

Equipping Reliable Leaders in  
Sound Doctrine

In  
**Russia**  
**Ukraine**  
**Latvia**  
**Hungary**  
**Romania**

Fall 2000  
Volume 3 , Issue 3

*Training the Soul-savers (in  
the countries of the former So-  
viet Block)*

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(OUR RUBRIC)

### Special Requests:

!! **1. November Power in the** !!  
!! **Pulpit Homiletics Conference** !!  
!! **\$12,000 (rescheduled due to** !!  
!! **needed funds, date indefinite)** !!

- 2. Greek New Testaments with dictionaries (60 @ \$18)**
- 3. Heidelberg Catechism (250 @ \$7)**
- 4. Westminster Shorter Catechism (250 @ \$5)**
- 5. Professor sponsorships (\$1850 per term)**
- 6. Escape from Reason, Francis Schaeffer, (80@ \$7)**
- 7. Analytical Grek Lexicon (60 @ \$22)**

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# NEWSITEMS

## Fall Edition

### ITEM-IZED VICTORIES IN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

By Dr. R. David  
Ludwick, President



*We celebrate together with our fellow Christians of the former Soviet Union who now have opportunity to study Reformed theology and preach the truth of the Gospel like in this Ukrainian village*

In Donetsk, Ukraine...

In Tyumen, Siberia...

In Riga, Latvia...

### Send out the Victory Sheets!

#### 1. Donetsk Regional Theological College:

- A. Graduates Bachelor of Theology & Bible Certificate students in June -- 56 of them!!!!
- B. Has established an extension/ correspondent school -- 100+ students.
- C. Has established an extension site college 75km from Donetsk - 72 students.
- D. Is establishing a 2d extension site college 100+ students waiting.
- E. Is attempting to conduct a 2d Homiletics Conference - that's 2<sup>nd</sup> this year (remember, we reported in our Summer **newsITEMs** newsletter that 564 pastors from all over Ukraine came to the first "Power in the Pulpit" Homiletics Conference in May 2000.

And, 11,000 pastors and church leaders of the world-wide conserva-

tive evangelical denomination with which we partner in Ukraine has determined that there is need for a nationwide Ukrainian seminary and that our college should be the model and that we should do it in partnership with them!! And they expect us to participate; and, they expect us to secure Reformed professors to people the faculty and teach Reformed theology.

This is exactly what has been our short & long term plan and goal!!!!!!

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*NB. It cost\$ ITEM approximately \$2.46 per student per classroom hour!!*

*And that covers everything!!!*

2. In **Tyumen, Siberia** we have 57 students ready and waiting for us to start a Bible institute/seminary and provide the faculty and to teach Reformed Theology there for the first time in history - the people are there able to administer it and the facilities are available.

3. In **Riga, Latvia** we have 23+ students waiting for us to move

from 4 institute meetings per year to a school that they might attend fulltime, taught by Reformed professors.

**All we have budget for is consumed by the work in paragraphs 1.A. and 3 !!!!!!!!!!!!!**

**If all of our veteran professors could direct us to 3 individuals, groups, whomever, but, not their missions committees, deacons, et al who are supporting His Work through us now, we might raise just \$1,000.00 per year from each such contact we would have money enough to begin both of the seminaries in Ukraine and in Siberia!**

And, if **five** churchmen in **50 churches** could direct us to support sources of just \$1,000.00 per year we could do it all.

Pray about these things and send this victory sheet to those whom you know who have a heart for missions and might be the very ones we seek!

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**TEACHING ESCHATOLOGY IN SUNNY RIGA**

*By Dr. Cornelius P. Venema, Mid-America Reformed Seminary*

Need of the Gospel...

Challenge of the past...

Open Doors of Opportunity...

**Teaching Term in Riga Reformed Theological Seminary in Latvia**

Recently, the editor of *World* magazine, Joel Belz, authored a column entitled, "Optimism in rainy Riga." Belz wrote his article after paying a short visit to Riga, Latvia, in early September. During his visit, apparently, the sun

never shone and Belz used that fact to describe the challenges facing the church and the gospel in this small Baltic country. It's hard to remain optimistic in a country devastated by many years of Soviet repression and where only a small percentage of the population attends church on a given Sunday.

Before describing my experiences in Latvia this September, I would like to begin with a few observations about the country itself. Latvia is a small country on the Baltic sea, one of three Baltic nations (the others are Estonia and Lithuania) that were dominated by the Soviet Union for a good part of the twentieth century.

Throughout its long history, Latvia has known independence on only two occasions, briefly in the early part of the twentieth century and then again recently after throwing off the yoke of Soviet oppression in the early nineties. The country has a population of approximately 2.5 million, 900,000 of whom live in the beautiful old city of Riga, a port city on the Baltic sea. Latvians comprise about 55% of the population, Russians about 40%.

Many of the present-day challenges confronting Latvia stem from the period of Soviet control: the economy is weak and struggling to free itself from over-reliance on the Russian economy; the political environment is unstable with many different parties vying for control of



*Location of Riga Reformed Theological Seminary. Among economic, political, and worst of all moral corruption this is a unique time for the Baltic States in general and Latvia in particular to turn to the right source for hope and guidance - the Word of God in its pure doctrine of Grace!*

the parliament; taxation is very heavy (60-70% of income); relations between the majority of Latvians and the minority of Russians are often strained;

economic and political corruption is rampant; the divorce rate is very high; and the historic influence of the national Lutheran church has been largely eclipsed. Like many of the other former Soviet satellite countries of eastern Europe, Latvia desperately needs the gospel of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, not only in terms of its promise of forgiveness and eternal life but also in terms of its implications for the reordering of all of life by the standard of God's law. The only hope for the Latvian people and nation, as for us, is the transforming power of the gospel.

Because of these challenges and the open door that is now provided for the gospel, I was grateful for the second opportunity granted to me to teach in Riga. As some of you may know, I was privileged to visit Riga in January, 1999, in order to teach a course on the doctrine of revelation. This time I was asked to teach a course on the doctrine of the last things (eschatology).

During my first teaching stint in Latvia, my class consisted of about 15 students. This time—perhaps due to a keen interest in the subject of eschatology—attendance was higher with as many as thirty students present. Since my last visit, the Riga Reformed Theological Seminary has relocated from the Technical University in the old city to a building outside of the old city. The new facility is much more modern than the old one, and includes office space and a small library. These facilities are shared with two Christian businessmen who were also students in my class. However, I was told that the Seminary will have to relocate again in the near future, as the rental costs for the present facility are high. The class would meet during the evenings, since most of the students work during the day. This allowed me a great deal of time during the day to explore the city of Riga. My hotel was located only two blocks from the Seminary and about one mile from the old city. I believe that, after my two stays in Riga, I may have walked the old cobblestone streets of Riga as much as many of the native Latvians!

One of the memorable aspects of my stay in Riga was the opportunity to worship in two Reformed congregations. One of these congregations had a diversity of age groups, the other was almost exclusively made up of young people (high school and university age). When I attended the second congregation, I had the im-

pression that I was at least twice as old as any other member! This congregation is led by a young pastor (Pastor Ungars) who is obviously very gifted and much appreciated by the members. In some ways, this congregation is a commentary on the state of the church in Latvia: it is a young church, made up of converts who need to mature in the faith in the face of a culture and nation that has largely abandoned its Christian heritage. The challenges are great, but the signs of the Lord's working are also evident.

I want to express my deep appreciation to the congregation for supporting my teaching in Riga. Thank you for your gifts and your prayers. Pray for the churches of Latvia. For even in rainy Riga, the sun does shine and the "Sun of righteousness" is rising with healing in His wings (Mal. 4:2). ~~~

## HOW LONG, O LORD?

*By Dr. R. David Ludwick, ITEM President*

The harvest is plenty...

The workers are still few...

What can we do about this?

### Our Rubric

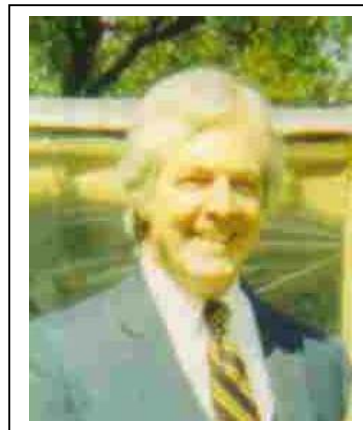
Brothers and sisters in Christ I come to you at this time in preparation for the thanksgiving season here in mid-America. I don't know whether you are aware or not but there is also the harvest time in the majority of the countries of the former Soviet Un-

ion. The people come and celebrate, gratefully, for the grace of their God because of the harvest which is come during the short growing season in most of the countries north of Ukraine. The provisions that our gracious God makes for His people include those of food which may be grown and stored throughout the winter to meet the needs of families in preparation for the duties that He has placed before them. Without these provisions the funds available to the majority of people whom we serve and who serve with us would not meet the barest of necessities of life.

I don't know whether you know it or not but in Western Russia, Siberia, Ukraine, for example, the average earned income is between \$35-90 per month. When I say average earned income that is not average wage earner for this includes physicians, architects, engineers, etc. It breaks my heart to tell you that we pay our full-time students \$50 per

family household for a living stipend, and this is a figure that they themselves set as being able to meet their necessities. We hold classes ten months out of the year and therefore it is necessary that they be full-time students and not be gainfully employed.

For your further information I would tell you that the students who have only one member of their household often share their \$50 with those who have more than one. It is by the grace of God that these students are even able to come and survive attending the school which they believe will prepare them for future ministry and give opportunity to share the grace and bounty of God!!



### ***How Long, O Lord? (continued)***

We can do something about this situation! We are teaching these men and women what Scripture has to say--we are teaching them not only what the Word says in its literal form but the theology which is incorporated in the words of the Scriptures. With this theology they will be able to understand and apprehend the Truths of Scripture and will be able to make them useful in their lives and not only that but in the lives of those whom they serve and for the generations to come! We are in crucial and critical stage in the development of theological education in the countries of the former Soviet Union. This is true to such an extent that we are now seeking to start a Masters Degree program. You may have already received information concerning this. This program will allow us to train nationals at an advanced theological level so that they may become the professors of the future and serve fellow countrymen not only in the equipping of pastors, teachers and lay leaders but in other leadership positions and of congregational edification in the churches themselves. Families will become involved, and those families with other families, just as it is in the best of churches!

It is my expressed concern to you that there are few laborers in the fields and yet the harvest is ripe. By this I do not mean that the Lord is pleading with us to come help Him in His Work! That is the farthest thing from my mind. I am entreating you to become more involved in this ministry by doing whatever He leads you to do and that you do so after prayerful and considered thought and reflection on who you are, what He has done for you, and what He called you to be according to His purposes and the mandate that He gives you concerning His Work as it impacts your lives and the lives of those whom He has entrusted into your care not only here but indirectly as prayer warrior and financial supporters of those whom He is raising up to be leaders in His Church.

Maybe what we need are some "vision missions trips" where you can "catch the vision" and ignite the fires in your hearts for those people who have waited for three generations for us to come and now that we are there seek to be fed by those who have already been fed. Where do you fit into this picture? On what line is your name written concerning your ministry mandates--I don't mean those ones that you carry with you to church and do in your local community but I mean the missions mandate that He has laid upon your heart because of the need of His people. He is giving us an opportunity, you and me, to share in His Work - it will not fail without us - but we will not share in the joy of seeing it successfully accomplished as a participator if we sit in the sidelines or only interact in small ways.

Here are a few things that you might consider doing:

1. organizing a prayer group where true believers can come together and agree in the missions work that He is effecting through ITEM;
2. make regular prayer for His work through ITEM a matter of a weekly Bible study or Sunday School agenda;

3. to prayerfully consider that ITEM might be made a regular receiver of prayer and financial support through the church missions committee or the deacons or through a consortium of churches or through a classis or presbytery;
4. sharing the special gifts that you have in computer skills, grant writing, fund raising, ministry development, etc. might be made available to ITEM in order that "reinventing the wheel" might not always take place everytim e we undertake a new project;
5. deciding you or a group that might organize or know of might undertake a particular project, like co-working in Tyumen, Siberia - a half dozen businessmen with reasonable foresight and intent could accomplish miracles in this one location; or the Masters Degree program where 42 men are standing in line waiting for us to open the doors that they might become the pastors/professors of tomorrow.

The list goes on and on. We need translations from English into Russian; we need teachers of English so that libraries of the books in English can be opened to those who can now only read Russian; that books can be found written in both English and Russian that could be shipped to the libraries of the various schools; that funds may be available for translation of such books as "Messianic Revelation in the Old Testament" by Dr. George Van Groningen (only one third has been translated so far); other books by Francis Schaeffer; John R. DeWitt; P. Y. deYoung, etc

I am not accustomed to being a salesman. I do not wish to offend anyone. There are scores of worthy causes which require more hands, more feet, more heads, more prayer, more funding, more resources than they have, and I do not wish to denigrate either their cause or their accomplishments, because this is one of those causes too. And we believe it is His cause and that it cannot fail and that while it appears to us to be in need, those needs are to arouse our interest and to enflame the hearts of His people so that they may share in the glories of His Victories not only in this life through such works as that accomplished through ITEM, but in the life to come. No matter how big and no matter how small your contribution, whether of time, ideas, service, funds, resources, what-all and whatever, it is an offering unto the Lord and an opportunity for you to share in His Victory.

I thank you for the opportunity of serving you as President of ITEM, for the blessing that I receive as I share in the equipping of these men and women for service, as I organize each team of professors to go to teach, as I hear of their victories and the fire that is ignited in the hearts of the congregations upon their return, as I make presentationst o various groups, churches, civic organizations, etc. and see the faces of people turned from unawareness to informed curiosity even to apprehended activity and participation... As I see these things I am grateful for His Grace, for in the long run those who truly understand Him and His Work, His Purpose and His Plan, must conclude that all there is is Grace! I look forward to hearing from you as He leads. ~~~

