

Mid-America Establishes Ties In Korea

Dr. Venema recently spent several days in Korea at the invitation of the Society of Reformed Theological Scholarship. He gave the plenary address at the Society's annual meeting, visited and lectured at three Presbyterian seminaries, and preached in a large Presbyterian church. Dr. Venema explains that much of the rapidly growing Christian population in Korea is Presbyterian. The Society of Reformed Theological Scholarship is fairly new, but already has over 200 members. The institutions Dr. Venema visited belong to the more conservative of two major Presbyterian denominations that each number between two and a half to three million.

Dr. Venema met Dr. John E. Kim (now president of Calvin University and Theological Seminary in Yongin City, Korea) when Dr. Kim worked with the CRC in the Los Angeles area many years ago. Dr. John Kim encouraged Dr. Jae Sung



Dr. Jae Sung Kim, Dr. Venema, and Dr. Hyung Yong Park, president of Hapdong Theological Seminary, in front of the Seminary



Dr. Venema lecturing in the chapel of Hapdong Theological Seminary

Kim, secretary of the Society, to engage Dr. Venema as the main speaker for the annual meeting. Dr. Jae Sung Kim is a professor at Hapdong Theological Seminary in Suwon, Korea, and arranged for Dr. Venema to lecture at Hapdong Seminary, at Calvin University and Theological Seminary, as well as to some of the 3,000 students who attend Chongshin Seminary near Seoul. Dr. Venema lectured primarily on "The Relationship Between Justification and



Dr. Venema and Dr. Kim



Dr. Venema and Dr. John E. Kim, president of Calvin University and Theological Seminary, with members of the theological faculty

Repentance in Calvin's Institutes," although he also spoke on different subjects to three systematic theology classes. His plenary address to the Society of Reformed Theological Scholarship was entitled, "The Reformed Churches in North America: Recent Trends and Challenges." On Sunday, Dr. Venema preached at a morning service of the Seongbok Central Presbyterian Church in Seoul. Mid-America is thankful for the success of Dr. Venema's trip and the opportunity to establish meaningful ties with sister institutions in Korea.

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From the Director of Development



Are you tired of appeals for financial support? I must confess that I am. I suspect you probably are, too. There are, of course, the obvious opportunities for Christian charitable giving to church and school. Then there are many worthwhile Christian organizations such as counseling centers, social services agencies, political action groups, etc. Finally we receive appeals from civic organizations such as police and fire departments, veterans groups, and the arts.

Perhaps you have had this experience on the drive home from work. The announcer on your car radio encourages you to donate your car, boat, or motorcycle to his worthy cause. The charitable volunteers on the street corner want you to put money in their converted milk jug in exchange for a bag of peanuts. You stop at the store for a loaf of bread and the Little League team seeks a donation as you exit. We want to give, but how can we be responsible and biblical in our charitable giving?

God calls all of us to be givers. In fact, we're told that God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9:7). To be sure, some believers have been given a special gift of giving (Romans 12:6-8), nevertheless, the Apostle Paul tells the Corinthians, "But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in the grace of giving" (1 Cor. 8:7). He exhorts the Corinthians to "try to excel in gifts that build up the church" (1 Cor. 14:12). We are called to excel in the grace of giving while excelling in gifts that build up the church.

This does not mean we are prohibited from giving to other causes, but it certainly means that causes that build up the church should be given our highest priority. Scripture is clear on our need to provide proper financial support for our pastors, missions, and our diaconal ministries. It is also clear on the need to provide financial support for the preparation of future pastors. The Heidelberg Catechism, Q. 103 asks, "What is God's will for us in the fourth commandment?" The answer begins by saying, "First, that the gospel ministry and education for it be maintained...." While maintaining education for the gospel ministry involves many things, it certainly involves financial support.

Mid-America is committed to the preparation of pastors. This preparation cannot be accomplished without partners who excel in the grace of giving. One of the greatest struggles we face is maintaining the financial resources to do our work. Our revenues are running significantly below what is needed to cover operating expenses and we need financial partners to train the next generation of pastors. Would you consider a generous gift to the work of the pastoral ministry in the church?

•Can you give a generous gift now to help us meet our immediate financial need?

•Would you consider a monthly gift throughout the year to help meet our monthly needs?

•Would you contact us to discuss an estate or planned gift to help us meet our future financial needs?

Where will your next pastor come from? How about the pastor who will minister to your children or your grandchildren? Will you invest in the spiritual future of your family by giving to the faithful training of future ministers of the Word of God?



Mrs. Karen Adams, Mrs. Helen Van Der Aa, Rev. Peter Adams. Rev. Adams is a 1997 graduate of MARS. Mrs. Van Der Aa is the wife of the late John Van Der Aa who served on Mid-America's first Board. The three were among 200 present at a fund-raising dinner in Wyoming, Michigan, on Nov. 15. Mr. Keith LeMahieu gave a development update and the Seminary Men's Chorus sang. Board member Rev. Art Besteman explained why, "It's All About Preaching." Students Matt Nuiver, Greg Bylsma, and Anup Hiwale expressed appreciation for their training.

The Board of Trustees of Mid-America recently met on campus (Oct. 16-17) to supervise the ongoing work of the Seminary. The Board ratified the election of new members by the Seminary association. The following were chosen for three year terms of service: Rev. Art Besteman, Rev. Bruce Hollister, Rev. Roger Sparks, Mr. Harlyn Jacobsma, Mr. Gerald Rozema, and Mr. Harry Van Gorp.

The Board also reorganized its executive committee as: President—Rev. Rich Kuiken; Vice President—Rev. Art Besteman; Secretary—Rev. Roger Sparks; Treasurer—Mr. Douglas Allen; and Vice—All—Rev. Phil Vos. In addition to receiving progress reports from its sub-committees, the Board spent some time discussing the future of Mid-America. In consultation with the faculty, the Board is considering offering a two year Master of Theology Studies degree program. The Board is also looking into the possibility of constructing a number of apartments adjacent to the seminary to provide housing opportunities for the growing student body. The Board will proceed prayerfully and with great care, so that the Seminary may remain true to its purpose: to train men for effective Gospel ministry in churches that embrace the Reformed faith. To God alone be the glory!

Rev. Sparks, Board Secretary

Every student at Mid-America Reformed Seminary has the opportunity for pastoral experience through summer internships, but not every student travels as far as James Folkerts did this summer. Folkerts spent thirteen weeks on summer assignment with Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF), headquartered in the John Calvin Study Center at Larnaca, Cyprus.

Cyprus, the third largest island in the Mediterranean Sea, was an important trading center in ancient times. On his first missionary journey, Paul and his companions landed at Salomis and spread the gospel across the island before stopping at Paphos. There a powerful demonstration of the Word of God caused the sorcerer, Elymas, to be struck blind. The proconsul, Sergius Paulus, was convinced of the claims of the gospel and became a believer. He governed Cyprus as the first Christian ruler in the world.

James was able to get a glimpse of that episode in church history by visiting the ruins of Salomis, even though the area is now under the control of Turkish forces who illegally occupy the northern third of the island.



John Calvin Study Center

Mid-America Student

Most of James' time was spent in preaching and teaching under the supervision of Rev. Victor Atallah, an ordained minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Director of MERF. Folkerts preached at the worship services in Larnaca, led daily devotions, and taught a Thursday evening Bible study on Galatians. On Sunday evenings, he preached for a church being planted in Limasol, about an hour away. He traveled to Limasol again every Wednesday evening to lead a Bible study. The group in Limasol is composed primarily of Arabic-speaking people from Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon, including many who are Palestinian refugees.



James Folkerts & Rev. G.I. Williamson with eschatology class

One evening, after James had preached about the wedding of Cana from John 2:1-12, he discovered that a listener was a Palestinian whose father came from Cana.

Spends Summer in Cyprus

Working with different cultures opened James' eyes to the breadth of Christ's church. "It was an immense blessing to be in Cyprus this summer," says James. "I saw the church of Christ is its expansive catholicity—peoples from every tribe and tongue."

Folkerts is a member of Providence Reformed Church of Winnipeg (URCNA) and a senior at Mid-America. He is interested in pastoral ministry, but also has an interest in missions. This summer assignment gave him opportunity to explore both interests.

While James was in Cyprus, Rev. G.I. Williamson (a semi-retired minister in the OPC and an associate member of Cornerstone URC in Sanborn, Iowa) taught a course on eschatology. He remarks: "It was a joy to get to know and to work with James Folkerts. The most impressive thing, to me, was the very high esteem for James and his work in the comments of those who sat under his preaching and teaching."

Folkerts believes that working in other cultures, while posing unique challenges, demonstrates the power of the gospel. "The challenge of preaching and teaching through a translator was a lesson in the weakness and foolishness of the preaching of man," he says, "and yet showed the power of the Spirit to use that Word in the lives of His people. God is gracious and His gospel is powerful."



James Folkerts at the ruins of Salomis

Dr. Beeke Speaks at Fall Lectures

Mid-America's Annual Fall Lecture Series on November 10 and 11 featured Dr. Joel R. Beeke speaking on "Calvin for Today's Calvinist Preacher."

Dr. Beeke presented his first lecture, "Calvin as an Experiential Preacher," at 2:00 on Monday afternoon. His second lecture, "Calvin as an Evangelist," was given Tuesday morning at 8:30 a.m., followed at 10:30 a.m. with his third lecture, "Calvin's Piety."

About fifty people attended the Fall Lectures.

Evening Class on Sacraments

Part of Mid-America's commitment to its constituency is to make its teaching publicly available on a regular basis.

This fall Dr. Cornel Venema has taught an evening class entitled, "Daddy, May I Take Communion?": Recent Questions Regarding the Sacraments." Four sessions were scheduled on Tuesday evenings in October on the following topics:

- Introducing the Doctrine of the Sacraments
- Should the Children of Believing Parents Be Baptized?
- Paedocommunion: Ought Children of the Covenant Be Admitted to the Lord's Table?
- How Often Should the Lord's Supper Be Administered?

In spite of some competition from baseball games earlier in the month, an average of forty people attended each session.

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Founders of Mid-America Reformed Seminary and members of the original Board of Trustees were honored on October 16. Pictured above are (l to r):

Rev. Jelle Tuininga*, Rev. Arthur Besteman*, Rev. John^* & Genevieve Piersma, Dr. John R. Sittema^*, Susan & Dr. Nelson Kloosterman^, Laurie & Rev. Tom Vanden Heuvel^* with Henry Vander Pol* behind, Rev. Edward^ & Harriet Knott, Dr. Richard Venema*, Tres & Harlyn Jacobsma*, Bart* & Babs Zandstra.

^indicates founder, *indicates original Board member

Additional founders were Dr. P.Y. De Jong, Rev. Eric Fennema, and Rev. Henry Vander Kam (deceased). Rev. Vander Kam's wife, Elaine, attended earlier in the day, but was not present for the picture. Additional members of the original Board were James Boogerd (deceased), Rev. Edward Heerema (deceased), Rev. Jerome Julien, Dr. Stewart Kanis, Leonard Klok, John M. Van Der Aa (deceased), John O. Van Hofwegen, and Nick Yonker. The current Board honored those present and their spouses with a private dinner followed by a reception at the Seminary. While visiting the Seminary, founders were interviewed for archival purposes.

Welcome

The first voice you're likely to hear when you phone Mid-America Reformed Seminary is the new Administrative Secretary, Tracy Abbott. Tracy replaces Sarah Boer who, with her husband Tim, recently celebrated the birth of a son. Beverly Mesman, who did part-time administrative work, also recently left to pursue an opportunity at a local law firm.

"I enjoy the city, but I don't miss the commute downtown for work every day," remarks Tracy about her previous position in downtown Chicago.

Tracy anticipates being married next summer. Her fiancé, James Whitfield, is serving with the U.S. Army in Iraq, but hopes to return stateside in March.

