. Olasky demonstrated how American journalism moved from the official story of colonial days, which was essentially public relations for the

governmental powers, to the corruption story that dominated much of the 19th century. Journalism in the 20th century moved to the oppression story. Big private institutions are the enemy. We need human gods within government to deliver us. And in the 21st century we see an odd melding of the official story and the oppression story.

In Lecture three, Dr. Olasky took us from theory to practice with an examination of some reporting during the past seven years.

Dr. Olasky gave practical insight as to using caution in the right use of Scripture



in reporting, while also clearly holding to the necessity of reporting from a biblical worldview. He ended giving a brief overview of his own life’s history unto God’s glory.

Luke Walkup

TWO WEEKS TO FLATTEN THE CURVE: ONE YEAR LATER

Last March, Mid-America Reformed Seminary received word that because we were an educational institution, and thus, a “non-essential” enterprise, we would have to learn and work remotely. We were not alone in this. As the new COVID-19 virus came on the stage, many organizations were sending their employees and/or students home.

Everyone was told to participate for two weeks to avoid overrunning hospitals with individuals experiencing complications from the virus. We remained in remote learning mode for the duration of the semester.

Shortly thereafter, employees of the

Seminary began reporting for duty in-person. It was nice to be back. Considering many students serve in summer internships, it was very easy to be socially distant throughout the summer. Plans were underway to develop protocols ahead of the start of the Fall semester.

Many precautions were considered – face masks, hand washing, social distancing, to name a few. The Seminary was very concerned about the health and well-being of the faculty, staff, and students. Also, a top priority was to hold classes on campus, as well as create a healthy environment within which the staff could work. Mid-America is convinced that ministry preparation is done best face to face – not

through a computer screen.

The Seminary was not immune from a case of COVID here and there. We’re thankful that the cases our faculty and students contracted were mild enough for full recovery to take place. Since the beginning of the spring semester, social events and fellowship opportunities were reintroduced, coupled with an easing of precautions.

As we commemorate the one-year anniversary of “two weeks to flatten the curve,” we’re reminded of and thankful for God’s providence.

Michael Deckinga
Vice-President of Advancement

SPRING EVENING CLASS ON ETHICS CHRISTIANS LIVING IN A SIN-STAINED WORLD

I had the privilege of teaching the evening class this Spring, where we explored some select topics in Christian ethics. The class was well attended, with many more viewers joining us via live stream. The Christian life is a challenge, as we all know, and among those challenges is learning how to weigh and sort out moral issues. In our first class we looked at this process and why it is important. What is of particular interest is how Christians from different faith traditions view the Christian life differently, including the responsibility of believers living in the world. These distinct approaches or paradigms affect how we engage our neighbors and conduct ourselves in the day-to-day affairs.

Although no one really wants to talk about it, the problem of pornography and its harmful repercussions for individuals and society was the subject matter of the second class, along with the controversial issue of transgenderism. The church is not facing up to such issues as boldly or honestly as it needs to be doing. The class

offered a beginning remedy to this neglect. For the third evening class we examined the issue of the Christian’s engagement in society. As a test case, we used the example of a believer who owns a plumbing and heating business. It becomes apparent that diverse perspectives (paradigms) on how a Christian views his life before God (or doesn’t) and views creation as belonging to God (or doesn’t) affects how he approaches and conducts his business as a plumber—which has little or nothing to do with the mechanics of plumbing but has much to do with how he shapes his business and labors in service to others. An approach that acknowledges that Jesus Christ is Lord of all-of-life pursues this task quite distinctly from approaches that either underplay or overplay the cultural antithesis between believers and unbelievers.



In the fourth and final class of the series we took up the problem of truth-telling in a world of deception. We are surrounded by lies—even in the church. Here we explored how the truth is not owed to evil doers who would use truth to do more evil.

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

FEATURE

SURVIVING THE POLARIZATION PANDEMIC

by Dr. Marvin Olasky





The United States may be recovering from COVID-19, but a second pandemic, POLARIZATION-20, shows no sign of abating. Many journalists spread the disease for both ideological and financial reasons. Christians know the sky is not falling because God holds up the sky, but *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* on the left, and Fox News on the right, have learned that anger and doomsaying sell newspapers and attract viewers.

We should know, though, that our present age is not the first time polarization has ruled American politics. In 1800 Federalists and Jeffersonians attacked each other with rhetoric as harsh as anything we've heard recently. (They did use seven-letter words like "liberty" instead of the four-letter words common in our terser era.) Much of the press so often served as cheerleaders for one side or the other that journalists seemed unlikely to survive an ideological death spiral.

But some of them did emerge. In this short essay I'll tell the story of one largely forgotten editor, Nathaniel Willis, and his early 19th century Christian colleagues. I'll then give you a look inside the thinking at *WORLD*, a practitioner of Willis journalism, and conclude with some thoughts on what we can learn from Abraham Lincoln.

Willis was born in 1780, one year before a British army surrendered at Yorktown. He grew up with the new nation. Early in the nineteenth century he edited *The Eastern Argus*, a partisan newspaper in Maine. In 1807, though, his life changed. Willis went to hear what he thought would be a political speech by a minister, but the minister brought his listeners back to Biblical basics.

Willis, in his own words, "was much interested, and became a constant hearer. The Holy Spirit led me to see . . . that the Bible is the Word of God — that Christ is the only Savior, and that it is by grace we are saved, through faith." The new vision changed Willis' life: He "began to moderate the severity of party spirit in the *Argus*, and extracted from other papers short articles on religious subjects."

Willis wanted to make the *Argus* an explicitly Christian newspaper, but local politicians who had backed the newspaper opposed him, so Willis moved to Boston, opened up a print shop there, and investigated the journalistic marketplace. Some newspapers, Willis found, were largely political and commercial. Others mainly served as church public-

relations organs specializing in ecclesiastical news. Willis closely analyzed three religious weeklies in particular and would not even count them as newspapers, for "a proper newspaper contains secular news, foreign and domestic."

With coeditor Sidney Morse, Willis then produced the first issue of *The Boston Recorder* on January 3, 1816. According to the Prospectus published that day, the *Recorder* was to be a newspaper with "the earliest information of all such events as mankind usually deem important." He wanted news stories to be written in a way that realistically showed the consequences of sin and the need for Christ: All kinds of stories provided "occasion to record many signal triumphs of divine grace over the obduracy of the human heart."

For example, a *Recorder* article in 1819 headlined "Shocking Homicide" reported that a man had killed his own son after being "for a long time troubled with irreligious fears, and a belief that his sins were too numerous to be pardoned." An article in 1820 criticized Admiral Stephen Decatur for fighting a duel for fear of being declared a coward: He forgot "that there is no honor, which is valuable and durable, save that which comes from God."

Christian-run newspapers in other cities had similar formats and success. The *Baltimore Chronicle*, in its international coverage, described the troubles of one king: "A bloody cloud now swims before his vision, distilling blood instead of rain; the agitated monarch sees nothing but mangled limbs and bleeding bodies.... If Divine Providence had intended to have produced a living instance of the worthlessness of human grandeur, could a more awful example have been afforded?" The *Portland Gazette*, for its local coverage, described how two persons were killed by lightning within a house, for want of a lightning rod. It then concluded, "By such events, as well as by a multitude of electrical experiments, Providence is teaching us."

These Christian newspapers attempted to provide a biblical worldview regarding all aspects of life, not just church news. One Ohio newspaper declared that the Christian newspaper should be a provider of not "merely religious intelligence, but a newspaper, complete in every department of general news, yet upon a religious, instead

of a political or literary basis.” Another, the *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, proclaimed, “Let theology, law, medicine, politics, literature, art, science, commerce, trade, architecture, agriculture — in fine, all questions which concern and secure the welfare of a people — be freely discussed and treated, and this, too, for God, for Jesus Christ, and the advancement of the Redeemer’s kingdom among men.”

Overall, many early Christian journalists showed an awareness of how the Bible uses bad news to show us the wages of sin and to prepare us for understanding the necessity of the Good News. The journalists knew that general statements about man’s corruption were far less gripping than coverage with specific detail of the results of sin and misery.

My wife and I have set up a small foundation, Zenger House, named after John Peter Zenger, a pioneering New York Christian journalist who did jail time in 1735 for telling the truth. Zenger House next year plans to begin awarding Nathaniel Willis Prizes for biblically objective reporting.

Christian journalism declined during the nineteenth century as Reformed understanding of God’s sovereignty in all areas of life became a minority position within Protestantism. Journalists influenced by Unitarianism and pantheism abandoned their Christian heritage. I’ve explored that history in two books, *Prodigal Press* and *Reforming Journalism*, and won’t repeat it all here, except to note that those titles summarize my view of the ghosts of American journalism past and my hope for the future.

Today’s mainstream American journalism is the prodigal son of Christian newspapers like *The Boston Recorder* that emphasized telling the truth—but many reporters have lost

sight of what truth is. To reform journalism we need to offer salt, not sugar: We need to print what is true about leaders and elections, not what we’d like to be true. WORLD is generally conservative but we try to be biblical first, conservative second, which means taking positions on compassion, immigration, prison reform, and other issues that don’t always fit within the conservative box. We practice journalism, not public relations, which means we are willing to criticize prominent leaders, including Christians, when they are hurting the cause of Christ.

We respect our readers not by echoing familiar soundbites but by speaking up for those it’s convenient to forget: among them are the unborn, the uneducated (victimized by poor schools), and the politically unfashionable. We see government as often the problem rather than the solution, yet we honor those who are in authority over us and recognize the God-given place of the state. We are fallen sinners, but we aim to present sensational facts with understated prose: In a high-decibel society we try to have a no-scream zone.

We value on-the-ground reporting from Africa, Iraq, China, and U.S. inner cities, and we put less trust in abstract essays. We emphasize the human touch by spending less time inside the Beltway and more on the prairie. We are less eager to publish abstract geopolitical analysis than to emphasize the lives of harassed or persecuted Christians. We try to cover cultural developments beyond Christian ghettos and comfort zones.

For 35 years WORLD has tried to follow John Piper’s advice: Aspire “to study reality as a manifestation of God’s glory, to speak and write about it with accuracy, and to savor the beauty of God in it.” Our goal is to tell real stories that implicitly show why we need to honor Christ in all things and above all things. The Bible teaches us that God created this world to be His theater, so the more we report accurately what happens in it, the more we praise Him.

WORLD sometimes highlights good news, and that praises God: Our natural

selfishness means that what is good comes from Him. We cover compassionate ministries because God most showed his glory when Christ lowered himself to live among us and then suffer and die for us. We also praise Christ by showing bad news about the results of sin — because the bad shows how desperately we need Him.

On my April drive from Texas to give three lectures at MARS, I stopped in Springfield and paid my respects to Abraham Lincoln. Polarization in his day cost more than 600,000 lives during the Civil War and, at war’s end, Lincoln’s life as well.

Exhibits at the Lincoln museum show the scorn that came with his resolution to save the Union. Cartoonists depicted him as a clown, an ape, or a vampire. But Lincoln throughout his career met insults with wit, not scorn of his own. In one speech he explained the need to be careful in policy pronouncements. Here’s part of the transcript: “If I saw a venomous snake crawling in the road, any man would say I might seize the nearest stick and kill it; but if I found that snake in bed with my children, that would be another question. [Laughter.] I might hurt the children more than the snake, and it might bite them. [Applause.]”

Atheists are now in bed with our children, and older Christians battling that snaky faith in faithlessness need to be wise as serpents and gentle as doves. Christian journalists need to craft parables and not only offer commands. To beat the polarization pandemic, journalists must maintain a social distance from politicians and ideological demands. That doesn’t mean putting on a mask and hiding commitments. For Christians, it means that our primary commitment should be to biblical objectivity—studying Scripture so as to internalize the point of view of our Creator, who alone knows the true nature of His creation.

Dr. Marvin Olasky
Editor-in-Chief, *WORLD Magazine*

ALUMNI UPDATES



Joel Irvin (2017) has been a church planter of Heart City Church (PCA) in his hometown of Elkhart, Indiana, since the start of 2020. He and his wife Jamie, plan to adopt a daughter, Zahara, this August.



Jonathan Key (2018) received a call to be the pastor of New Life Church, Burbank in December 2020. He

sustained his ordination exam before the Pacific Presbytery of the PCA on March 2, 2021 and was ordained as a Teaching Elder on April 18. He and his wife Lorissa have settled into their new home and ministry in Burbank, California. They are excited about the future that the Lord has prepared for them, especially as they anticipate the birth of their first child in October.



Chris Moulton (2009) was officially installed as Pastor of Trinity Covenant Reformed Church (RCUS) in

Colorado Springs, Colorado this past November. Prior to his installation at Trinity Covenant Reformed, he was the Mission Pastor of Mercy Street Reformed Church in Denver, a mission work/church plant of the RCUS overseen by the Consistory of Trinity Covenant Reformed. That work (in Denver) is still going, as he preaches and teaches each Lord's Day evening in Denver.



On March 20 2021, in the city that never sleeps, **Dan Ragusa** (2016) was ordained

and installed at Messiah's Reformed Fellowship (URCNA) on March 20, 2021. The congregation has been warm and welcoming, and Dan has enjoyed shepherding them alongside Rev. Paul Murphy these early first months. The context of New York City is challenging. Dan is being confronted with liberal Christianity, pressured socially and politically by those hostile to the gospel, and challenged to wrestle with every thought system imaginable (and often unimaginable). Yet, he is excited and encouraged as the Lord continues to build His church here. Dan has found himself more heartily trusting God's promises, the presence of his Spirit, and the power of his Word—especially when proclaiming the gospel every Lord's Day, unsure of who might've walked in to listen. Beyond the call to pastor this congregation, the Lord also provided another tremendous gift. On May 1 2021, Dan was married to his now-wife, Susanna, and they are settling into their new apartment in a wonderful neighborhood in Brooklyn (named after Breuckelen in the Netherlands for those who might appreciate its Dutch connection). He is also aiming to finish his PhD at Westminster Theological Seminary this year. In all of these things the Lord has proved Himself kind and faithful again and again. The city may never sleep but Dan is thankful to belong to the Lord who still gives it to His beloved (Ps. 127:2).



Nathan Voss (2019) sustained his classis examination on March 16, 2021 and

accepted a call for Minister of the Word and Sacraments at Faith United Reformed Church in Beecher, Illinois where he had been serving as stated supply since November 1, 2020. He was ordained on April 18, 2021 and has begun his ministry at Faith URC. He and his wife, Lauren, are expecting their first child in October. Praise be to God for His faithfulness!



Scottie Wright (2020) passed his candidacy exam March 24, and has accepted

a call to Covenant URC Pantego, NC. Scottie and his family spent the 2020 summer and also October to December in Pantego. They have gotten to know and love the congregation. Right now he is leading some services for Covenant URC over zoom one Sunday a month, and more when needed. In the meantime they are in Ponoka, Alberta, waiting for visa paperwork to go through so they can get back into the States. He has had the opportunity to fill pulpits there often, but is doing construction work again to pay the bills. With U.S. immigration and COVID being what it is, they aren't sure how long this will be. They are praying that their paperwork comes soon so they can schedule his ordination exam in Classis Eastern U.S., and then get into the church in Pantego. In this waiting time, they are growing in dependence on God as they pray for patience.



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