

# the messenger

Mid-America Reformed Seminary

September 2022 | Volume 41 Number 1



## THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS AND A SIN-SICK CULTURE

p. 6

▶ p. 5: New Students

▶ p. 10: Alumni Profile: James Folkerts

# THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

## “WITH COMPLETE PATIENCE AND TEACHING”



*“Preach the Word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching” (2 Tim. 4:2).*

*“It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops” (2 Tim. 2:6).*

Most of us are familiar with the old adage, “Patience is a virtue.” We are also well aware of the fact that patience is a rare commodity, especially in our fast-paced world. In a consumer-driven world like the one we live in today, we prize Amazon’s promise to deliver an order by the next day, the local “fast food” restaurant’s speedy filling of our order, or the latest social media that can send out a quick message or tweet to its recipients. By contrast, who relishes the prospect of a long commute to work, waiting for a slow train to get through an intersection, or an excessively long and meandering sermon that never comes to the point?

Though it would be easy to multiply examples of circumstances that try our patience, my purpose is to call attention to a noteworthy characteristic of the ministry of the Word and, indirectly, the work of preparing students for the ministry. At the close of his second pastoral letter to Timothy, the apostle Paul solemnly charges him to discharge his principal task as a gospel minister “*with complete patience*.” Timothy is not only encouraged to preach the Word courageously and faithfully, but he is also encouraged to preach the Word “in season and out of season” with long-suffering patience and forbearance. Literally, Paul tells Timothy that he must minister the Word with “all” patience. In his commentary on 2 Timothy, John Calvin captures well the burden of Paul’s charge. Timothy’s ministry of the Word of the gospel must be marked by “ruthless persistence.”

The charge the apostle Paul gives to Timothy is an urgent and sobering one. Paul reminds Timothy that his charge is given “in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom.” Both God (the Father) and Christ Jesus (the incarnate Son), to whom Timothy is to bear witness, stand behind and will judge Timothy’s labor in ministering the gospel Word entrusted to him. Though he may not be ultimately subject to the judgment of others (cf. 1 Cor. 4:3–4), Timothy will have to give an account of his ministry to the Lord who will judge his faithfulness. Preaching the Word of God is serious business. Those who preach, including Timothy, must do so as those “who will have to give an account” (Heb. 13:17).

Immediately after charging Timothy in this solemn manner, the apostle Paul observes that there will be many among his hearers who will not endure “sound doctrine.” They will have “itching ears” and seek out preachers who will “suit their own passions and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths” (2 Tim. 4:3–4). Paul introduces this observation as part of the reason for insisting that Timothy pursue his calling with all patience. He insists that Timothy continue to fulfill his calling with steadfastness out of an awareness that he might be tempted to become discouraged at the meager fruits resulting from his ministry. He does so also out of a concern that Timothy might be tempted to accommodate his message to the desires of those who hear his preaching.

Paul’s concluding charge to Timothy is not unrelated to an analogy that he uses earlier in the letter. In chapter 2, he uses three analogies for the work of the minister. Like a “*good soldier*,” ministers must make it their aim to please the one who “enlisted” them, namely, Jesus Christ (2:4). They may not allow themselves to become entangled in civilian pursuits. Like an *athlete*, ministers are obliged to compete according to the rules of the game in which they are engaged (2:5). And like a *farmer*, ministers who wait for fruit to be borne upon their efforts will receive their corresponding reward (2:6). The third of these analogies is especially pertinent to the need for great patience in the work of the ministry. Farmers are obliged to wait for a long time for the seed they have sown and cultivated to produce fruit. They must wait patiently upon the Lord of the harvest. They know that the seed sown will not produce plentiful fruit without the nourishing rain that only the Lord can provide.

Students, seminary professors, and ministers alike desperately need this timely reminder to continue in their labor with “all” or “complete” patience. The church that Christ is gathering by His Spirit and Word will not be built in a day. Christ Himself has been building His church from the beginning of the world until now. And He will continue to do so until God’s house is filled with all those whom He redeems. Accordingly, ministers are charged to preach the Word with a patient confidence that their labor in the Lord will not be in vain.

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: Foundation for the Future
- 5 New Students

## FEATURE

- 6 The Seven Deadly Sins and a Sin-Sick Culture

## ALUMNI

- 10 Alumni Profile: James Folkerts
- 11 Alumni Updates

# MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Greetings, readers!

We hope you are doing well and have enjoyed God's blessings this summer. We have been beyond blessed here at the Seminary. While we all stay busy completing some projects here at the Seminary throughout the summer, many of us are also able to enjoy time spent with our families. As we begin a new academic year, we do so refreshed and recharged, and we're excited to share some updates with you in this issue of The Messenger. Financial results, as well as recruiting results are reaching all-time highs. Our building campaign – Foundation for the Future – is off to an encouraging start. A seminary education is not an end in and of itself, but really serves as a means to a greater, kingdom-focused end, ordinarily gospel ministry. In addition to institutional updates, we hope you'll enjoy an update from one of our very own alumnae, Rev. James Folkerts. He and his family are actively reaching the lost – praise God for His work through His servants! May the Lord bless you and equip you with all things necessary to be faithful to Him, your church, your family, and your work.



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

September 2022  
Volume 41 Number 1

### Editor

Michael Deckinga, Vice-President of Advancement

### Contributing Writers

Dr. Cornelis P. Venema, President  
Michael B. Deckinga, Vice-President of Advancement  
Dr. J. Mark Beach, Professor of Ministerial and Doctrinal Studies | Faculty Secretary | Managing Editor of MAJT  
Dr. Alan D. Strange, Professor of Church History | Registrar | Theological Librarian  
Brian Blummer, Director of Enrollment Management

### 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: “FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE”

Did anyone else take his wife on a date and kiss her at midnight on July 1st to ring in the new year? No? Just me then? Alright, perhaps not everyone gets excited as I do about the start of a new fiscal year. It is exciting though! The start of something new usually is. Here at the Seminary, we look back for just a bit on our results in the 2021-22 fiscal year, but then we're all eyes on the future. With this article, we'll do the same.

As you can see from the first chart, we were blessed with budget-exceeding contributions already in July, and the trend continued throughout the year. As each month passed, your generosity continued to be a source of humility and also tremendous encouragement. There's another figure I'd like you to see – something I haven't seen in my tenure here yet.

Looking at our second chart, we see that donations from our Canadian brothers and sisters were sufficient such that we were able to receive our budgeted \$44,000/month. While we missed July, we caught up in December.

To all of our friends who have supported us this year – thank you so much for your generous partnership! We're thankful for all of you, and we know we couldn't do this work without the Lord's provision of you and the gifts you share.

In the Lord's providence, He's enabled us to continue to do our work, so we look ahead to another academic year of glorifying Him through the faithful treatment of His Word as we prepare the next generation of pastors. The economy, as you're likely aware, hasn't been doing well as of late, and the costs we've anticipated for this year are certainly on the rise. The Board of Trustees approved a 15.8% budget increase for the 2022-23 fiscal year. We've got a long way to go, but thanks to your help, we're off to a good start.

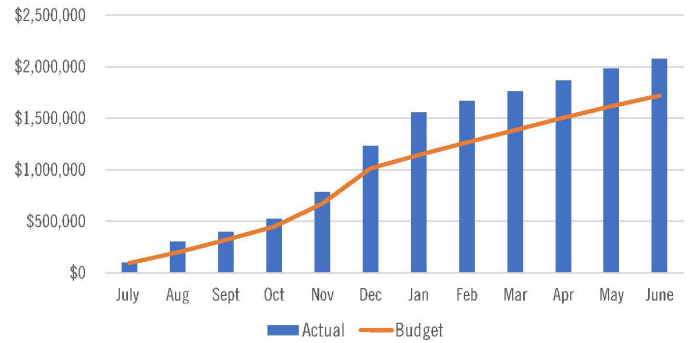
## Foundation for the Future.

The Seminary is pleased to announce the launch of its capital campaign, “Foundation for the Future.” This building campaign will fund the Seminary's campus expansion plans. Phase I of our project will include a new chapel, an expanded cafeteria, new administrative and faculty offices, a conference/board room that will comfortably accommodate our Board of Trustees, as well as serve staff and committee work in the meantime, a complete refresh of the existing interior, and a library remodel that will provide additional study space for our growing student body. The library remodel is nearly complete. Phase II, which has not been fleshed out quite yet, will be the development of student housing, utilizing a good portion of the remaining 22 acres the Seminary owns to the north.

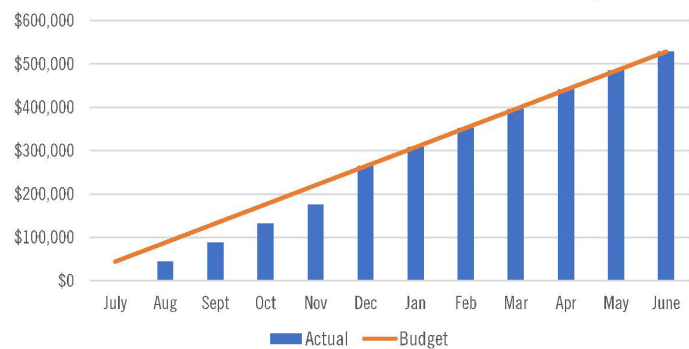
The Lord has been pleased to bless us with an increase in interest and enrollment over the last few years, and the trend looks to continue as our recruiting pipeline is quite full. Given this increase, the time to lay a solid foundation for the future is now. I'll pause a moment to mention this: if you're thinking about attending a biblically sound, confessionally reformed, and residential seminary that will equip you with the tools necessary for a lifetime of fruitful ministry, I submit to you that now is a very exciting time to enroll at Mid-America – a Seminary that builds off a faithful past that informs and guides a bright future ahead.

What is all this going to cost? Professional estimates suggest about \$4.5 million. So

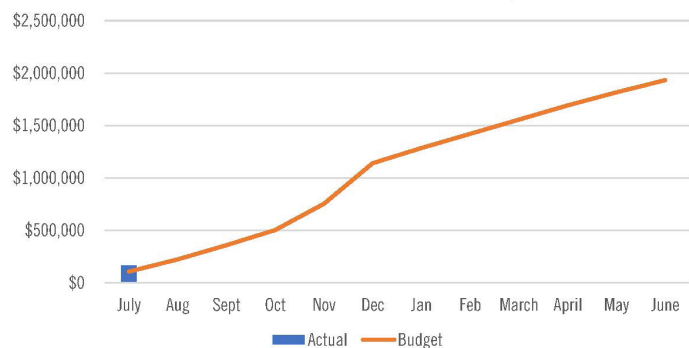
2021-22 FY General Fund Actual vs. Budget



2021-22 FY Canadian Cost Share (Foundation) Actual vs. Budget



2022-23 FY General Fund Actual vs. Budget



far, Foundation for the Future has received nearly \$1.5 million in contributions. While we're thrilled and thankful for the campaign's start, we recognize we have a long way to go. Stay tuned to learn more about the campaign and how you can help! May God be glorified through our growth. Please pray the Lord establishes our plans.

**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

Every year, Major League Baseball has pitchers and catchers report to spring training, and in the summer, new students arrive at the Seminary for Summer Greek. (Lovingly, it's "kamikaze Greek," if you listen to the lore. But I digress.)

This summer was no exception—and the eight new students arrived on campus, who took Greek anticipating full academic courseloads starting in the Fall semester. I get to know all these students as I work with them throughout the recruiting and admission process, and then like clockwork it gets to be my personal honor to introduce them to you, our constituency, as well. Thank you for letting me do this work!

**Thomas Bell** (URC) graduated from Spurgeon College (Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary) and arrives from Kansas City, MO. College afforded Thomas significant time overseas, which he says helped confirm his own personal sense of call as well as his dedication to God's sovereignty and control.

**Jeremy Chong** (OPC) is originally from Manhattan, NY, and graduated from Wheaton College (IL) this past May. He is strongly interested in street preaching and evangelism, particularly partnering with his local church and going weekly with a group to downtown Chicago.

**Daniel Hofland** (URC) and his wife Leah have four children and come to us from Pella, IA. Daniel is a graduate of Dordt University (IA) with a degree in Mechanical Engineering. He was employed prior to seminary as an engineer for a major manufacturer in Pella.

**Alexander Proudfoot** (URC) graduated from Heritage College and Seminary and comes to us from London, ON, Canada. Alexander was a theology major in college, concentrating particularly on pastoral studies. Hobbies include sci-fi and history.

**Anthony Sato** (URC) and his wife Anna moved to Dyer from Kansas City, MO, shortly after delivering their youngest



*Left to Right: Anthony Sato, Thomas Bell, Daniel Hofland, Franz Stagl, Alexander Proudfoot, Joel Trinidad, Jeremy Chong, Josh Savage*

child, their eighth. Anthony holds a career background in video graphic design. The Satos are reuniting with their former pastor from Kansas City, who now pastors a congregation in nearby Oak Lawn, IL.

**Josh Savage** (RCUS) and his wife Rachel have one child and arrived to seminary from Greeley, CO. Josh was previously a college professor in Colorado, teaching English composition and literature since 2014. Josh himself studied vocal performance in college, and is gifted in composing, arranging, and directing sacred choral music.

**Franz Stagl** (PCA) and his wife Kelli both grew up in Northwest Indiana near the seminary. Franz and Kelli have two children, and Franz remains enlisted in the Indiana Air National Guard in Terra Haute, IN. The Stagls returned to the area from active-duty military service in Georgia.

**Joel Trinidad** (Presb.) and his wife JC have three children and come from just outside metro Manila, the Philippines. Joel and JC own and operate Coram Deo Books in the Philippines, selling theological works to equip the churches

and people of their homeland.

Several auditors and remote students are also blessing us this school year, which is exciting. These students represent a number of different denominations as well as intentions for taking their respective classes. Some are studying right here on Mid-America's campus, while several remain at a distance in other parts of the United States and in Canada. Some are studying for personal interest and continuing education, while others are weighing potential future seminary degrees. We are glad to have all of them as extensions of our Mid-America student family, and look forward to the year ahead!

Some student body statistics:

Total enrollment:	34
Degree-seeking:	27 (79%)
Master of Divinity:	26 (76%)
"Second career":	24 (68%)
Denominations:	11
Countries:	4
Average age:	33

**Brian Blummer**  
Director of Enrollment Management

# THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

## AND A SIN-SICK CULTURE

by Dr. J. Mark Beach

The Seven Deadly Sins cast a big grin across our land today—sadly so. The devil smirks, for ours is a culture that promotes pride—sports pride, state pride, ethnic pride, and gay pride. Envy is welcomed so long as you're the one being envied, while anger is the order of the day. All the sins of the past must be righted. People rage on social media and on the road. Sloth (a form of ingratitude and jadedness) has come to define a swath of the millennial generation—nothing is much good and the future is not worth working toward. As for greed: well, greed is good—it makes the economy hum. With gluttony—okay, with that sin we finally get to a sin that our collective culture calls a sin—one wears their paunch to their shame, but others celebrate their bulging thighs as their beautiful self. Finally, American and Canadian society can no longer blush, for lust is luscious for a lusting society. Milk it, nurture it! By all means, protect it!

These sins—so common, lurking just below the surface of our social conventions—produce an enormous fallout that wounds human life. These sins (called deadly, because, like pregnant-mothers, they easily birth other sins) must be combatted. Indeed, in waging the battle of the Christian life a knowledge of the seven deadly sins helps us to see where and how the devil gains footholds in our lives to bring us into misery. Let us briefly look at each of them.

The sin of **Pride** bottoms out in a disposition that a person is not subject to God and His will. Pride tops the list of the seven deadlies. Of course, as Christians, we try to hide our pride, and we don't readily admit that we are proud (which easily gives way to conceit), though pride and conceit are not the same. This is why we must beware lest our good gifts (even our repentance) become the door through

which pride is welcomed into our hearts. In the well-known parable, the Pharisee expresses gratitude that he is not like other people. But he is blind about himself. He cannot recognize his own glaring sins because pride gets in the way. Pride stands there, broad shouldered, straight, confident. The Pharisee sees himself as spiritually handsome. "Take a look God! You like what you see, don't you?" ("I like what I see!")

We do the same, not by looking at the sins we eagerly acknowledge but by pointing to those areas in our lives that are intact. Progressivism, conservatism, traditionalism, liberalism, theological knowledge, Christian service (take your pick)—the vulnerable area is often where you judge yourself strong. There pride lurks.

God assessed the Pharisee differently than he assessed himself (see Luke 18:9-14). His pride is a deadly sin.

**Envy** comes next. It is the sin that hurts inside. We envy and we ache. It is miserable to be envious. It gnaws at our spirit. It deflates and depresses us. And envy most assaults us with our peers. Who envies Bill Gates his wealth? We much more likely envy a peer. Much more likely a pastor will envy the better salary or success his colleague enjoys down the road than the success (and wealth) of the televangelist Joyce Meyer. Who envies Aaron Rogers his skills as a quarterback? More likely we will envy the praise heaped on a co-worker than a person whom we judge our superior. Envy is an ugly sin, since envy is discontent, even sadness, over someone else's blessings. Envy, then, is closely linked to discontent at your own

situation in life. Because of pride and other vices, we can also want to be envied. We regale others of our successes in order to feel important and, hopefully, envied. We purchase new gadgets, perhaps, in the hopes of being envied. That is all quite pathetic, of course. But such are the vapid joys of wanting to make other people miserable for not recognizing, unprompted, our importance.

Envy begets desires to see the envied brought down, to fail, to flunk, to suffer loss. Cain slew Abel out of envy. Saul cast an envious eye on David (because of the greater praise David received) and plotted to kill him.

The envious, if they are Calvinists, easily blame God for the way life is, for God is in control. He could do something about it, and doesn't. Now the person who envies suffers more rot of soul. Envy is a deadly sin.

With **Anger** we arrive at a maddening, unreasonable sin—though, actually, finally, all sins are nonsensical and asinine. Anger blinds us, though. It makes us see others as sub-human enemies, not just enemies. Anger often lives in a fantasy world of imagining “making things right” in a world of so much wrong, especially wrong done to you or those close to you. Indeed, behind anger is enormous pain, usually. Anger is the mechanism to shield our vulnerability, our weakness. Anger rages back for self-protection. Anger, being a deadly sin, easily becomes habitual—forming ruts

in our psyche, becoming the default disposition for disappointment. Anger also feeds on itself. Like a snowball rolling down a snowy slope, anger gains both size and momentum. It gets more dangerous and violent as it accelerates and widens. Anger can violently erupt or silently smolder. Each form, though, harms others and the self. Unlike God's, our anger is seldom righteous. It colors outside the lines of justice. Our anger is unjustly vengeful and destructive—a passion that flames or smolders to do harm. Hence, we afflict others with the silent treatment; we slander or diminish the persons we hate by bearing false witness against them; we plot harm, in some form, to fall upon the objects of our wrath. “I will have justice,” our angry heart protests to itself. But is justice what we serve? Anger is a deadly sin.

**Sloth** is the most misunderstood deadly sin. It is not laziness, though the slothful may, as a side-effect, behave in a lazy fashion. Rather, sloth is spiritual jadedness, born of weariness;

“Sloth ... is a form of ingratitude in the face of divine goodness; it is a dejection of faith and a spiritless carelessness—literally expressed in the phrase, *I couldn't care less.*”

it is a form of ingratitude in the face of divine goodness; it is a dejection of faith and a spiritless carelessness—literally expressed in the phrase, “I couldn't care less.” In a very significant sense, it is spiritual melancholy. This is where the sluggishness and perceived laziness comes in; the lazy-traits are secondary. The sin of sloth involves a poisoned will toward spiritual good. It

comes to expression in a blasé, worn-out, and weary attitude toward the things of God. As such, it is a form of despair and therefore exhibits as spiritual joylessness.

The slothful person feels like a squeezed-empty tube of toothpaste, all-used-up. The slothful suffer a deflated heart. The idea of vanity in the book of Ecclesiastes gets at one side of sloth (it's all a waste of time), but no single biblical text captures all its faces and angles. It is partly cynicism, partly loneliness, partly sorrow, partly shame, partly low self-esteem, partly a smattering of other deadly sins enjoying a harvest in one's soul. In short, the slothful feel like nothing really matters, so why try?

As a result, its fruits are self-centeredness, inactivity, ingratitude, aimlessness, and a kind of bench-warming that doesn't pay attention to the game and isn't even certain it matters who wins. In any case, the slothful, as bench-warmers, aren't ready to play.

As you can see, sloth is a deadly sin.

**Greed** (this transgression is also called Avarice) is the sin that thinks money and things will buy happiness. It is the sin that wants more than it needs. Avarice is inordinate love of temporal things, usually riches.

It should be noted immediately, though, that to be greedy is not necessarily to be miserly. The avaricious soul may be miserly or a spendthrift. The possessing can take the form of hoarding or spending. Actually, being greedy to have more often goes with having more in order to indulge oneself.

The Bible addresses greed from a side-



shot when it takes us to the rich fool of Jesus' parable. This fellow seems to have earned his wealth all above board and fair. Very well! No greed yet. His mistake comes in what he says to his soul, upon having such wealth, for he says: "Soul, you have it made. Enjoy the good life. Relax! Bask in your riches and take it easy!"

What is so foolish about that, you ask? Well, he failed to notice that he was dirt poor in the spiritual department of his life—he was not rich toward God.

Greed is one of the overtly idolatrous sins—and it is stupidity! Standing next to the secular mantra of the West—"Greed is good!"—stands the biblical indictment, "You fool!" For the greedy, God is reduced to an emergency helper, since money has most of life covered for you. This god, at the helm of our lives, is our own creation for our own selfish reasons. God and Mammon cannot be served side-by-side as two masters! Like the others on the list, avarice is a deadly sin.

This brings us to the chubbiest sin of the bunch, **Gluttony**. Why does this pudgy sin keep company with such mean sins as envy and anger, or such conceited sins as pride and avarice? Does gluttony really deserve to be one of the seven deadlies?

Yes, a deadly sin it is. Don't be deceived by its portly grin. Underneath the smiling double-chin of gluttony is a world of misery. As the novelist Peter De Vries notes, "Gluttony is an emotional escape, a sign something is eating us." For gluttony is an inordinate obsession with food, drink, and the consumption that goes with each. Lust, as we shall see, gets sex wrong. Gluttony gets food wrong—it blows food out of proportion to its importance (eating too much

or fussing too much or consuming only the best). It too is a form of idolatry—a doing obeisance to the god of the stomach.

So, ask yourself: how do food and drink function in your life and what do you make of the importance of each? We need questions like that, for life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing (see Matt. 6:25). Like a drug, we can use food and drink in an attempt to ease our pain. But serving this god will not satiate or satisfy. This why gluttony is a deadly sin.

Last on the list of the seven deadlies is **Lust**. Lust is a pimp of a sin, for it uses others and disposes of them. It is like a drug that begs to be indulged, bestows a temporary high, only to leave us lower and uglier, hungrier and needier, poisoning our spirit and rotting our souls. The more we give in to it, the more it demands. It is insatiable.

Lust is also petty and small-minded, besides being completely self-centered. And, not incidentally, it is also (usually) destructive of others, for it literally wants a person's body without the person! As such, lust, trampling marital boundaries, perverts God-given sexual desire and seeks sexual fulfillment without fellowship. It most often thrives in the fantasy and private world of masturbation. Sexual joy is sought in this fantasyland. But lusting after anybody and everybody was never in the divine design plan. Sexual love is satisfied within marriage. Sexual desire inflates and celebrates union in that context. Lust, by contrast, deflates and dejects persons. It depersonalizes the other and the self. Lust, and the mental porn accompanying it, is therefore soul-less sex—bodies without souls. And sexual union in the soul-less form is estrangement instead of intimacy. As a result, we are left spiritually and sexually famished. That

is why lust is a deadly sin.

With this brief survey of the seven deadly sins, we would be remiss if we failed to note the antidote to these sins as a path for the Christian life. In every case, not to over simplify, God as our first love, and faith in His love for us, as the lover of our souls in Christ Jesus, is the remedy. Pride is beaten down when God is the love of our lives (we're loved and humbled). Envy is countered in celebrating grace and blessings to others, even as it is countered by one trusting God and His love for us, trusting that His plan for our own lives is blessedness. We find victory in loving Him and our blessed neighbor. Anger meets defeat in God's own gracious and loving mercy and forgiveness, as it also meets defeat in the knowledge that God's justice and mercy will prevail as we celebrate His kingdom come. Resting in and enjoying God's love is the beginning of our triumph over sin, such that Sloth is defeated when we stop blaming God. Love God, and know that He has never stopped loving us, even in our state of ingratitude and jadedness. Greed, Gluttony, and Lust—our gods of things, of stomach, and of genitals—is misplaced love in every case; these gods can neither meet our longing for love and acceptance nor our need for fellowship and embrace. Only God's ardor for us, our Savior's loving devotion to us, conquer these aches and miseries, and are the remedy to bring us to a blessed state of comfort and hope. A sin-sick culture, wallowing in these miserable sins, needs Jesus Christ as the remedy, as we do!

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

# ALUMNI PROFILE: JAMES FOLKERTS (2004)

Greetings from Karamoja, Uganda!

We are working in what might yet be called “old Africa.” The people here are a semi-nomadic Nilotic cattle herding tribe who have now mostly become stationary and trying to figure what to do next. They drink a lot, thinking about it. Think of Jacob and Esau in mud huts with their crazy family dynamics of polygamy, cattle raiding, famines, fighting, and sickness and then having cheap, Chinese smart phones trying to do WhatsApp and you get a bit of the picture. This week we counselled a Christian woman working at our clinic whose sister was murdered by her husband the night before (a mother of 5 young children).

We give thanks to the Lord that we are getting to see his people being called out of this demonic darkness to know Christ. These are exciting and interesting times! For the first time, some of the young Karamojan men are showing good promise for leadership in the local church. We hope to send one young man for a bachelor’s degree in theology at our theological school in Mbale, Uganda, this fall. Our church is also doing an evangelistic conference on its own up on the mountain above us. It is great to see the missional spirit of the indigenous people being fanned into flames!

This coming month we are beginning a new initiative to try to teach Bible in the local primary schools. One school has over 900 children and only 5 teachers. They were begging us for any help we could give, including pens, paper, and Bibles. In total, we could be reaching potentially more than 4,000 children. It would be wonderful if you could pray for this.

There is also much work in missions to be done here in Africa, particularly in the work of theological education.

The OPC has Knox School of Theology in Mbale which offers a 3-year bachelor’s degree in theology. We are currently hoping to open this Fall with full government approved accreditation. A new dorm is currently being built to house the students. We hope the school will serve all of East Africa including South Sudan. Already we have more applicants than we can handle.

We are so thankful for the team that we have here in Uganda, both of westerners and Ugandans. Missions is a team effort of the Church of Christ. As a team here we often joked that the main missionary saying is “You’re not the boss of me!” It is really, though, no laughing matter. It runs contrary to Christ and His mission and fails to give to local indigenous peoples a view of “team Jesus.” How many good opportunities and joys we miss when we fail to work together as a team. But where we are working together there in much encouragement, help, warnings from danger, and shared joys in our labors as we listen to one another.

Recently one of our team members was driving through the local game reserve when they had the rare sighting of three cheetahs. They were pulled over enjoying the sight when a safari vehicle went by with tourists. Our team member yelled in a whisper “cheetahs!” but the expert safari guy just laughed and kept driving



thinking he knew better. All those people lost the opportunity to see those beautiful animals because their driver “knew better.”

It made me ponder how often we can do the same thing with missions: failing to stop and take seriously what people are saying. This can be for mission boards, presbyteries, consistories, missionaries, and even indigenous folk. We can often be far too busy, or believe we already know how it really is, and miss beautiful opportunities God has for us - maybe even cheetahs! Anyway, that’s just a bit of a thread of thought I’ve had lately for Christ’s church.

I remain so thankful and indebted for the work of Mid-America and their teamwork in training me for Gospel ministry and contact with the Seminary over the years. Let us keep them in our support and prayers!

Warmly in Christ!  
James Folkerts

# ALUMNI UPDATES



**Michael Bentley** (2009) is finishing his fourth year in St. Louis, hav-

ing moved from Long Island, NY in 2018. In 2021, his wife, Stacy, worked with other homeschooling moms to start Redwood Classical Academy, a hybrid homeschool co-op. Mike serves as Senior Pastor for Trinity Christian Reformed Church, and has spent the last year serving with the Steering Committee of The Abide Project to address issues of human sexuality in the CRC. They continue to homeschool Anna, Samuel, and Caleb, while Adam and Katie are currently finishing college work. Last but not least, they are foster parents (again!) with two children placed in their home.

**Leonard Gulstrom** (1995) received a call just before he graduated to a Reformed Congregational Church in Upton, Massachusetts. After 4 years he joined the OPC and received a call to Faith OPC in Anchorage, Alaska. After another 4 years he received a call to a Congregational Church in Limington, Maine. There he and his wife Sonya spent 18 years serving the Lord. He arrived there in 2003. The church voted to join the OPC in 2011. He retired from the ministry in 2021. They are now living in western New York. They have 7 children and 18 grandchildren thus far. The Lord has truly blessed them in so many ways. He still preaches from time to time, but his family and church here keep them busy.



**Joel Irvin** (2017) gives thanks to God for the preparation he received at MARS. Heart City Church PCA is now 2 years old as

an inner city church plant in Elkhart, Indiana. Last year they acquired a downtown worship location, and this year they are making significant renovations. More wonderful is witnessing the building up of Christ's body. God recently provided their first elder, Mr. Victor Yoder.



In 2021, **Jonathan Key** (2018) and his wife, Lorissa, welcomed Eloise, a beautiful, healthy little girl, into the world. Eloise has been a constant source of joy (and adrenaline) since God expanded the Key family from 2 to 3. Jonathan pastored New Life Burbank until its dissolution in August 2022. He is currently searching for a new pastoral call, but the Lord continues to provide daily bread to his family throughout this transitional period.



Since July 2022, **Jeff Munive** (2014) has been installed as a Minister of the Word in the Reformed Churches in the United States (RCUS) denomination. He is currently serving full time in Grace Reformed Church in Lancaster, CA. The Lord has blessed Jeff and his wife, Markey, with two energetic boys who are currently 3 years old (Jonah) and 6 months old (Isaiah). He had the great privilege to baptize our youngest son at the church he currently serves. "The Lord has been good to us!"

## DR. STRANGE SABBATICAL



I remain grateful to my faculty colleagues and to the Board for granting me a sabbatical from February-July 2022. Even before February, my wife and I were able to

leave here for Phoenix, where we spent five (5) weeks. I got a good deal of reading and writing done there, including access to Phoenix Seminary, which permitted me to use both their extensive online collection and their reference/circulating collection. I did have a bit of recreational fun there and elsewhere. I wrote a major essay on Charles Hodge and the nature of church office and Presbyterianism for Brill. I did conferences in Phoenix and Ontario, as well as giving a series of lectures on church polity in Bogota, Colombia. I completed my commentary on the Form of Government for the OPC and started a commentary on the Book of Discipline. I did a good deal of work on a book for Crossway, manuscript due 1 December, and had other research and publishing projects. I continued my work in the presbytery, of which I am moderator, and the broader church, attending General Assembly as the representative of three committees. I continued regular preaching and my work as theological librarian and am refreshed.

## Alumni!

Feel free to send us your updates at any time to [rluttjeboer@midamerica.edu](mailto:rluttjeboer@midamerica.edu).



**MID-AMERICA**  
REFORMED SEMINARY

229 Seminary Drive | Dyer, Indiana 46311-1069

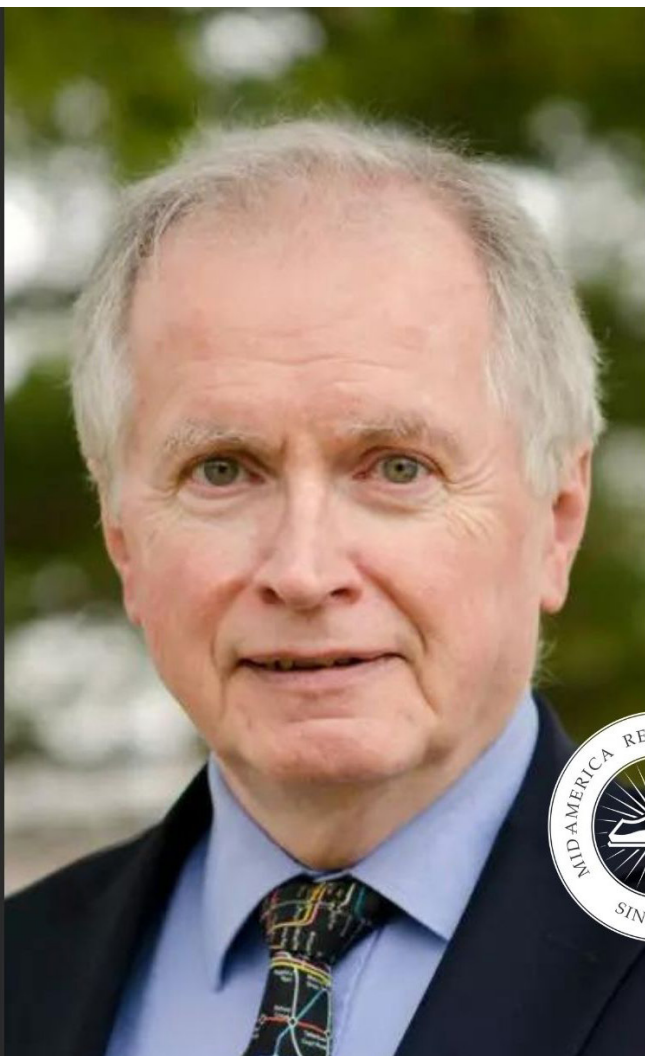
NONPROFIT ORG  
U. S. POSTAGE PAID  
HOMWOOD, IL  
PERMIT NO. 130

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Tel: 219-864-2400

Fax: 219-864-2410

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



MARS 2022  
*Fall Lectures*

**THE USE OF THE OLD  
TESTAMENT IN THE  
EPISTLE TO THE  
HEBREWS**

with Dr. D.A. Carson  
November 8-9, 2022

---

*Offered both on-campus  
and via livestream*