



“So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.”
Acts 16:5

THE HEIDELBRIEF

News from Heidelberg Theological Seminary

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When the Church is the Church

Rev. Jay Fluck, Professor of Church History



When Christian parents gather their kids in minivans or SUVs on Sunday mornings, there is the common understanding that all are going to church. In fact, they *are* the church, and really what they are doing is going to worship God with others who are also the church (at least the visible church). What does “going to church” really convey if it does not mean arriving at a place of worship, where God is to be met, exalted, and revered in a special corporate context? Worshipping well demands that we first know, assent to, and trust the object of our worship, and second, that we know ourselves as the church with all the duties and privileges of being members of the household of God. As a church historian, I want folks to know that the church is not the building per se, but



the called out people of God. The history of the church properly commences in Genesis 1:27 when God created Adam (mankind both male and female). Thus, begins the record of God’s dealing with His church (His plan, His decree), and that early data goes from sin, exile, biblical notables like Abel and Cain, Noah, Abraham, Melchizedek, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, to life in Egypt, the exodus, past David and Solomon, the severed kingdom, captivity and exile, and then to a restoration of sorts.



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Church history is the record of God's decree, his faithfulness, justice, mercy, power, and patience. It is the revelation of all of God's attributes—His revelation of Himself. Yes, church history is the whole Old Testament and more.

From the conclusion of Malachi to the appearance of Gabriel to Zacharias, we have only human records, but they do demonstrate the accuracy of Daniel's prophecy and that record includes the continuation of the church.

God's hand continues to use all of His creation (sinful empires included) to show His faithfulness to His church along with His other attributes, which preserve His people. But the early church record does not stop here; there is the whole New Testament to consider, which includes Jesus' incarnation, the synoptic gospel record, the acts of the apostles, the epistles and their information about the church. Data from Paul, James, John, and Jude show the continuation of God's revelation of Himself. Jesus reveals the nature of those He has called, including all their "warts" along with the strength of the Holy Spirit's work in and through them.

Jesus proclaimed to His disciples that there would be an end to His earthly ministry, then a resurrection and an ascension to His Father, after which He would not be on earth but would be with them by His Spirit. So Mark 13: 3-13 records the disciples' asking when His return would be and how they would see it coming and recognize its arrival. Jesus' answer was in effect that all the things you have heard in the record of the Old Testament and seen in the incarnation will continue—growth in faith will come, growth in numbers will come, as well as the falling away.

And we have seen this in our day! Church history has taught us that God adds to the church even through subtraction—crazy math indeed! As we will see in my historical snapshots to come, how God's pruning of the branches over the ages adds vitality, for the church grows when the weight of dead matter is removed! So how does knowing church history as recorded in Sacred Scripture and in our present day records benefit you, the believer? Well, what does it mean to you to be a part of the household of God and part of a spiritual lineage that has been preserved by that same God? Know this, that God does not preserve the brick and mortar of bygone generations, but the remnant He preserves, for the remnant is His children. So when we pile into our minivans ready to go "to church," look around for we are already here (and not yet)—we are the church by the grace of God and like our forebears we gather with our faith siblings to worship Him and await for that future when He shall come again and unite body and soul in glorious consummation.

Serving the Church; That's What We Do

Rev. Chuck Muether, Part-time Advancement Director



When it comes to the oversight of any seminary within a given Reformed denomination, there is no shortage of opinion. Some prefer direct ecclesiastical control and others advocate an independent operating board, but what all orthodox churchmen agree upon is that the seminary faithfully seeks to train men in service to the church, and, to that end, be properly assessed by the church.



The seminary does not order the church in the way she should go, and church history has demonstrably proven that when the direction of the church is determined by the trending of theology espoused by a seminary's faculty, the church tends to drift from her biblical moorings.

It is the responsibility of the church to scrutinize how future ministers of the Word are being trained, and at the 273rd Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States, the Christian Education Committee carried out the Synod's mandate to evaluate seminaries considered worthy of support by the RCUS. Subcommittees were tasked with visiting professors and seminary presidents, observing classroom instruction, and reviewing curriculum. Reports were then submitted to the synodical delegates for their review.



It may seem superfluous to evaluate Heidelberg where most professors are currently fulltime pastors within the RCUS, but HTS does not get a pass, nor should it. Heidelberg trains not only RCUS students, but also instructs students from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Presbyterian Church in America, and other Reformed denominations and federations. It is proper that HTS not only welcome scrutiny from sister Reformed denominations but seek to improve its operation from evaluations that come from within and

beyond the immediate constituency. We desire to be faithful to

Scripture. We desire to serve the church. We desire to train men to be

competent preachers and pastors. We desire to be held accountable to the church for the mission with which we have been entrusted. Founding professor, Dr. Robert Grossmann, stated it well when he said in class one day, "Mischievousness arises from any seminary when the institution presupposes autonomy over the church. A faithful seminary is a submissive-to-the-Word seminary."

The HTS Alumni Association Thanks You!

Rev. Cody J. Schwichtenberg
(Class of '15), President of the
HTS Alumni Association

On behalf of the Alumni Association, I want to thank all the churches and individuals for supporting the seminary. It seems that every time gratitude is expressed there does not come a time when we can pause from seeking more help. Running a seminary is an expensive endeavor, and I had seen firsthand as a student how prudent and stewardly HTS is with the donations that are given. So thank you from all of us who have graduated and will be graduating in the upcoming year.



The HTS Alumni Association sees a dire need in updating the seminary's technology. Much of our equipment is over a decade old and in electronics years, that's huge. We are woefully behind in our distance learning tech because like our German-Russian church forbears, we just patch up the old and call it good. However, it's hard to patch over that which no longer functions, and so we ask that if you are of a mind and ability to give toward updating our computers and digital classroom cameras, please give Dr. Koerner a call at 605.595.5850. Thank you so much for your kindness!



How's your handling of the original languages?

Do you find yourself too dependent on language tools?
Do you want to go back to those post-seminary days
when you finally were able to translate
Hebrew and Greek without a lot of sweat?

Pastors, join Dr. Kevin Carroll in August for a weeklong language course that is geared to help get back your reading and translating skills.

Email Dr. M. Koerner for more details. (mkoerner@heidelbergseminary.org)