

Become a Mid-America Seminarian for a Day

Pulsing with life in the dead of winter

Although the hours of daylight are fleeting and the weather is cold, winter activities at Mid-America keep days full and fellowship warm.

Relationships among the students gel as they reach the middle of the academic year and form strong bonds. As soon as the ice on the Seminary pond reaches a safe depth, students engage each other in lively hockey games.

December contains several fellowship events that are highlights of the academic year.

Faculty, staff, and students with their spouses joined in the annual Christmas potluck on December 4. Following the meal, the Seminary community enjoyed playing games and singing Christmas carols together.

On the first Monday in December, Flo Kooiman prepared soup and pies for the volunteers who assist with Messenger mailings. About 10-15 ladies were joined by faculty members in this expression of gratitude for the ladies' assistance.

On December 11, Dr. Cornel and Nancy Venema hosted members of the faculty and staff with their spouses for a light dinner at the Venema home. The meal was followed by singing favorite Christmas carols, accompanied by Mrs. Venema.

See inside for details about interim.

Mid-America's campus in winter is carpeted with snow reminiscent of sins washed even whiter. Spring's bright blossoms, summer's warm sun, and fall's vibrant colors reflect the beauty of the gospel taught at the Seminary.

During all seasons, Mid-America faithfully trains workers in Christ's kingdom. The academic year bustles with activity, Greek is taught in summer, and winter interim provides an opportunity for specialized instruction.

Anytime is the most wonderful time of the year at Mid-America. Wouldn't you like to be here? Now you can!

Mid-America is pleased to announce the initiation of its new "Seminarian for a Day" program. While prospective students are always welcome at the Seminary, this is not limited to those considering enrollment. Supporters or anyone interested in learning more about the Seminary is welcome to become a Mid-America "Seminarian for a Day."

"We encourage students considering the Seminary to spend a day on campus, experiencing life in the classroom and meeting students and faculty," says Keith LeMahieu, Director of Development. "But I have discovered that there are many others interested in learning what seminary is like. They might be high school students, retirees, folks who support the Seminary, or people from the community who are curious about what we do. I thought that if people's lives are enriched by touring Wrigley Field, they certainly could be enriched by becoming a Mid-America Seminarian for a Day."

Sit in on classes of your choice and enjoy intellectual and spiritual stimulation. Meet and interact with students and faculty.



Tour Mid-America's facilities. Browse the library and use its resources. Visit the bookstore. Have lunch with Seminary personnel. View a presentation on the procedure toward ordination. Share the Seminary experience and learn more about the process of pastoral preparation.

Any "Seminarian for a Day" is welcome on Tuesday or Wednesday, when students lead chapel, or on Friday, when guest speakers lead it.

As a "Seminarian for a Day," you will receive a welcome letter with a schedule, driving directions, and instructions. Those coming from out of town may request assistance in making lodging arrangements. Seminary personnel will also be happy to assist out of town visitors with ideas and suggestions for visiting Chicago.

There is no charge for participation, but registration requires at least two weeks notice. Register by email, phone, or the "Seminarian for a Day" registration page on the Seminary's website: www.midamerica.edu.

"We warmly welcome any interested person as a Mid-America Seminarian for a Day," says Mr. LeMahieu. "God has blessed Mid-America with a wonderful facility and a gifted faculty. We want to share those blessings with our friends."

Please note this issue's "Reformed Pathways" insert on Charles Hodge by Prof. Alan Strange.



Development Report



Willful Planning: Property

by Keith Le Mahieu

In the last *Messenger*, we considered how to address property matters in estate planning. It is important to think through how property will be distributed and who will be its beneficiary. In this issue, we will look at leaving property to minor children.

The law does not permit minors to “own” or hold title to property directly. Instead, the property of a minor is held in trust and managed by a responsible adult. You know that if you open a bank savings account for your minor child, you are responsible for managing that account. Likewise, if you name your minor children as beneficiaries of your estate, you must make arrangements for a responsible adult to serve as custodian or trustee on behalf of your children. If you do not, the court will appoint someone to serve in this capacity and you may not approve of the court’s choice.

You may be surprised to learn that your spouse may not be able automatically to step in and handle property you leave your children...

Typically, a parent leaves their property to a surviving spouse and presumes they will use good judgment in providing for their children’s needs. You may be surprised to know that your spouse may not be able automatically to step in and handle property you leave your children in your will. Unless

you specify your spouse as the manager of the property, the court may supervise your spouse until the children are legally old enough to manage the property themselves.

If you and your spouse both die, your will should name a trusted adult to manage the minor child’s property. Because minors are not allowed to own or hold title to property directly, any property they inherit must be managed by an adult for the minor’s benefit until at least age 18 (the age can vary). Additionally, you may wish to specify how or when certain portions of your property may pass to your children—an art collection that you do not want squandered or damaged, for example. There are several different options for creating a trust that will maintain the assets received by your minor children, and your legal advisor can inform you what type of trust is best suited for your situation.

Choosing someone to manage your child’s finances is almost as important as choosing a guardian. Many parents choose the same person to handle both tasks. If you decide to separate guardianship and financial management, it is important to select people who work well together. Although it may seem obvious, you should choose someone you trust, who is familiar with managing the kinds of assets you leave your children, and who shares your values about how the children should be raised and their money managed. The person you choose for property management doesn’t have to be a financial professional. Using the trust’s assets, they can hire help if necessary. Their main task is making wise financial decisions on behalf of your children.

Caring for the children God places in our care is an awesome responsibility. Planning for their care in event of your death must be done very carefully. Since these matters are complicated, you should always seek competent legal help when creating or updating your will.



Financial Update

The Faculty Endowment had a good year in 2009, helped primarily by strong investment performance. It grew from \$613,000 to \$888,000, an increase of 45%. Roughly 20% of this growth came from donations totaling approximately \$55,000. We have two years remaining to achieve our goal of \$2,000,000.

Last year proved to be difficult in other financial areas, however, as giving to the work of the Seminary was down significantly. Donations to the general operating fund fell 16%, or \$187,000, compared to the previous three-year average. As reported in the past, Mid-America maintains a reserve fund equal to approximately three months of operating expenses to carry us through the lean summer months. Typically this reserve fund is replenished by the end of the calendar year and we end up with a surplus in the operating fund. We ended 2009 with a reserve fund deficit of \$70,000. In other words, we were not able to replenish the reserve fund and there was no surplus in the operating fund. This does not place us in a strong cash position as we begin 2010.

Please prayerfully consider how you may be able to help maintain our financial strength in 2010.

BOARD NOMINATIONS

The Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees is soliciting the names of potential Board members (both ministers and laymen) to serve a three-year term beginning September of 2010. You are encouraged to submit nominations, including name, address, telephone number, vocation, denominational affiliation, and leadership experience to the Seminary office no later than April 1, 2010.



Professors Visit Prison

As part of Mid-America's effort to explore avenues for providing seminary level instruction to correctional facility inmates, Professors Strange and Vander Hart spent December 17-19 at Louisiana State Penitentiary (LSP).

With over 5,000 inmates, LSP (also known as Angola Prison) is the nation's largest maximum security prison. Its slave plantation origins and its violent history created a disreputable image, but the gospel radically changed that.

"Angola prison at one time had the reputation of being one of the bloodiest prisons in the nation," says Prof. Vander Hart. "Today, it is one of the safest."

Warden Burl Cain's open door policy has allowed New Orleans Baptist Seminary, with the funding and support of local churches, to establish a Bible college inside the prison's walls.

"God's Word and Spirit have done the rest in spreading the gospel among the prisoners," say Prof. Vander Hart. "Now there are close to 40 Christian congregations in the prisoner population!"

Warden Cain calls this effort "moral rehabilitation" and uses no government funding to support it. He has also

implemented many changes and practices that contribute to treating the prisoners with dignity and humanity.

The prison is very productive, generating income from farming, a rodeo held twice annually, and other work projects.

Since many inmates are serving life sentences with no hope of release, caring for the ill and dying is part of prison life. Prisoners conduct their own hospice and craft caskets. A prison cemetery is

available for those who have made no other arrangements.

In conjunction with the prison ministry of Immanuel United Reformed Church in DeMotte, IN, Mid-America hopes to learn how a similar program might be implemented at the prison in Danville, IL.

Prof. Vander Hart says, "Christian prison inmates have strongly requested that some kind of Bible college or even seminary level program be introduced."



Louisiana State Penitentiary, also known as Angola Prison, was originally four plantations, one named Angola for the slave's country of origin.

Prayer Conference

Each year Mid-America students plan a spring conference, and this year's will focus on one of the most crucial aspects of the Christian life: prayer.

Steve Williamson, a second-year student and one of the conference organizers, says, "We are in desperate need of communion with God. The Spirit of God must powerfully work in and through us as we cultivate lives and ministries that further the kingdom of Christ."

That is the rationale behind the conference on prayer, which is titled, "Shepherds and Sheep in Communion with God."

Steve adds, "This conference will call us to develop our relationship with God, focusing on the need for prayer."

The conference will be held on the afternoon and evening of Tuesday, March 16, at First Reformed Church, 3234 Ridge Road, in Lansing, IL.

Conference speakers will be Rev. Mike Pitsenberger, pastor of Christ Memorial Church (RCA) in Holland, MI, and Rev. Jacques Roets, pastor of Redeemer United Reformed Church in Dyer, IN.

Afternoon lectures (2:00 pm) will be "Focusing on the Shepherds" and evening lectures (7:00 pm) will be "Focusing on the Sheep." Dinner will be served between the afternoon and evening lectures (5:00 pm).

Admission is free and open to the public.

All interested supporters of the Seminary are encouraged to attend.

A message from *the Messenger's* Managing Editor:

In February of 2003, the *Messenger* went to a four-color format and a bi-monthly schedule. It was the first issue I produced as Managing Editor under the direction of Dr. Venema as General Editor. It's been a great seven years of service to the Seminary! Increasing writing and family commitments, however, make it impossible for me to continue my present level of responsibilities. This is my last issue as Managing Editor. Dr. Venema remains the General Editor, but beginning with the next issue, Abby Schaaf will be the Layout Editor and I will be the Contributing Editor. I will continue writing some feature articles, but I will no longer do the layout and regular writing.

Glenda Mathes

Winter Interim History of Christian Liturgy with Dr. Peter Wallace



This year's interim class (Jan. 10-22) featured Dr. Peter Wallace teaching the "History of Christian Liturgy." The class began by exploring the dialogical principle in the biblical pattern of worship: God speaks and His people respond with faith and obedience.

The class then discussed the **formation** of liturgy in the patristic era, its **deformation** in the middle ages, and its **reformation** in the 16th century, as well as the tendency toward liturgical amnesia and anarchy that has characterized the last two hundred years.

"We live in an era of liturgical amnesia," says Dr. Wallace. "We have forgotten what worship is all about. And as is common with those who suffer from amnesia, the result is liturgical anarchy. The solution is remembering first the biblical teaching on worship, but also how the church has worshiped through the centuries in order to lay the foundation for our own worship."

Remembering avoids the "peril of nostalgia" by being eschatological—oriented toward the glory of the resurrection and the fulfillment of the kingdom of Christ.

Faculty Update

Since August, **Dr. J. Mark Beach** has been on sabbatical. He finished a book on Calvin that will soon be published. He also worked on a book that considers the theoretical/philosophical issues and practical/pastoral issues surrounding the Reformed doctrine of predestination.

Dr. Nelson D. Kloosterman spoke at Church Leadership Training conferences last March and May. He attended the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) in New Zealand last October and conducted Church Leadership Training conferences for the Wellington and Auckland Presbyteries of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

Rev. Alan D. Strange spoke at marriage conferences in March and April and at the OPC Timothy Conference in April. He spoke at Calvin conferences in Wheaton, IL in May; Machen Retreat and Conference Center in July; Wilmington, DE in July; Austin, TX in October; Atlanta, GA in October; and Ponoka, AB in November. He spoke at

an office-bearers conference in October. He is scheduled to speak at a conference in Alberta and at the Reformation Society of Indiana in March.

Rev. Mark D. Vander Hart represented Mid-America at the installation of the new president for Providence Christian College in Ontario, CA, in September. He has been leading Covenant Fellowship at Oak Glen URc during this academic year. He will speak at the "Pentecost Festival" of the URC of Nampa, ID, on May 28-30.

Dr. Cornelis P. Venema spoke at a Bible conference in Ontario, CA in September and on Bavinck in Byron Center, MI in October. He frequently spoke on Calvin this past year: Grand Rapids, MI in August; Wheaton, IL in September; the Geneva Lecture Series in Dallas, TX in October; Boise, ID and West Sayville, NY in November; and Edmonton and Lethbridge, AB in January of 2010. He spoke at an office-bearers conference while in Lethbridge. He will speak at all four venues of the 2010 Philadelphia Conference of Reformed Theology.



Dr. Nelson D. Kloosterman

The Board of Trustees regrets to announce the decision of Dr. Nelson D. Kloosterman to discontinue his work as a regular member of Mid-America's faculty, effective December 31, 2010. Dr. Kloosterman intends to pursue service in a writing, speaking, translating, and consulting venture. He has expressed his willingness to assist the Seminary by teaching courses on a limited basis. The Board thanks God for Dr. Kloosterman's 25 years of service and wishes him every blessing in his new venture.



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