

Mid-America Reformed Seminary's 25th Commencement

Graduate Awards

Every spring the faculty selects from among the graduates seniors who have distinguished themselves academically. This year, two graduating seniors captured the academic awards for their work while completing the Master of Divinity degree.

At the closing convocation on May 12, Aaron Verhoef and Corey Dykstra (pictured below, L to R) each received two awards.

Mr. Verhoef received awards in Biblical Studies and Ecclesiastical Studies. The Biblical Studies award is given to the senior who had the highest combined scores on his Hebrew and Greek comprehensive exams. The Ecclesiastical Studies award goes to the senior who had the highest GPA in the ecclesiastical studies division.

Mr. Dykstra received awards in Ministerial and Doctrinal Studies. The Ministerial Studies award is given to the senior with the highest GPA in the area of ministerial studies and the highest marks on the exhorting evaluation forms. The Doctrinal Studies award goes to the senior with the highest GPA in the doctrinal studies division.

The entire seminary community congratulates them for their achievement.



This year, on May 21, 2010, Mid-America Reformed Seminary celebrated its **25th Commencement**. It was held on a Friday evening at Calvary Community Church in South Holland, Illinois. A sizeable assembly consisting of family members of the graduates and friends of the Seminary gathered in celebration of this milestone in the lives of the graduates. As part of the exercises, the first graduating class of Mid-America Reformed Seminary was invited to attend this event. The Reverend Roger Sparks, pastor of the Luverne Christian Reformed Church in Luverne, Minnesota, and the Reverend Duane Veddors, former pastor of Immanuel Fellowship Church in Holland, Michigan and former missionary to Eritrea were Mid-America's first graduating class.

Rev. Sparks spoke from Jeremiah 1 in a message entitled "Caller ID," wherein he focused particularly on verses 5-10. As God, in accord with His wisdom and providence, told Jeremiah that He knew him before He knit him together in his mother's womb, and that He, the LORD, had set Jeremiah apart, even before he was born, to be His prophet, God likewise has set apart these graduates who aspire to the gospel ministry for service in Christ's church. Similarly, the work of ministry today has its parallels to the calling given to Jeremiah, for the gospel sets itself over nations and kingdoms, "to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant." God did not allow Jeremiah to circumvent the divine call by pointing to his youthfulness. Instead God reminded him that "to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak." Best of all is that God sent Jeremiah then, as He sends gospel ministers today, with the promise that He is with them to protect them from the enemies they face. Rev. Sparks also reminded the graduates of what a privilege and joy it is to serve our good



*The Mid-America Reformed Seminary Class of 2010:
Curtis Moleterno, Richard Bultje, Jimmy Hall, Jeph Nobel,
J.P. Mosley, Aaron Verhoef, Corey Dykstra*

and great God, who shows us His goodness and faithfulness in Jesus Christ.

Rev. Veddors, though he was unable to attend this event, sent a letter, which Dr. Cornelis P. Venema, the President of the Seminary, read to the graduates and the assembled guests. Rev. Veddors sent not only words of greeting and congratulations to the Seminary and the **2010 graduating class**, but he also reminded us all of God's faithfulness in guiding the Seminary throughout the years. In his comments he offered these words: "I well recall that Rev. C. Van Schouwen, a retired Bible teacher from Dordt College, spoke at one of our opening chapels. In that chapel service he spoke from Zechariah 4:10 the following words: 'For whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice.' Rev. Van Schouwen then expressed the idea that though men might despise the small beginnings of Mid-America, God did not and that the end would be one of rejoicing. Certainly his words have been prophetic and there has been much joy as a result of the training done in this place for the glory of our God and the building up of his kingdom."

Dr. J. Mark Beach, Professor of Ministerial and Doctrinal Studies at the Seminary, gave the charge to the graduates using Matthew 16:18 as his text. Since Christ builds His church, aspiring ministers can look to Him as their source of strength in facing the inevitable trials and burdens, along with the joys and blessings, of the ministry.

A time of refreshment and fellowship followed the ceremony.

Dr. J. Mark Beach

Development Report

Are You a Generous Giver?

by Keith Le Mahieu



You may recall about a year ago I wrote in *The Messenger* about philanthropy and stewardship. We considered the difference between charitable giving as a philanthropic exercise versus giving as an act of stewardship. We defined philanthropic activity as a humanistic model where charitable giving is viewed as a way of using our possessions to help others and prosper society and its institutions. We defined stewardship, on the other hand, as the reflection of a generous heart motivated by the recognition that all we have is a gift from God. It is a heart transformed by the Holy Spirit and whose treasure has been laid up in heaven.

A key element of this definition of the stewardly giver is that of generosity. Generosity is the act of sacrifice. When we practice generosity we are sacrificing something of value for the

True generosity is not always easy because the world, the flesh, and the devil battle against this test of our faith.

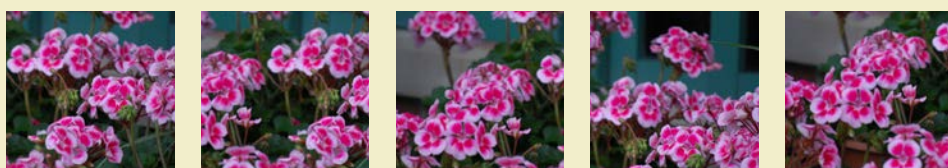
good of others because we care for them. We love them. Indeed, it is love that differentiates giving (philanthropy) from generosity (stewardship). True generosity is always motivated by love, and we find this true generosity first and always in God. For God so loved the world....

God was the first and most generous giver, and when God calls us to generosity He is not asking anything of us that He has not already done. He is not asking us to do anything that we are unable to do. We are called to model Christ. "He left his throne above, so free, so infinite His grace, emptied Himself of all but love, and bled for Adam's helpless race; 'Tis mercy all, immense and free, for oh my God it found out me!" (*And Can it Be* – Charles Wesley). Christ's love is not a sentimental love, but rather a love of compassion. It is a love that sacrifices out of pity for the lost and helpless.

God's love is also a generosity that flows out of His very best. He gave us His only begotten Son, the spotless Lamb of God. In turn, Christ gave us the very best of Himself, living a sinless life on our behalf and giving that "last full measure of devotion" that He might present us before His Father as perfectly righteous. He did not give just a token for us; rather He gave His all. Likewise, the generous believer is called not to give just a token of his wealth. On the contrary, we are most like Christ when we give sacrificially.

Christ gave generously out of love for "those who were yet sinners" to make it possible for mankind to have eternal life. When we give, our giving should be directed to causes that sow seeds which make it possible for others to find eternal life. Our giving should be directed at activities that make Christ known and help others to know and serve Him. "Thou who wast rich beyond all splendor, all for love's sake becomest poor, thrones for a manger didst surrender, sapphire paved courts for stable floor" (*Thou Who Wast Rich* – Frank Houghton).

He who was rich chose to become poor that we might become spiritually rich. He went from wealth to poverty that we might go from poverty to wealth. This is easily the greatest transfer of wealth in the history of mankind. Authentic Christianity produces generous people of faith because the central act of that faith is an act of generosity. True generosity is not always easy because the world, the flesh, and the devil battle against this test of our faith. The generous giver knows, however, that true stewardship does not begin until there is sacrifice motivated by love that is in alignment with the sacrifice of our loving Savior.



Generosity Made Easy

Have you visited the donor section of Mid-America's website recently? Mid-America has made it easier than ever to contribute to the preparation of pastors for the gospel ministry. You now have several options that allow you to give to the Seminary without writing a check.

First, you can give using a debit authorization form. This form, once completed, authorizes Mid-America to perform an electronic funds transfer on a schedule of your choosing. You could, for example, authorize Mid-America to electronically transfer \$50 per month from a checking or savings account. It happens automatically so you can "set it and forget it."

A new option available on the website gives you the ability to donate online using your credit card. You can make a one-time donation or you can set up a monthly donation for a 12 month period. The credit card donation form uses secure server technology to ensure your credit card information is safe, and it is fast and easy. You can use this option to donate to Mid-America while taking advantage of perks offered by your credit card company for using your card.

Mid-America needs your regular support, especially as we enter the summer months. As I reported previously, donations are down. The Seminary's operating fund is \$40,000 behind last year as of mid-May. A regular, generous gift to the Seminary would be an encouragement and blessing.

Keith LeMahieu

Summer Greek will take place at Mid-America July 6 - August 13 and is open to anyone who would like to audit or take Greek for credit. Call 219.864.2400 for more details or to register.

Board of Trustees Report

by Rev. Wybren Oord

The Board of Mid-America Reformed Seminary met on May 20-21. The Seminary President, Dr. Cornelis P. Venema, was absent from the first day of meetings as he was attending the funeral of his sister. We convey our sympathy to Dr. Venema in his loss, but also acknowledge that the very purpose of the Seminary is to give men the tools to proclaim a glorious gospel that eternal life is granted to those who trust in Jesus Christ—indeed our hope is not in vain.

After great labors, the Seminary was awarded accreditation by the Association of Theological Schools. The Board is grateful for all the work that went into the preparation for this endeavor. The Board also acknowledged the tremendous amount of work that has gone into preparing a self-study for a reaffirmation of

accreditation by the Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools.

The Finance Committee acknowledged that the difficult economic period has led to a significant drop in contributions over the past year. Recognizing the decrease in contributions, the committee worked hard to find areas of the budget to freeze or cut. Overall, a minimal budget increase of less than 1% was approved for the coming year, accounting mainly for rising health care costs.

Upon receiving the announcement that Dr. Kloosterman would begin pursuing other avenues of ministry after twenty-six faithful years of teaching, the Board set out to find potential new faculty members. We rejoice in the work that Dr. Kloosterman accomplished in his many years with the Seminary and trust that the Lord will continue to use him in very significant ways for His kingdom.

The Board expressed gratitude for the work that has been done by the faculty and staff.

Through their efforts, seven young men received diplomas and eagerly anticipate God's leading in their lives. We pray that the Lord will use these men for His service in His kingdom and that through them the message of salvation may be boldly proclaimed.

We are able to rejoice in reports that sixteen men have been accepted to begin their studies at Mid-America Reformed Seminary. Still others are in the process of being accepted for enrollment in the coming year. While not all of these students will begin their studies in the fall, we are thankful for the way that Mid-America is attracting men from a variety of churches and backgrounds and trust that the Lord will continue to use the Seminary to equip men for preaching the gospel.

Seminary Weekend

by Rev. Mark Vander Hart

The Seminary Weekend tradition continued this April when some Mid-America students, faculty, and staff traveled to Northwest Iowa for the Seminary Weekend, April 10-11. The Seminary Weekend is an occasion for churches to meet and hear students from the Seminary and for the Seminary to maintain contact with supporters and others interested in the Seminary's work. Last year's Iowa Seminary Weekend was cancelled because of a winter storm, but this year travel to Northwest Iowa went very well and the weather was beautiful.

Saturday evening (April 10) Mid-America hosted a promotional dinner at Dordt College in the West Commons. Following a delicious meal, a short program was held in which students Aaron Verhoef and Eric Stolte spoke, Rev. Vander Hart presented slides from his 2008 archaeological trip to Israel, and Keith

LeMahieu gave a report on the Seminary's finances and current challenges. Over one hundred people gathered for the evening. It was very encouraging to see so many long-time Mid-America supporters, some former Board members, and Seminary alumni who are pastors in area churches.

On Sunday, April 11, the seminarians and Rev. Vander Hart led worship at a number of churches in the area. The seminarians who participated in this Seminary Weekend were Richard Bultje, Curtis Moleterno, Erik Stolte, Matt van Dyken, Aaron Verhoef, and Steve Williamson.

If you are interested in arranging a similar weekend in your area, please contact the Seminary.



Spring Events

Friday, April 30 was the annual spring banquet. The evening started with punch, followed by devotions led by Dr. J. Mark Beach. Dinner was catered in by Glenwood Oaks. After dinner, the students provided the entertainment with skits.

On Wednesday, May 12 the students, faculty and staff of Mid-America got together for a picnic and softball game. This annual event allows for some healthy competition and gives a much needed break from school work.

On Wednesday, May 19 the Seminary held a dinner to celebrate the 2010 graduating class. The senior class, along with their spouses, the faculty, and administrative staff of Mid-America met at the Briar Ridge Country Club for the evening.

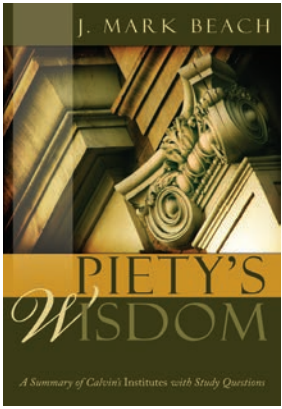
Ministerial Apprenticeship Program

2010 Summer Assignments

Summer assignments allow students to focus on the practical aspects of ministry and give churches the extra benefit of seminarian assistance. Master of Divinity students are required to do at least 2 summer assignments. Most assignments last ten weeks. Students and their 2010 summer assignments are as follows:

- Brian Blummer - Trinity Presbyterian Church (PCA) in DeMotte, Indiana
- Andrew De Young - St. Paul's Lutheran Church (LCMS) in Tinley Park, Illinois
- Corey Dykstra - Grace Reformed Church (URC) in Kelowna, British Columbia
- Yevgeni Kogay - All Nations Mission Church in South Brunswick, New Jersey
- Joseph P. Mosley - Terra Ceia Christian Reformed Church in Pantego, North Carolina
- Erik Stolte - Reformed Bible Church (URC) in Pompton Plains, New Jersey
- Nathan Tomlinson - Amoskeag Presbyterian Church (OPC) in Manchester, New Hampshire
- Matthew Van Dyken - Eternal Life Mission (URC) in Tepic, Mexico
- Steven Williamson - Messiah's Independent Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan

New Reading Guide to Calvin's Institutes



Anyone who has ever attempted to read Calvin's big two-volume work, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, knows that it is a daunting task. Many begin, but their resolve

wanes somewhere along the way, mostly due to time-commitments and the length of the assignment. Dr. Beach, Professor of Ministerial and Doctrinal Studies at Mid-America, has recently published a new book entitled, *Piety's Wisdom: A Summary of Calvin's Institutes with Study Questions*. This 352-page summary can be read as a stand-alone introduction to the life and theology of Calvin or it can be read as a chapter-by-chapter summary guide for readers

committed to reading the entire *Institutes*. This book is well suited for busy pastors, college students, seminarians, and believers who have always wanted to learn Reformed theology from Calvin but are not ready to tackle the 1,440-plus pages of Calvin's two-volume *Institutes*.

Perhaps what makes this book unique among the guides to Calvin's *Institutes* is that it can be used in an adult study group, since questions for discussion and reflection are appended to the end of each chapter. In his review of the book, Tony Reinke writes that Beach set for himself a high and difficult task, "but [it is] a task Beach masterfully fulfills." He adds, "The work oozes with theological conviction, biblical references, and pastoral sensitivities."

Among the endorsements of this work is one by a premiere authority in Reformation and Post-reformation studies, Dr. Richard A. Muller, who states that "*Piety's Wisdom* provides a finely done summary and analysis of Calvin's *Institutes* that should be of considerable service to Christian

laity, pastors, and students in coming to terms with the thought of the Genevan Reformer.... It stands as one of the best and most trustworthy introductions to Calvin presently available."

The book can be purchased from the bookstore at Mid-America for \$14.00. Go to <http://marsbooksonline.com> or call 219.864.2400 to place your order.

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Tel: 219-864-2400
Fax: 219-864-2410



Mid-America Reformed
Seminary Association
229 Seminary Drive
Dyer, Indiana 46311-1069

