VanderPol Update

TEACHING THEOLOGY FOR MINTS INTERNATIONAL SEMINARY **November 2018**

Summary of Trip to Malawi and Zambia

Last month I travelled with Shane Bakker, from Kansas City, MO, to Malawi and Zambia. I taught in four MINTS study centers. Shane accompanied me throughout the trip, wrote notes and took pictures. I deeply appreciated his help. In Zomba, Malawi, I taught in the pastor's training school of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Zambia. In the same town, I taught in another MINTS center whose students include teachers of Bible knowledge in public schools. In Lilongwe, Malawi, I taught pastors and public school teachers. Then, at Covenant College in Petauke, Zambia, I taught a class consisting primarily of pastors. Besides teaching theology, Covenant College features an agriculture program to train pastors and others to support themselves financially through agriculture while they serve their churches in various capacities.

On this trip I taught only courses that I have written. I taught part of my course on "The Heidelberg Catechism" to students of the Reformed Presbyterian Church; their church has adopted the Heidelberg Catechism as one of its confessions. At another place I taught the course on "The Doctrine of God in the Context of World Religions." It briefly presents the main features of animism, among other false religions. Animism still influences members of Christian churches; though people profess Christian faith, the influence of animism shows up in their superstitious responses to their problems and fears. Students expressed appreciation for the clarity that the course gave them in its comparison between animism and Christianity. I taught the course on "How to Write a Simple English Sentence" to two groups to emphasize the role of word order in the English language. Students who write essays and master's theses usually need to developed their skills in English more fully. Local coordinators, who supervise students, ensure that students complete all of the course requirements after I left.

Opportunities for MINTS seem to explode in South Central Africa. Due to the initiative of Joster Jumbe, MINTS has six study centers in Malawi and eight in Zambia. Soon an anticipated nine centers will open in Mozambique. The smaller centers have eight or ten students; larger centers teach up to forty students.

Teaching students in Lilongwe, Malawi (photo by John Joseph Matandika)

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Shane's selfie with Zambian National Coordinator Jacob Nilni and myself.

Reformed and Presbyterian Church leaders appreciate very much the opportunity to use MINTS courses as they train present and upcoming church leaders. They say that they have not found anything available to them like the MINTS curriculum--biblical and confessional content with challenging assignments.

I believe that my teaching proved worthwhile. I have begun to explore the possibility of teaching there again next year.

Future Plans

If the Lord permits, I hope to travel next year to India, the Philippines, Africa and Eastern Europe. These places need personnel from MINTS to visit and lead them from time to time.

Prayer Requests

Join me in giving thanks for:

- sufficient funds for 2018. We depend on the continuing gifts of churches and individuals. When we receive them, we regard them as the Lord's provision,
- the successful completion of the Heidelberg Catechism writing project, and
- safety throughout my travels.

Join me in asking the Lord to:

- provide the needed funds in 2019,
- give guidance as I plan my travels for 2019,
- give the ability to complete two courses which I have begun to write: on Liberation Theology and a Survey of Biblical Greek,
- give insight concerning future courses which I ought to write,
- provide for the needs of my wife and family when I am away, and
- build up his church through the teaching which MINTS offers the needy church worldwide.

Financial Support

If you would like to support this work financially, please send your gifts to the following:

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