

the messenger

Mid-America Reformed Seminary

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THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

“THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS”



The Fifth Main Point of the *Canons* treats the topic of the perseverance of the saints. Nowhere does the pastoral comfort and encouragement of the doctrine of election become more obvious than at this point.

To set the stage for their teaching on the perseverance of the saints, the *Canons* begin with several articles that soberly portray the struggle with remaining sin that belongs to the Christian life. Though believers are freed by the Spirit of regeneration from “the reign and slavery of sin,” they do not find complete victory from the flesh and sin (Art. 1). Until believers are perfected in holiness by the Spirit of Christ, they will continue to sin daily and fall short of the perfect obedience required of them in the law of God (Art. 2). In this way, believers are continually taught to humbly acknowledge their weakness, to take refuge in Christ for forgiveness, to put to death the flesh, and to pursue growth in holiness by praying in the Holy Spirit and straining toward the goal of perfection. Believers are also reminded that they depend wholly upon God’s gracious preservation whereby He

mercifully strengthens them “in the grace once conferred on them” and powerfully preserves them in this grace to the end. Without God’s steadfast mercy, believers would not be able to stand for a moment.

The burden of the *Canons* is to remind believers that their ability to persevere depends upon God’s gracious preservation of them. God, who in His unfathomable mercy chose them in Christ for salvation, will not fail to realize His gracious purpose toward them. Nor will He leave them without the aid of His indwelling Spirit, the same Spirit who through the Word of the gospel effectually called them to faith in and fellowship with Christ.

So it is not by their own merits or strength but by God’s undeserved mercy that they neither forfeit faith and grace totally nor remain in their downfalls to the end and are lost. With respect to themselves this not only easily could happen, but also undoubtedly would happen; but with respect to God it cannot possibly happen, since His plan cannot be changed, His promise cannot fail, the calling according to His purpose cannot be revoked, the merit of Christ as well as His interceding and preserving cannot be nullified, and the sealing of the Holy Spirit can neither be invalidated nor wiped out. (Art. 8)

All the main themes of the *Canons’* teaching regarding God’s unconditional election in Christ are echoed in this article. The certainty of the perseverance of the saints finds its sure ground in the purposes of the Triune God: God the Father in His eternal and unchangeable decision to save them in Christ; God the Son in His work as Mediator, making atonement for their sins and acquiring for them all the benefits of His saving work; and God the Spirit who works effectually through the Word to grant them perseverance in faith and repentance. The doctrine of unconditional election inseparably joins together both God’s glory as the Author of salvation and His people’s comfort as the beneficiaries of His saving work.

While recognizing that believers are assured of their preservation “in accordance with the measure of their faith,” the *Canons* insist that they “can and do become assured . . . that they are and always will remain true and living members of the church, and that they have the forgiveness of sin and eternal life” (Art. 9). Such assurance does not stem from “some private revelation beyond or outside of the Word” of God (Art. 10). Rather, it is based upon the rich promises of the gospel, the testimony of the Spirit with our spirits, and the fruits of the Spirit’s work, namely, faith and the pursuit of good works. Upon the basis of these considerations, believers have a “well-founded comfort that the victory will be theirs” and a “reliable guarantee of eternal glory.” Believers grow in assurance through the ordinary means God has appointed to save His people (Word and sacraments). Therefore, the *Canons’* conclude by commending the assurance of preservation as a teaching loved by the bride of Christ, cherished as a priceless treasure, and aimed at ascribing all glory in salvation to God alone.

What an important reminder this is for all gospel ministers! Their privilege is to bring the joyful message of the gospel of salvation, declaring the steadfast love of the Triune God toward those whom He saves and preserves to the end (Heb. 7:25). They do not come with the demands of the law—“do this, and continue to do it, so that you may live.” No, they come with a gospel Word of promise—“God has done it, and will preserve you in it to the end!”

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

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MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Where has the time gone? Can it really be summer has already passed us by, and we are heading full steam into our fall semester? The work of training men for the ministry has resumed in the classroom – but it didn't stop over the summer. Scottie Wright served Covenant Presbyterian Church with Dr. Eric Watkins. You can read more about his work at this OPC church plant, located in St. Augustine FL on page 5. Speaking of church planting, Dr. Beach enlightens us on the delights, but also the dirtiness of church planting in his article beginning on page 6. Special thanks to Rev. Spencer Aalsburg, Rev. Bob Holda, and Rev. Justin Beach for contributing to this piece. All three of these men are Mid-America alumni – if you would like to see what other alumni have been up to, turn to the back pages. I guess this issue can be summed up in one word – work. As you turn each page, you'll get an up close look at the work happening not only during our students' time in seminary, but beyond.

Thanks for reading. Turn the page, and enjoy!



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: REVIEW AND PREVIEW

As I write this article, it is late July. By the time you read this, it will be September. It can be a bit difficult to pick a topic to write about, since so much time will go by between composition and delivery. Towards the end of our fiscal year, I wrote extensively about our financial progress, and invited you to participate. It seems only fitting that we take a moment to look at the financial results of the 2018-2019 fiscal year.

Friends, I am pleased to announce that our budget was satisfied last year! Praise God for His abundant goodness towards us through you! We worked together to make it a reality, and I want to offer a hearty “thank you” on behalf of all of us here at Mid-America.

As you can see from the graph, and as you may recall from my previous articles in *The Messenger*, we spent most of our year trailing our General Fund budget. When this happens, we take our already tight expense budget and shrink it back as much as possible – really, what that looks like is delaying expenses for as long as possible, but when push comes to shove, we budget *needs* not wants, so those expenses have to be realized sooner or later.

We analyze our contributions carefully and budget accordingly. We look at trends over a four-year period, both for US and Canadian giving – simply to compare year over year would not always portray an accurate picture of where we stand with you, our generous partners.

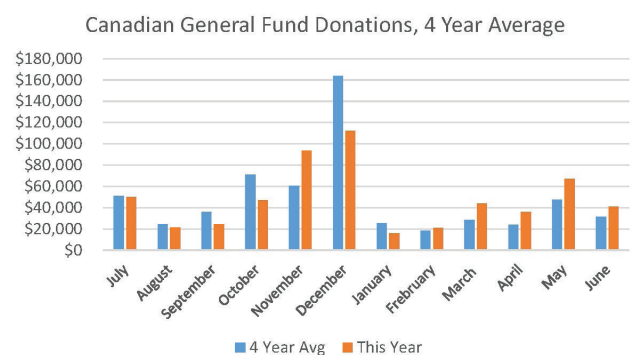
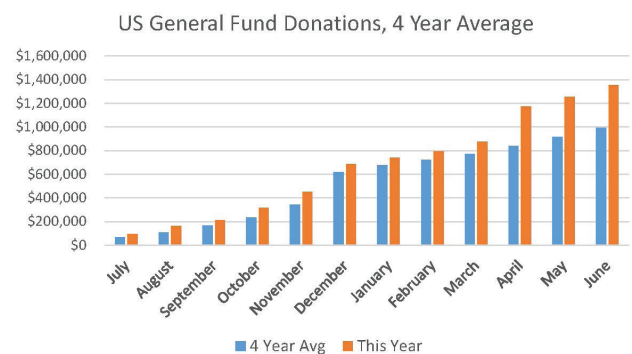
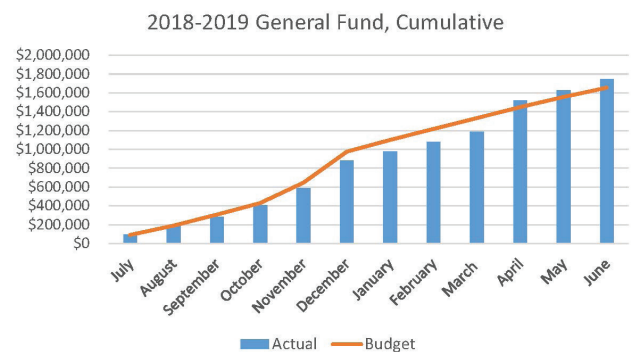
U.S. General Fund donations outpaced the four year average each month this past fiscal year, with a sharp increase in April. We also have experienced a decline in Canadian giving, but as the next graph will show, we have seen current donations outpace the four year average consistently over the last five months!

As you can clearly see, we have much to be thankful for. Your generosity has helped us maintain a commitment we’ve had since day one – affordability. When our students graduate and enter the ministry, we want them to be able to serve Christ, not service debt. The investments you have made in these men are paying dividends from pulpits all across North America and the world, each and every Sunday. They’re encouraging the flock, reaching the lost, comforting the sick and dying – advancing the Lord’s Kingdom by His grace! Praise God!

At the recommendation of the Finance Committee, the Board of Trustees passed a small budget increase to cover the ever-increasing costs of educating the next generation of pastors. After factoring in tuition, fees, special events, and bookstore sales, we are asking you to help us cover a 4.1% increase in General Fund contributions. Over the next 12 months, we must raise \$1,654,785. It looks like a large number – at any rate, it isn’t small! I am confident that we can raise this amount together – little by little. A gift of any amount will help us get there.

Over the next several months, you may begin to think about where to give your charitable dollars. There are so many Kingdom causes worthy of your support! I enjoy supporting several myself. I’d like to end this article with one last thought – ministries like Mid-America are fueled by the church herself – let’s start with a significant investment in the training of her pastors and leaders. May the Lord bless you, and Mid-America Reformed Seminary!

Michael Deckinga



SOAKING UP THE SON: HOW SCOTTIE WRIGHT REDISCOVERED THE DEPTH OF GOD

Canadian student Scottie Wright wanted to experience an internship in a church plant, and so this summer he served in the Covenant Presbyterian Church of St. Augustine, Florida. Dr. Eric Watkins, an OPC pastor who taught evangelism in our last academic year, has been busy planting this congregation, and thus his experience in this work is invaluable in providing Scottie a good variety of work in the ministry, also with an eye to what goes into starting and ministering to a new Christian congregation.

The church in which Scottie ministers has a great deal of diversity in terms of people's backgrounds. Many church members do not have a Reformed background. This too is enriching!

Dr. Watkins kept Scottie very busy. For one thing, Scottie brought a sermon series through 1 John, after which he may do some sermons from Luke. Sermon writing and delivery, with helpful critique, are key elements in any summer assignment. Scottie also has been reading books assigned by Dr. Watkins as well as being involved in pastoral care situations.

Summer internships are part of our M.Div. program, bringing academic study together with practical ministry. Scottie has seen much growth in himself this summer. Scottie says, "From my last assignment I felt like I grew, but I didn't notice it until after the assignment where I could soak in what I learned more in the silence afterward. But here I feel like I can put more things into practice in my preaching as I learn them... I think we have also grown in our sense of God's calling." Scottie reports being amazed at the depth of God, the depth of His love, the depth of His understanding of who we are and how weak we are and how we need constant nourishment from Him. This is what God abundantly gives through Christ and His Word. And herein is the value of a summer internship.

Rev. Mark Vander Hart



Scottie Wright with his wife, Vanessa, and sons Levi, Troy, Isak, and Jake.

MARS IN CYBERSPACE

Do you ever wonder if you could revisit Mid-America Reformed Seminary content? We're here to remind you that there are many avenues at your disposal.

All you have to do is access our website at www.midamerica.edu, and hover over the "Resources" tab. Voila! Mid-America resources are now yours to access.

Visit our online bookstore, which houses faculty publications and various Mid-America apparel and gifts. Of special mention is Dr. Cornelis Venema's latest book, *Chosen in Christ: Revisiting the Contours of Predestination*, and the latest volume of the Mid-America Journal of Theology. If you are a pastor or layperson interested in theology, you can have free rein to access all of our earlier Journal volumes.

Are you a visual or auditory learner? There is an abundance of possibilities for you to choose from. Take advantage of the "Sermon Audio" page, where you'll find a whole host of lectures given by guest speakers over the years (which you can also find in our Capture Portal as a video), as well as the most recent "Round Table" podcasts hosted by our professors and produced by the Seminary itself. And then, of course, our video content is consistently uploaded to our YouTube page and our Videos page on our website, and on various social media channels as well.

We hope you take advantage of these resources. May you be blessed by them, as we are in providing them.

Jared Luttjeboer



YOU CAN'T SOW SEED WITHOUT GETTING YOUR HANDS DIRTY: THE WORK OF CHURCH PLANTING

DR. J. MARK BEACH

Jesus's well-known parable of the Sower is about seed and soil. The seed is the Word of the gospel. The soil, or soils, represent people's hearts. Thing is, though, even a prepared heart, even "good" soil, is incapable of producing fruit unless the seed is sown.

The work of church planting is finally about sowing the seed (of the Word) in the soil (of human hearts). Only God can prepare hearts, ready the soil. But we must be generous in our spread of the seed—whether the seed lands on hard paths, rocky or thorny ground, or good soil. The work of God is a work of His grace—both in planting, watering, and giving the increase.

Growing-up in a "Church Plant"

I grew up in what we would today label a "church plant." It has left an indelible mark on my perspective about the church's life and mission. The church of my youth was of the (Dutch) Reformed tradition. It was an interesting blend of classically raised Dutch Reformed people, interlaced with a blend of persons and families that came from other Calvinistic church backgrounds, or otherwise non-Reformed church backgrounds or no

church background at all. We had a racial and ethnic mix of members, including Native Americans, Hispanics, African Americans, and mostly white Americans. We even had a Dutch immigrant or two, post WWII, with the brogue and all. Ja!

The life of that church as a "plant" was short (it organized quickly). The initial group (all believers) was sizeable enough to get going; and, shortly thereafter, they called their first pastor. This was in the late 1950s and early '60s. They built a functional facility, well located, but a decade later they built a new building in a fast developing part of the city in an effort to become a neighborhood or community church. That never really took off. It remained a small, sometimes struggling, church (in that sense, it remained a church plant).

At one point in its history it suffered a controversy over how overtly "Reformed" it would be. The long and short of it resulted in a hurtful loss of membership and a period of decline, including financial struggle and dwindling leadership talent. But I have great fondness for the church that nurtured me in the faith from infancy. It had hardworking pastors who preached the gospel—most of whom did not stay more than six years or so. But all of them labored to disciple new comers, reach out to visitors, and help the church become a loving and enfolding body of believers.

For me, growing up in a church like that, outreach was simply a given. It was never an option. We were too small to simply “stand pat.” We needed more numbers. We needed each other. We needed to be a witness to our neighbors. And it faced non-traditional challenges, like how its membership viewed the Christian life. Some were staunch keepers of the Lord’s Day; others had spouses who did not share the faith and did not tolerate their husband or wife attending worship more than once on a Sunday. Christian education, at least of the distinctively Reformed variety, was not financially feasible—and, for a portion of the church membership, it would have been hard to bring the theological commitment to it, in any case. This small church plant had many challenges.

Salvation is Messy Work

Yet, church planting (reaching out to lost people, planting the seed of the Word) is the glory of the gospel. It is the good news—good news to broken people who need something good. With all the shame and brokenness in people’s lives, amid all the betrayal and infidelity, along with the empty lies that plague our world, the gospel of Jesus Christ is the best of news, the good news. Bringing the gospel to lost people, however, is messy work—if for no other reason, because lost people find themselves in the mire and misery of sin. Come to think of it, believers don’t always live such tidy lives themselves. Our sins make a mess of things, too.

Enter the gospel of Jesus Christ, where the church is called to sow the seed. The preacher plants; he waters (he gets his hands dirty). And the Lord gives the increase, for Jesus comes to seek and save the lost—to enter the mess of human misery. In reality, His incarnation is nothing less than the love-driven desire to come to our rescue, to love us despite our unlovableness, to humble Himself not merely by washing soiled feet but, so much more, to hang in shame on the cross to wash sin-dirtied souls.

No church of which I am aware would dispute the requirement to sow the Word. Yet, local churches can abdicate the assignment to sow the Word into unknown soils. This is to miss out on the greatest joy of the gospel: seeing the lost found, the dead come to life, and witnessing the power of God invade Satan’s turf and stake claim upon it. In fact, to fail to do this breeds a spirit of ingratitude. It nurses a habit of heart that ignores lost people. Worse, it rears the thought that God doesn’t love lost people. It makes us conclude, since there are harden-path hearts “out there,” rocky-soil hearts, and thorny-soil hearts, too, we needn’t bother sowing the seed “out there.” In fact, some Reformed people observe that “the church doors aren’t locked. God will save lost people if He wants them saved.” This outlook goes arm-in-arm with the

attitude that we are “the savable” or “deserve-it-more” people, or that we are “the-better-than-them” people, unlike those unbelieving Sabbath-breakers and coarse-language talkers.

I think we know this is askew, even ungodly, yet many of us have not been raised in churches that taught or modeled for us how to reach out to lost neighbors. We are not against it; we simply don’t know how to do it. We know it is the gospel-mandate of every denomination or federation as a whole, even as it is the mandate of every local congregation. Every consistory or session, and every pastor, bears this responsibility, for church planting and outreach is part of the definition of the church.

This means that seminaries also play a role in this work—not because seminary education is designed to preach the gospel to lost people but because its curriculum (and professors) need to equip the church for preaching the gospel to lost people—and “preaching the gospel” includes “making disciples,” baptizing and teaching them to observe all that Jesus has commanded us. Part of what He has commanded us is to disciple lost people. Thus: Outreach, Church Planting.

Meet Some Church Planters

We recently solicited some comments about church planting from three Mid-America graduates (each of them ordained to the gospel ministry, each serving distinct denominations) who are each laboring at some stage of this work. Their paths into church planting work are diverse.

Spencer Aalsburg, who is the pastor of Christ Reformed Church (URC) in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, notes that he didn’t set out to be a church planter. It happened that he was called by an upstart group that desired a URC in



Spencer Aalsburg with his wife, Julia, and children Emily, Hannah, David, Geneva, and Annabelle.

that community. Thus he became a church planter by default. Likewise, Bob Holda (who labors at Resurrection Presbyterian Church [OPC], Oshkosh, WI) states that his call into church planting involved several factors, among them was “the spiritual maturity of the elders on the session” (his supervising session), “the mentoring relationship” he had and has “with the pastor of the overseeing church, and the denominational affiliation and presbytery” which supports this work. Meanwhile, Justin Beach (who labored in church planting for a short-time in Chicago but is now a PCA church planter in Phoenix, AZ) had a different experience inasmuch as he had the goal of being a church planter when he entered seminary.

Joys and Challenges

Without question, church planting is a venture of faith. Where a pastor is starting from scratch, the effort to make contacts, establish relationships, build trust, and convey the gospel in a sensitive manner to people from varied (and sometimes sordid) backgrounds is scary, but also stirring. Bob Holda reports that among the joys of this work is to see God “forming a local body of Christ, uniting people from various backgrounds with all the gifts and graces a congregation needs to function fully and be built up in the love of Christ.” And Justin Beach addresses the stirring delight amidst the scary, in “seeing how God answers prayer in unexpected and beautiful ways,” besides “witnessing fellow Christians express the hope they have in Christ to our non-Christian friends in the context of our home.” Aalsburg, too, mentions joy despite the challenges; for example, “Seeing those far off brought near and those even who grew up in the church dive into deeper levels of communion with our Lord and in His service.” This makes the work quite encouraging and delightful. He also



Rev. Bob Holda with his wife, Grace, and daughters Elaina and Verity.

mentions how it is a delight to interact with and develop “relationships with those who didn’t grow up in church (let alone a Reformed church),” and also to watch them mature “into a deeper relationship with Christ and His people.”

But the challenges and disappointments are present as well. Justin Beach frankly states that “the biggest challenge is discouragement. It is easy for church planters to look at their current circumstance as a measurement of what God is doing and how fruitful they are in ministry. For instance, if the number of people who show up to a gathering varies from week to week it can drain the energy out of a church planter. Connected to this is the temptation for the pastor to base his identity upon the success or non-success of his performance. If people don’t come, perhaps it’s because of something he said or did poorly. This fear of man causes him to shift where he places his identity—away from Christ and who He declares him to be. These are dangerous waters for the church planter.”

Not surprisingly, “manpower and support (philosophically and financially)” were a constant challenge, says Aalsburg. Among “normal” challenges he mentions is preaching to small numbers in worship gatherings. (Indeed—as the joke goes—some churches are so small that when the preacher says, “Dearly beloved,” the ladies blush!) There are other challenges, too. In planting a church, some of those who commit, especially those who are already believers, may have their own ideas about how the church can grow, what it should be like, and so on. There is the danger, Aalsburg notes, of building the church in “my image.” Holda tells us that the preacher faces challenges in church planting work relative to himself and his approach, specifically referring to the need to “keep it simple” and to “focus on the essentials of pastoral ministry.” As a pastor, he wants to run, but these newly formed children are barely able to walk. He says we must learn to be thankful and content with “the day of small things.” A bigger discouragement he mentions comes about when visitors whom the pastor has discipled for a time and seem ready to commit to the church, suddenly decide to go elsewhere. This must be accepted; but this loss brings a heavy heart after so much investment of time and prayer for them. Church planting is tough work. Furthermore, Holda also informs us that church planters must resist the temptation to be “people pleasers.” Be faithful. Yet, at the same time, disappointments urge us on to faithfulness. We have to press on, forget what is behind, and bring the gospel to the lost. There is, says Holda, “a welcome pressure to evangelize.”

Traits as Christ’s Servant

In this connection, it is necessary to be “patient,” notes Holda. Church planters must sometimes “slow down,” stop

pushing so “hard for growth in areas that the Lord isn’t providing for just yet.” The “extra stuff” must not inhibit the essential trajectory the church is on. Along with patience, Aalsburg counsels “thick-skinned resilience.” Yes, the church-planting pastor must work hard, but also learn “how to rest well.” Essential traits, that all of them mentioned, in one form or another, was being a visionary leader, the ability to apply the gospel to our current culture, and learning to start conversations with new people, along with taking an interest in the lives of others. Beach accentuated the need to be humbly dependent on God. “Church planters have many different personality types and characteristics.” Some are “entrepreneurial, energetic ‘go-getters’ who burn the candle at both ends, and adapt quickly and think outside the box,” but these aren’t what is most important. Rather, “more than anything else a church planter needs is humility before God . . . humility that relies upon Jesus’s power at work in him.” For, “no ability, personality, or talent will be enough to do what only the Holy Spirit can do through a humble and willing servant.”

Support from Members and Churches

All three of these pastors, laboring at a stage of church planting work (indeed, Aalsburg’s ministry is no longer a church plant but organized in 2016) said that newly planted churches (or ones that are trying to get off the ground) need other churches for support. Aalsburg warns: a church planter must not become “a lone ranger.” “The new church needs the help of older, more established churches in their theological rootedness and support, financially and relationally.” But it goes both ways, too. “Older churches also benefit from the vibrancy and zeal that often accompany younger churches.” Justin Beach states that there is a lot to learn from other churches—not necessarily one’s own denominational body—which have been ministering in a given area for some time. Varied Protestant churches can be “unlikely allies and friends.” In pastors meeting together, they can pray one another onward. Holda also mentions meeting with other pastors—both NAPAC leaders and non-Reformed pastors—for fellowship and prayer. His church also regularly prays for other churches that minister the gospel in his community and region.

Leadership is a key ingredient each of them mentioned. Church plants need strong, mature members who can help carry the load, disciple others, and labor alongside the pastor in order for the ministry to move forward. Seeing God answer prayer for leadership are among the delights and blessings of this work. When you don’t have



Rev. Justin Beach with his wife, Bonnie, and children Paxton, Vera, and Evie.

something, and need it desperately, how grateful you are to receive it. Aalsburg tells us that leadership in his church has flourished in answer to prayer, which has brought blessing to the entire congregation and to himself.

Wisdom and Gratitude

Finally, wisdom and deliberate strategy is also requisite. Justin Beach observes that we cannot expect lost people to show up at our worship services. “The Western world is increasingly post-Christian where non-Christians are very unlikely to engage with established churches. They are not walking through the church doors in droves. We must go to them, to both de-churched and non-churched people.” This is what Jesus did; and Paul “traveled” (he went out) “to proclaim the cross of Christ throughout ancient Greco-Roman world.” Yes, outreach is key. Holda and Aalsburg both emphasized the need to trust God to use the means of grace, principal of which is gospel preaching, to work savingly in lost souls.

We thank these brothers for their insight and hard labors. They expressed thanks to Mid-America Reformed Seminary for “the robust theological education” they received, for MAP field assignments that allowed for “outreach” and “church planting” opportunities, and for the “pastoring” skills that are well-suited to shepherd the lost. We appeal to our supporters to pray for these men and their ministries, and contact them, too, if they could use financial assistance. Indeed, pray for all such outreach efforts. Church planting—sowing the seed—is messy work. You can’t do it without getting your hands dirty. But, then, Jesus bore our soiled sins upon Himself—to wash us clean. That’s the glorious good news we are privileged to bring to the world.

FROM MILK TO MINISTRY: GOD'S PROVIDENCE IN THE LIFE OF REV. PETE VAN'T HOFF

What does a dairy farmer, an owner of a tech company, and a pastor have in common? No, this isn't a riddle. The answer isn't tucked away upside down on the back of the last page. We're not even going to do a fill-in-the-blank because the apostrophe would throw you off.

We caught up with Rev. Pete Van't Hoff, class of 2016, for this edition of the Alumni Spotlight. Pete and Cheryl, along with their five lovely children live in Brockville Ontario.

Pete serves as the Pastor of Bethel United Reformed Church – a church family he's grown to love over the past year-and-a-half.

At Mid-America, we see students come from a variety of backgrounds. Some are on a second or third career, others are fresh out of college. One group benefits from being in a "student mindset," while the other takes with them some practical "real life" experiences that can prove useful – even if seemingly completely unrelated

to full-time gospel ministry. Prior to seminary, Pete experienced a wide range of different kinds of work. "Having lived a little," Pete remarks, "has helped me understand where my congregation is coming from." This has helped mature Pete in a variety of ways, namely, how he crafts his sermons and how he interacts with those in the pews at Bethel.

Pete is very thankful for the time he spent at Mid-America. In his own words, "Mid-America took a weak academic and taught him to exegete the text. They did it with patience and love. They challenged me to do and be more than I thought I was able. They didn't give up, when giving up seemed like my only option. I stand in debt to this institution, and it is my prayer to fill those classrooms with internally called, externally supplied, godly men."

Pete's life experience, coupled with his classroom and practical training at Mid-America have come together in a meaningful way. His love for Christ and His church spills out beyond the walls of Bethel and into the community. Pete actively attends different ministerial associations local to him and in the Greater Toronto area, and is looking forward to chairing the September 2019 meeting of Classis Ontario East.

It is a joy to see Pete and his family being used by God to bless those around him. Pete has been the recipient of much encouragement over the years – perhaps there's someone you know in your church who needs the same encouragement to begin a full-time, fruitful ministry for the sake of Christ's Kingdom. No matter what professional background – God can use those He calls to do great things, for His glory.

Michael Deckinga



ALUMNI UPDATES



Jeremy Baker (2016) serves as the Pastor/Evangelist at Yuma Orthodox Presbyterian

Church (Yuma, AZ). After graduation the Baker family moved to Yuma to serve as a church planter. He and his wife Gwen have 3 children: Daisy (17), Lily (14), Dahlia (8).



Hank Bowen (1990) with his wife Patty assumed the pastorate of First Reformed Church (RCUS) Aberdeen, South

Dakota in 2017. They are now the proud grandparents of three. Hank is also active with Hockey Ministries International (HMI) as chaplain of the Aberdeen Wings NAHL Juniors Tier 2 team along with working Christian hockey camps in the summer, and playing in the occasional Sr. Tournament.



Norman DeJong (1993) continues to provide Bible studies for The Outlook magazine. To date, he has completed series on Ezra,

Nehemiah, and Esther. The Esther study continues to get good reviews and will be the subject of a two-hour interview on "Iron Sharpens Iron" on September 13 and is scheduled for a new, expanded version this August. He continues to preach occasionally and will be traveling to Pineville, Louisiana, for the months of September and October to lead worship at Pineville OPC while Pastor Sawyer takes a much needed break.



Bryce DeZwarte (2019) is currently serving as a pastoral intern at Redeemer United Reformed Church in Orange City, IA, through

the end of November of this year. In addition, he is also preparing for his candidacy examination, which is slated for September 9-10 and is being held in Pella, IA, by Classis Central US of the URCNA. Lord willing, at that time, he will be declared eligible for call in the URCNA.



Bob Holda (2016) was called as the Associate Pastor of Apple Valley Presbyterian Church (OPC) in Neenah, WI, to plant

their daughter church, Resurrection Presbyterian Church (OPC) 20 minutes South of Neenah, in Oshkosh, WI. In the past 2.5 years, God has generously provided 4 ordained ruling elders, a church membership that has grown from 15 to 50, an excellent building to lease, and an expanding ministry in the Oshkosh area, including a weekly Bible study for students at a local secular university. Bob also serves as the chairman of his presbytery's Youth Committee. He and his wife, Grace, live in Oshkosh with their two daughters, Elaina (3) and Verity (1).



Jonathan Key (2019) is currently interning for a year at Grace Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Hudson, OH. He is pursuing licensure to preach in the PCA. Jonathan married Lorissa

Haveman in June of 2019, and the two are looking forward to seeing what God has next as they pursue His call in their lives as a married couple.



July marks the 3 year anniversary of when **Peter Kloosterman** (1999) and

his family moved to Hastings, New Zealand to serve at the Reformed Church of Hastings. Prior to this he had lived and served in Masterton, New Zealand. since Sept. 2005. They have seven children (Jessica, Rebekah, Kelsey, Benjamin, Lindsey, Janelle and Meagan). The 3 youngest remain at home. The others are working and studying throughout New Zealand. They are thankful for the Lord's blessings on the ministry.



Aaron Warner (2015) and His wife Audra are celebrating the birth of their 5th child, Elliana Hope Warner. Elliana means My God has answered. God

has answered their prayer. Elliana was born nine weeks early on May 9 by emergency c-section. After six weeks in the hospital, Elliana came home and was united with her brothers and sister. She will be baptised on the 28th of July. They praise God for His mercy and grace, and give thanks for the church family in New Zealand who supported them, since their family is in Michigan, as well as all those who supported them through their prayers.



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