

# THE MESSENGER

MID-AMERICA REFORMED SEMINARY

## Commencement



by Dr. Alan D. Strange

Mid-America Reformed Seminary's Thirty-Third Commencement was held on 3 May 2018, coinciding with the Spring meeting of the Board of Trustees. Area PCA Teaching Elder Dr. Peter Wallace, pastor of graduate Joel Irvin and an Adjunct Professor of Church History at Mid-America, delivered the commencement address to a large crowd of graduates' families and friends gathered for the occasion. Dr. Wallace, who had taught several of the eight

graduates Medieval and Reformation Church History, gave a challenging and encouraging talk to the assembled. His address is detailed in the accompanying sidebar.

In addition to the music described below, the assembled sang three hymns: "God is Our Refuge and Our Strength," "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah," and a song new this year, but most appropriate for a seminary graduation, being written for one in the 19th century, and well-suited to Dr. Wallace's talk, "Lead On, O King Eternal."

President Cornelis Venema welcomed all and introduced our speaker. He also gave special recognition to the wives of the graduates for their support during the arduous training of their husbands. After Rev. Wallace's inspiring speech, President Venema was joined by the Board President, Rev. James Sawtelle, for the conferring of the degrees. Five of the students received M.Div. degrees and three students MTS degrees. Of those receiving the M.Div., Jon Beall (OPC), Dan Beezhold (URCNA), Paul Freswick (URCNA), and Ehren Gaebler (PCA) will continue to work towards licensure/candidacy in preparation for calls. The fifth, Joel Irvin (PCA), has received a call to be an associate pastor in his PCA congregation in Indiana where he was ordained and installed on May 25. The MTS graduates will labor variously, with Jared Luttjeboer (CRC) continuing in a job in media services at the seminary, Pablo Martinez (who had his M.Div. from a Baptist Seminary, now in the PCA) seeking ministerial service, and Glem Melo, PCA (who will pursue an M.Div. here) working in Muslim ministry in Chicago.

After receiving their degrees, and the hearty applause of the audience, the graduates received a charge from Rev. Andrew Compton, Assistant Professor of Old Testament. The faculty takes turns in giving this annual charge. While the graduates appreciated hearing from a seasoned pastor and teacher like Dr. Wallace, they also enjoyed hearing final words from one who has regularly taught them, and Rev. Compton did not disappoint, with a stirring call to humble service in our Lord's church.

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. Alan D. Strange 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 processional and recessional (in addition to prelude and postlude). Maria Luttjeboer, wife of graduate Jared, rounded off the musical contributions with a beautiful soprano solo.

Following the conclusion of the service, the newest alumni of Mid-America gathered in the fellowship hall to receive the congratulations of, and enjoy refreshments with, all who had come to witness this joyful occasion.

## "Seeking the Interests of Christ"

by Dr. Peter J. Wallace

In Philippians 2, Paul says that the glorious doctrine of the incarnation – this astounding marvel of the substitutionary atonement – is the model and example of how you are supposed to live! How are you supposed to be like Jesus? Precisely in the very things that you cannot possibly be like Jesus – apart from him. How do you "imitate" the incarnation and atonement? Paul says that you have been united to Christ, who became all that we are by nature so that we might become all that he is by grace. Indeed, in Galatians 2:20, Paul will go so far as to say, "I am crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."

The Christian life is characterized by the mind of Christ – an attitude, or disposition, of humility and sacrificial service, exemplified in the incarnation of the Son of God and in his atoning death on the cross.

And in Philippians 2:19-24, Paul says that if you want to know what this looks like, look at Timothy! Timothy seeks the things of Christ, rather than his own interests. Timothy is a model of humility. He exemplifies verse 4, that as Christ did not seek his own interests, neither should we!

Further, Paul wants them to remember how "as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel." Think about what this showed you of the mind of Christ. To be a faithful pastor, it's not enough to study theology and learn how to preach. You have to learn how to live the gospel!

Let me give you an example: as elders, you are to be given to hospitality. And hospitality does not mean having your friends over. It means love for strangers. How many strangers have been in your home recently? How do you organize your life in such a way as to seek out opportunities for hospitality? Strangers will rarely accept an invitation to your church – but they will often come to your home. Start there.

## The President's Message: "Commencing a Search for a Ministerial Studies Instructor"

by Dr. Cornelis P. Venema



Among the actions taken by the Board of Trustees at its recent meeting was the decision to commence a search for a ministerial studies instructor. Due to the importance of this decision for the long-term fruitfulness of the ministry of Mid-America, I believe it deserves to be brought to your attention. In order to do so, I want to begin this column by providing an account of the background and rationale for the Board's decision. Then I will offer a few comments regarding the strategic importance of this decision.

Prior to the meeting of the Board, the Faculty passed a motion at its regular meeting in April that "in view of impending retirements and current need, the Board approve commencing a formal search for a faculty member in the position of ministerial studies." The Faculty also offered the following observations as a rationale for its

recommendation:

- In the last two Long Range Plans, the Board and Faculty frequently noted the particular need for, and importance of, an appointment of an instructor in the area of ministerial studies. In the interim period prior to the appointment of such an instructor, the Board encouraged the Faculty to make use of adjunct instructors, especially in the area of ministerial studies.
- Though the appointment of a new instructor in ministerial studies would increase the number of full-time faculty to seven, the Faculty's recommendation does not assume an increase in the number of full-time members for the long-term. Rather, this recommendation recognizes that the appointment of such a faculty member may not take place for a year or two, and that we need to be prepared for the possibility of several faculty retirements in close succession over the next decade.
- The appointment of a faculty member in the area of ministerial studies before any present faculty retire has obvious benefits. The new instructor in ministerial studies would be able to become acquainted with the present faculty, and to benefit from their help at the beginning of his tenure at the seminary.
- At the present time, Mid-America does not have a faculty member who is appointed full-time in the area of ministerial studies. The Seminary's desire to combine academic study with training for ministerial competency, including the oversight of the Ministerial Apprenticeship Program, would be enhanced by the appointment of an instructor whose teaching responsibility is exclusively in the area of ministerial studies.
- The Faculty believes that the appointment of a faculty member in the ministerial studies division is especially strategic, but not an easy one to achieve. An appointee to this position needs not only to be biblically, confessionally, and theologically sound, but also to be a person who has significant pastoral experience and proven competence in ministerial work.
- The Faculty also noted that the Executive Committee of the Board had previously encouraged the Faculty to identify prospective candidates for this position, and to put together a timeline for hiring an instructor in ministerial studies.

When the Board decided to adopt the Faculty's recommendation, it was clear that it shared the Faculty's desire to anticipate the Seminary's future needs for faculty development rather than belatedly respond after faculty retirements create a vacancy.

As president of Mid-America Reformed Seminary, I am pleased with the Board's decision. Though the appointment of a new faculty member in the area of ministerial studies may entail an increase in our annual budget, the Board recognized the strategic importance of building for the future. The Board also recognized the historic emphasis Mid-America has placed upon the appointment of faculty members who not only share its biblical, confessional, and academic values, but also its commitment to provide our students with the kind of ministerial and spiritual formation that is needed for the work of pastoral ministry.

When I was appointed as the first president of Mid-America, I gave an inaugural address under the theme, "An Academy with a Vocational Aim." My conviction then and now is that this is what Mid-America must aim to be by God's grace: not merely an academic institution, but a school where students are prepared for the vocation of the pastoral ministry.

Please remember in prayer the work of the Faculty Development Committee as it undertakes this search. And if you are aware of a suitable candidate for this position, don't hesitate to recommend him to us.

## Board Report

by Keith LeMahieu

Mid-America's Board of Trustees met on campus on May 3-4. The first item of business was a re-appointment interview with Rev. Andrew Compton, Associate Professor of Old Testament. The Board voted to re-appoint Rev. Compton to another two-year term. The Board also approved a six-month sabbatical for Dr. Marcus Miningier.

Next, the Board ratified a slate of candidates for this summer's upcoming election. Seven of the eighteen seats on the board are up for election – four ministerial seats and three laymen seats (the Board is made up of nine ministers and nine laymen).

As you can see from the adjacent article, the Board made the important decision to commence the process of a formal search for a ministerial studies professor. Additionally, the Board approved the faculty recommendation that Mid-America award the M.Div. degree to five students, and the MTS degree to three students.

The Board's Finance Committee brought three recommendations. First, the Board approved a 2018-2019 fiscal-year budget of \$1,942,545.00. Second, the Board approved a recommendation that the Faculty Endowment be designated as the Seminary's reserve fund. This decision was made to address a concern raised by our financial auditors that Mid-America lacked sufficient operating reserves in the event of an unforeseen dip in revenue. The motion states that endowment funds can only be used to fund operations with the approval of the Board, and these funds must be paid back to the endowment as soon as practicable. Finally, the Board considered a recommendation that the Seminary combine the Student Aid Fund (used to support North American students) and the International Student Aid Fund (used to support international students) into one account known as the Student Aid Fund. This decision streamlines the student aid process and increases the potential that we can support more international students.

The Board of Trustees is scheduled to meet again on October 4-5, 2018.

## Summer Assignments

Most of our junior and middler students will be spreading out across this hemisphere to serve a variety of churches and learn in a ‘hands-on’ way what goes into the life and work of the Christian ministry. Below are the names of the students and the churches that they will be serving. Pray for them, that the students and the respective churches may receive a rich blessing and that the entire experience may be glorifying to God and profitable for all.

Student	Assignment	Location
Jonathan Beall	First Congregational Church (OPC)	Merrimack, New Hampshire
Elijah de Jong	New Covenant Community Church (OPC)	Joliet, Illinois
Bryce de Zwart	Providence United Reformed Church	Strathroy, Ontario
Daniel Flinn	Covenant Presbyterian Church (OPC)	Buford, Georgia
Cristian Garcia	Iglesia Reformada Luz de Vida	Quito, Ecuador
Cary Gephart	Cottage Grove Christian Reformed Church	South Holland, Illinois
Carl Gobelman	Hope Presbyterian Church (OPC)	Grayslake, Illinois
Daniel Hamstra	Living Water Reformed Church (URC)	Brantford, Ontario
Jonathan Key	Bethlehem Reformed Church (OPC)	Freeman, South Dakota
Andrew Pinson	Phoenix United Reformed Church	Phoenix, Arizona
Nathaniel Rademaker	Covenant United Reformed Church	Pantego, North Carolina
Ryan Swale	Covenant Reformed Church (URC)	Pella, Iowa
Kelvin Tiemstra	Parkland Reformed Church (URC)	Ponoka, Alberta
Nathan Voss	First Christian Reformed Church	South Holland, Illinois
Scottie Wright	United Reformed Church of Nampa	Nampa, Idaho
John Ysinga	Cornerstone United Reformed Church	Edmonton, Alberta

## Dollars & Sense by Mike Deckinga



Well friends, it has been another wonderful spring here in Chicagoland. The following is a short, but by no means exhaustive list of common occurrences in our region, and on our campus, during this season.

1. Our students feverishly preparing for final exams and summer internships.
2. Commencement.
3. Disappointing baseball (depending on what side of town you're on).
4. The spring Board of Trustees meeting takes place.
5. I use the seat warmers and the air conditioning in my car, sometimes within the same day.
6. Sluggish financial contributions to our institution.
7. Plans are being made to attend church assemblies.

Really, this list is intended to make you smile. I'm sure you could think of several other things I could put here. I don't have enough space in *The Messenger* to write about Major League Baseball in Chicago, or the weather in our fair city, so I'd like to cover #6 on the list, if I may.

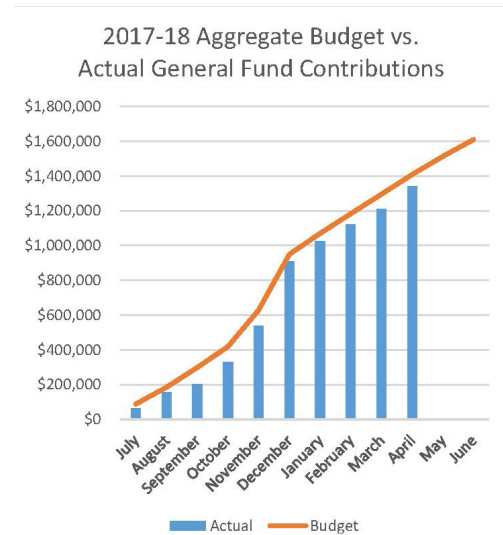
This time of year, we often see giving begin to slow down significantly, and that often lasts throughout the summer months. This positions us poorly to begin the next academic year in the fall.

Many of you likely received an appeal I sent out last month. If you did, you'll recognize this graph.

It is highlighting our budgeted income vs. our actual contributions. I mentioned that we were trailing budgeted revenue by \$83,861. You responded generously, and for that, we are incredibly grateful. April has closed, and you helped decrease the deficit by \$15,402, bringing our difference to \$68,459.

We have two months left in our fiscal year. It would be disappointing, and quite burdensome to end the year trailing budget. We trust in our Heavenly Father to provide for our needs, and we ask you to consider how your partnership with us could impact our financial situation in a meaningful way. We don't have far to go! Will you help us get there?

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





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## SAVE THE DATE MID-AMERICA GOLF OUTING

September 8, 2018  
SPG Green Garden Country Club,  
Frankfort IL

shotgun start at 8:00 am  
lunch and awards to follow



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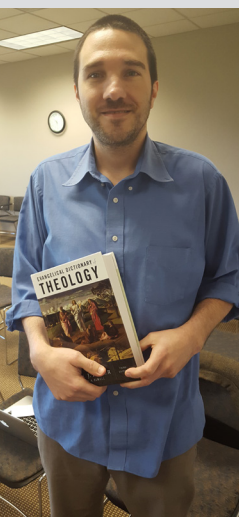
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### ◆ CAMPUS UPDATES

#### Student Awards

by Jared Luttjeboer



Joel Irvin

At the end of every spring semester, particular students are selected as recipients of awards reflecting their academic achievement. This year, the Biblical, Ecclesiastical, and Doctrinal Studies Awards were granted to Joel Irvin, having the highest GPA in all three divisions. The Ministerial Studies Award was shared between Dan Beezhold and Joel Irvin. Finally, the Schiebout Biblical Exegesis Award and the Mission Essay Award went to Ryan Swale.

#### Retiring Board Members

by Jared Luttjeboer



Left to right: Rev. John Hilbelink;  
Dr. Steve Werkema, and Harlyn Jacobsma

This Spring we bid farewell to four Board members. Rev. John Hilbelink (Rockford, IL), who served on the Promotions Committee as well as conducting graduate exit interviews, says that “serving on the board of trustees of Mid-America has been a blessing and a privilege.” Harlyn Jacobsma (Orange City, IA), who served

the Finance Committee throughout his years of service “appreciated the dedication from [his] fellow board members.” He says that working with “men from all over the US and Canada and to see their commitment and defense of the truth of scripture has been heart-warming and such a blessing!” Dr. Steve Werkema (Wheaton, IL) chaired the Education Committee, served on the Executive Committee as Vice-all, and worked on the Administrative Sub-Committee for long range planning. He says that he is “grateful to the faculty who have diligently used their considerable God-given talent to train men for the Gospel ministry – it has been my great pleasure to see those gifts in action and to see their fruit.” Finally, alumnus, Rev. Danny Patterson (Portland, ME), is leaving the Board after serving one term. Rev. Patterson served as the Board’s secretary.

We thank the Lord for the time and service these men have rendered to the Seminary.