

# THE MESSENGER

MID-AMERICA REFORMED SEMINARY

## Spring Banquet by Glenda Mathes



Combine Nancy Venema's creativity with Sheryl Beach's organizational skills and the result is a fabulous Spring Banquet with an international flavor. The two faculty wives worked with a few student wives to plan and set up for the annual event, held on April 27, but rather than catering food decided on an international potluck.

"Since we have a very diverse student body, we thought it would be fun to do this instead of having something catered in," explains Sheryl.

"Everyone was to bring a dish from their native country or region or an ethnic dish that they wanted to share."

Nancy relates, "The dinner was held at the Seminary with tables set up in the foyer and three tables of food set up in the cafeteria." Tables were decorated with items from a variety of cultures.

Students, faculty, and staff, along with spouses and girlfriends, enjoyed foods from Ecuador, Peru, the Ukraine, Thailand, New Zealand, Mexico, Italy, Germany, and Hungary with French and Greek desserts. American food included fried chicken and dishes from New Mexico and Texas. There were also traditional staples like Dutch ham buns and corn casserole from Indiana.

The event generally includes singing and skits exaggerating professors' idiosyncrasies. Student Joel Worries wrote and hosted the main skit, portraying a game of theological Jeopardy played by students Tony Domanik (as Prof. Strange), Caleb Smith (as Prof. Vander Hart), and Roberto Rossi (as Dr. Beach).

"Prof. Strange was parodied, among other things, as loving his own puns but not the puns of others," writes Dr. Beach. "Prof. Vander Hart was satirized as offering answers to questions using Hebrew words, which the host thought sounded like gibberish, and Dr. Beach was imitated as given to sudden outbursts of insight and passion, and liking to quote lines from certain movies, meanwhile slumping into disinterest in the proceedings. The game board finally revealed a chiasitic structure that 'Prof. Vander Hart' went gaga over. Through an odd set of misunderstandings, Dr. Beach won the game in final Jeopardy, with Prof. Strange wanting to quote Roberts Rules in objection."

Dr. Beach was the evening's MC. As part of the musical entertainment, Tim Scheuers sang a solo. Student Dan Nicholson offered a series of humorous 'awards' to students. Sheryl Beach says, "It was a great evening of fun and fellowship before exams started the following week."



## Graduation

by Glenda Mathes



At Mid-America's 27th commencement ceremony held on May 10, 2012, Andrew De Young, Nathan Tomlinson, and Robert Van der Woerd received Master of Divinity degrees, while Ananda Jayawardene received the Master of Theological Studies degree.

Dr. Craig Troxel gave the commencement address "Fulfill Your Ministry," based on 2 Timothy 4:5. Noting that God is sending the graduates "all over the United States, and around the world," Dr. Troxel encouraged graduates to long for people to see Christ, "who truly fulfilled his ministry." The humble minister is "constantly pointing away from himself as a servant and to the true Master."

From Nehemiah 4, Rev. Alan Strange charged graduates: "You are being called to the rebuilding of a new humanity in Jesus Christ from the wreck and ruin of those dead in trespasses and sin." He urged them to view opposition as part of their sanctification, and to fight for fellow believers, since it's "all ultimately about the Lord Jesus."

Dr. Cornel Venema opened the ceremony. Rev. Marcus Mininger led a thanksgiving and praise litany. Dr. J. Mark Beach led the Nicene Creed recitation. Rev. Mark Vander Hart closed in prayer. Mrs. Nancy Venema accompanied the singing. Students James Oord, Paul Sandbulte, Tim Scheuers, Caleb Smith, and Brian Zegers sang in a quintet. Following the ceremony, family and friends congratulated graduates during a time of fellowship.

## Want to Simplify Charitable Giving? Consider a Donor Advised Fund.

by Keith Le Mahieu



Let's face it, charitable giving, especially when done very intentionally, can sometimes be a hassle. Let's imagine you bought 100 shares of Microsoft® in 1986. That \$2,100 investment would be worth approximately \$720,000 today. You now wish to donate all or a portion of that investment to the various charitable organizations you support. Since you want to avoid paying capital gains tax, you must donate your shares directly to the various charities, but that is a significant bother since you will need to arrange a separate transaction for each of the charities who receive a gift. What's more, an organization like your church may not be set up to receive a gift of stock.

Perhaps you didn't buy Microsoft® but rather you bought a lake home back when the children were small. Over the years you made improvements to the house and the lake on which it is located has become very popular, increasing the property's value to over \$500,000. The children are now grown, no longer live near the lake and owning the lake house would, for them, be impractical. You want to sell and use the proceeds to support the various charities you support. How do you sell the house and support multiple charities from the proceeds while avoiding capital gains tax?

One of the easiest ways to manage complicated charitable giving scenarios is through a donor advised fund. A donor advised fund is an account that is established for the purpose of managing charitable contributions on behalf of an individual or family. Almost any type of asset can become a charitable gift (e.g. stocks, bonds, real estate, a business interest, life insurance, farm commodities, equipment, artwork, etc). Appreciated assets are especially advantageous for a donor advised fund since appreciation on charitable gifts is not subject to capital gains tax, you receive a tax deduction on the full value of the asset, and this tax deduction could significantly decrease your tax liability. A donor advised fund can help you split hard-to-divide assets among your favorite charities.

A donor advised fund can also help you more carefully manage distributions to your favorite charities. Let's imagine you decide to donate your Microsoft® stock at year-end to take advantage of the tax deduction, but you do not wish to donate to charitable causes until later. You can claim an immediate tax deduction for the value of the stock and distribute charitable contributions out of the donor advised fund at a time of your choosing. You can contribute more assets to your donor advised fund at any time. You can also involve your children in the process of distributing gifts to your favorite charities and thus teach principles of stewardship and demonstrate your values and the causes that are important to you.

Mid-America is a member organization of the Barnabas Foundation. The Barnabas Foundation has established the Stewards Fund to allow donors of member organizations to quickly and easily create and manage a donor advised fund. The Stewards Fund allows you to make automatic payments to your favorite charities on a quarterly, semi-annual or annual basis. You can submit payment requests for your charity, access your account balance and grant history all online. The Stewards Fund provides a simple and concise tax receipt even after giving to multiple charitable organizations. The Stewards Fund takes the hassle out of charitable giving while offering significant tax benefits.

If you wish to learn more about creating your own donor advised fund, contact me at the Seminary or contact the Barnabas Foundation directly at [www.barnabasfoundation.com](http://www.barnabasfoundation.com) or 888-448-3040.

## Board of Trustees Report

Mid-America's Board of Trustees met from May 10-11, 2012. Secretary Mr. Paul Anema reports that each spring Board members conduct an oral self-assessment of their work: "Included in this assessment is a discussion of how the purpose and goals of the Seminary are being advanced. This is a very worthwhile process that is helpful for the Board and the institution." He also reports a number of students (8 or 9) entering the Seminary this fall.

The Board of Trustees granted permission to Rev. Vander Hart to teach in Latvia this summer. It also granted Dr. Venema a sabbatical leave from August 1, 2012, to January 31, 2013, during which time he hopes to complete several writing projects.

Board member Rev. Ron Scheuers interviewed Rev. Marcus Mininger, who was unanimously approved for a two-year term as Assistant Professor of New Testament Studies.

The duties of Keith LeMahieu, Director of Development, were reviewed, with the Board deciding to transfer the duties of Student Recruitment to Grant Dykstra for a two-year term. Mr. Dykstra is also the Seminary's Assistant Financial Officer.

Standing committee reports were discussed. Nominations for the Board were approved and appear on the ballot inserted in this issue of the Messenger.

The Board whole-heartedly approved the Faculty recommendations that upon completion of all requirements the Board grant three students the Master of Divinity degree (M.Div.) and one student the Master of Theological Studies (MTS) degree.



## Summer Assignments by Rev. Mark Vander Hart

Once again many of our M.Div. students will be away from campus to serve as summer interns in churches from coast to coast. One student will be back in his native Canada, and another student will be serving in Costa Rica. Such summer experiences are very enriching to the students, helping them to bring the knowledge gained in the academy (seminary) to the practical labor of the congregation itself. Pray that students and churches alike may be mutual blessings this summer, to the greater glory of God.

Student:	Church:	City:	Supervisor(s):
Domanik, Tony	Two Cities Church (PCA)	Lafayette, Indiana	Rev. Adam Brice
Grissom, Geoffrey	First Congregational Church (OPC)	Merrimack, New Hampshire	Rev. Allen Tomlinson
Landázuri, Pablo	Reformed Church; missions	Costa Rica	Rev. Nick Lammé
Minatelli, Andrew	Church of the Lakes (OPC)	Brainerd, Minnesota	Rev. Roger Gibbons
Munive, Jeff	First United Reformed Church	Chino, California	Rev. Quentin Falkena
Roosma, James	Lynden United Reformed Church	Lynden, Washington	Rev. Chris Gordon
Rossi, Roberto	Oak Glen United Reformed Church	Lansing, Illinois	Rev. John Vermeer
Sandbulte, Paul	Spencer Mills Orthodox Presbyterian Church	Gowen, Michigan	Rev. Alan Flowers
Scheuers, Tim	Escondido United Reformed Church	Escondido, California	Rev. Stephen Donovan
Scott, Jeffrey	New Covenant Community (OPC)	New Lenox, Illinois	Rev. Bruce Hollister
Smith, Caleb	Grace Orthodox Presbyterian Church	Vienna, Virginia	Rev. Dan Clifford & Dr. Chad van Dixhoorn
Van der Woerd, Robert	Lynwood United Reformed Church	Lynwood, Illinois	Rev. Keith Davis
Wories, Joel	Immanuel United Reformed Church	DeMotte, Indiana	Rev. Tom Wetselaar
Zegers, Brian	New Horizons URC; mission to Muslims	Scarborough, Ontario	Rev. Mitch Persaud

## Student Conference by James Oord



On April 17th, the students and faculty of Mid-America, as well as many local pastors and elders, enjoyed an afternoon of lectures and fellowship with Dr. Gregory Reynolds. Architect, church planter, pastor, and author, Dr. Reynolds proved to be a fascinating speaker with a wealth of experience and knowledge. Dr. Reynolds serves

as the editor of *Ordained Servant: a Journal for Church Officers* and has written a fascinating and insightful book, *The Word is Worth a Thousand Pictures: Preaching in the Electronic Age*.

Dr. Reynolds' lectures were titled "An Ecology of Preaching in an Electronic Age." In our increasingly technology-driven world, face-to-face, voice-to-ear communication seems outdated, out-of-step, and out-of-the-loop.

Dr. Reynolds challenged us to be good stewards of our time and our media usage as individuals, as churches, as teachers, as worshippers, and as preachers. We are not merely to receive each new technology passively, without questions. He urged us to prioritize by rejecting the "entertainment mentality" that the world throws at us. In the end, our preaching is not

to be gimmick-filled and dazzling – it is to be gospel-filled.

The glory of preaching, he said, is that we proclaim rather than persuade. He urged us to not alter our message even one iota, no matter what our culture clamors for us to do. Whereas television and other media exalt style over substance, "preaching is the unique power of a living voice proclaiming the living Word." God is the Persuader, we are the proclaimers.

Dr. Reynolds' visit was enjoyed by all. In his lectures and in the fellowship shared during meals and throughout the evening he proved to be a passionate, inspiring thinker, eager to exalt the glories of God's holy Word as the ultimate Medium for the ultimate Message.

## Final Chapel: "The Lord Laughs"



Ananda Jayawardene

At the academic year's final chapel on May 2, Dr. Venema spoke from Psalm 2 on the enthroned Lord's laughter. The occasion is the nations united in conspiring against Christ and His kingdom's rule on earth, the world into which graduates go to preach the gospel. God's laughter is neither a "nervous twitter" nor an "anxious pretense," but comes from "absolute confidence."

"You go out preaching as vessels of clay who

by Glenda Mathes

believe the treasure you carry," he said. "But you carry the fulfillment of the decree of the enthroned God who laughs the nations to derision when they rise up against him."

Acknowledging Christ as King over all people and the whole of life is not a "mission impossible," but an exercise empowered by God's great decree: "This is my beloved Son, to him the nations are given as his rightful inheritance."

Rev. Strange presented the Award for Academic Achievement to senior Nathan Tomlinson as the student with the best overall record in the four divisions of the theological curriculum: biblical, ecclesiastical, doctrinal, and ministerial. The award included digital copies of *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, W.G.T. Shedd's *Systematic Theology*, and the works of Calvin, Spurgeon, and others.

On behalf of the student body, the Faculty, and the administration, Student Body President Roberto Rossi presented graduating senior Ananda Jayawardene with a CD containing the works of Charles Spurgeon, Calvin's commentaries and Bible encyclopedias. Rev. Jayawardene is returning to his native Sri Lanka, and the gift will assist him in his teaching and preaching while reminding him of his time with the Mid-America family.



Nathan Tomlinson receiving his award from Rev. Strange



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