

Training the Shepherds in the
countries of the former Soviet
Block

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NewsITEMs

Spring Edition

POWER IN THE PULPIT - MAY 2001!

By Dr. R. David Ludwick, President

How many do you think will come? said Dr. Joel Nederhood, Chancellor of Eastern Ukrainian Theological Seminary/Donetsk Regional Theological College. If we invite them, they will come responded Reverend Sergei Karpenko, President of EUTS/DRTC.

In this the 2nd Annual Power in the Pulpit Homiletics Conference the theme will relate to the preaching of the Word of God as it is found in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of Mankind, Lord of All. The conference will be held in the school's facilities in Donetsk/Makeyevka and will begin on April 30th to commemorate the 10th year of the establishment of the school and seminary/college and the graduation of the Bachelor of Theology and Bible Certificate students and the national holiday of May 1st. In attendance will be dignitaries from the Ukrainian Church, past professors, homileticians for the Power in Pulpit Conference per se, and hundreds of Ukrainian pastors/students and prayer warriors, even those who have built the church facilities in which our school is housed! It is anticipated that the Power in Pulpit Conference, will as of this year, also include a training conference in October/November and that the program will include a certificate of accomplishment



"Eastern Ukrainian Theological Seminary has marked significant growth and development in the past six years..."

to be given upon attendance of 10 conferences by any accepted pastor, and the successful completion of the assignments given.

The feasibility of Western seminarians serving in the field for theological education and equipping missions opportunities is being investigated. And the probability of their inclusion in the equipping of the students in the Certificate Program of the satellite schools is being determined at the present time. Should this type opportunity be made available to seminarians in the West the same would commence forthrightly even as early as May, June, or July of 2001.

I would like to take a few lines to thank our visionary founder, Reverend Nicholas Vogelzang, now residing in Aurora, Colorado, who committed numerous hours, days, months, and several years to the work of establishing ITEM with the purpose of training nationals to train nationals. It was through his efforts and the advice of Dr. Joel Nederhood, Back to God Hour, that it became a reality and has grown and born fruit to the extent that more than half of the new churches in the Donetsk Region have pulpits peopled by students from Donetsk Regional Theological College! And of the difference between that half and the 43 planted, many of those pulpits will be filled by our graduates and students as well. Teachers are going forth from our school and peopling the classrooms of both schools and churches bringing the message of the Gospel in a "taught" context while the pastors deliver the same Gospel in a preaching context. RDL

HOW LONG, O LORD...?

(OUR RUBRIC)

By Dr. R. David
Ludwick, President



How long, o Lord? Not long

In just a few short years our gracious God has blessed His people in the countries of the former Soviet Union bountifully. We, and they, have come to know the bounty of His provision once we have begun to do those things He has set forth in His Word for us to do. I call your attention to the Riga (Latvia) Reformed Seminary reports in prior newsletters as evidence of the growth there and the response of the people to His bountiful provision in Latvia.

I also call your attention to the fact that the Donetsk Regional Theological College, now **Eastern Ukrainian Theological Seminary**, has marked significant growth and development in the past six years. Moving from approximately twelve students in a one-room facility, this school now gratefully thanks our Lord for the following:

- ❖ 54 graduates in May 2001 – 28 with Bachelor of Theology degrees and 26 with Bible Certificate diplomas;
- ❖ More than 1000 correspondent students enrolled in the “distant learning” program;
- ❖ A new Bachelor of Theology class beginning in August 2001 in each of the programs above with full compliment of students;
- ❖ A Master’s Degree Program commencing August 2001 with 42 students enrolled;
- ❖ Three satellite schools each with 72 or more students enrolled and undertaking, initially, the Bible Certificate Program;
- ❖ Power in the Pulpit Preaching Conference dealing with the Person and Work of Christ in May 2001 – anticipated attendance 750+;
- ❖ The acquisition of a building, formerly a cinema, for one of the satellite schools – seating capacity 325 and several rooms for offices, classrooms, etc. and adaptable for both church and seminary purposes - \$7200.00!;
- ❖ Completion of new facilities to house the new Master’s Degree Program;

It has been proposed by the leadership of DRTC /EUTS that the third year students in the Bachelor of Theological Program be given practicum assignments which would include but not be limited to the teaching of classes in the satellite schools, the three schools in Ukraine and those proposed to be established outside of Ukraine. The advantage: nationals equipping nationals, in their native language, in the Reformed Faith!

Tyumen, Siberia: Plans are progressing with regard to the establishment of an institute in Tyumen, Siberia, previously noted in our prior newsletters, and Reverend James Bultman of Zeeland, Michigan will be first professor in residence lecturing on historical confessions and reformation topics. He will travel to Tyumen in the not so distant future and participate in the selection of facilities etc. and curriculum necessities, logistics, etc. and working in conjunction with Jim and Sally Foote of Footprints, Inc., and the Cultural Center which they have established to foster the work of nationals among nationals in the areas of drug abuse, alcoholism, dependency/co-dependency, dysfunctional families, and counseling activities, as well as a “practicum” of Bible study.

It is anticipated that the students who are adequately prepared in the various schools might have opportunity to lecture in the Tyumen environment, bringing cross-cultural diversity within the context of the given culture. The experience for both givers and receivers should prove invaluable, not only for domestic fine-tuning, but also in the area of mission.

Knox Seminary: I had the opportunity to address the Chapel lectures of Knox Seminary (Ft. Lauderdale, FL) on Thursday February 22nd and visited with several of the students after the chapel hour, all of who were eager to have more information concerning field service and opportunities for seminary students during their tenure as well as after graduation. Also present was Dr. Robert Reymond, former ITEM professor to the Society for Open Christianity in St. Petersburg, Russia. He gave great encouragement to the students in their pursuit of theological education and the equipping of nationals.

Missions Conferences: I had the pleasure of attending two missions conferences recently, one at Grace Presbyterian Church in Stow, Ohio, under the tutelage of Reverend Zachary Eswine and Reverend Arthur Ames, sharing with them the vision previously grasped by pastors Eswine and Richard Terpstra (Lamont CRC) as they traveled

and taught for ITEM in February 2000. The fire of missions burns in the hearts of those who have traveled to the Ukraine, tasted its fervor, experienced its need in a contributory way and furthered the mandate of the great commission given by our Lord and Savior. Reminiscent of the activities of the year 2000 and Pastor Ames’ opportunity to serve this year, Ruling Elder Fred Greco commented on the great need for the churches of the Reformed Faith to have a specific mission mandate and to pursue it zealously.

Returning on Monday the 25th from a five-day mission trip to St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in Hollywood, Florida, I am pleased to report that all four pastors of St. Andrew’s Church, Rev. T. J. Campo, Rev. John Stevenson, Rev. John Moore and Rev. Brad Hunter (Missions Conference Coordinator) have all expressed interest in going to the Ukraine to teach and we anticipate their scheduling within the next calendar year. The mission conference theme involved nationals spreading the Gospel, planting churches, and being involved in the theological education and equipping of nationals in order that the Gospel may spread to all the nations.

And so one asks “How long o Lord?” and the answer comes back, “Not long...!”

RDL ~~~

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AGAINST THE PLANS OF THE ENEMY

By Andre V. Bouravnev, M.Div.-cand.
(Covenant Theological Seminary), ITEM
Director of Publications

"Now Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, "Oh that You would bless me indeed and enlarge my border, and that Your hand might be with me, and that You would keep me from harm that it may not pain me!" And God granted him what he requested."

1 Ch. 4:10

A prominent Russian politician Grigory Yavlinsky said in his interview to the Russian independent broadcasting company NTV, that "the authorities have a tendency of creating a corporate political state." What he means by that is this: the way Russian government has been running things more looks like a corporation, completely disregarding the interests and freedoms of an individual. In such an environment it is even harder to be a Christian. It feels more as if you are in a Franz Kafka world of "the Trial," helpless against the corporate machinery crushing you.

And yet my wife Elizabeth, my daughter Anna and I look forward to going back to Russia to serve as missionaries with ITEM within the next 2 years. The Lord's words "the harvest is plenty but the workers are few" have never been so to the point as a chart on Religion in Russia in *Time* magazine for May 27, 1996 shows Russian Orthodox as 71.8% of



Pray for the Bouravnev family: Andre, Elizabeth and little Anna - preparing to serve the Lord in Russia through the ministry of ITEM/Christ for Russia

the population in Russia (only nominally), Muslim 5.5%, Catholic 1.8%, Protestant 0.7%, Buddhist 0.6%, Jewish 0.3%, Other 0.9%; no affiliation 18.9%.

With the population of about 150 million people in Russia, Protestants constitute hardly a million, of whom most are either Evangelical Christians-Baptists or Pentecostals. And even though Reformed Theology is barely represented its appeal is great (especially in the works of great Reformed theologians). This is what we bring with us to share with the people of Russia as a Covenant family in obedience to the

Lord's Great Commission. Also we have been equipped with sound doctrine through the education received at the Covenant Theological Seminary, through the preaching of Reformed pastors of St. Louis area, through the ministry of International Theological Education Ministries, and through discipleship of godly Christian leaders.

Our vision is "to equip reliable national leaders in sound doctrine." to train

national Christian leaders who will in their turn train others and minister equipped with the tools and means of sound biblical teaching so that one day we will look at a similar chart and see the difference that the Lord is producing as we faithfully labor in His field.

We realize that what we are planning to do is against the plans of the enemy and so we ask for your support, for your prayers, for the Lord to prepare us and protects us, to bless His work through our ministry and to prepare the hearts of the people whom we will encounter and minister, because the task ahead of us may seem an impossibility but with God all things are possible (Mt. 19:16).

My Personal Mission Statement

I believe to be called to the ministry of a teacher to lead God's people in God-centered, God-directed lifestyle and devotion, worship and exercise of their spiritual gifts according to the instruction of the Spirit of the law and consistent with historically consistent sound biblical teaching, in order to equip believers in the work and service and building up of the one Body of Christ, as represented by the Church, according to the divine design and all for the glory of triune God.



THE KINGDOM THAT WILL NEVER BE DESTROYED

From the Chairman Rev. Leon D. Pannkuk

In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. Daniel 2:44

Within the words of this verse lies the hope of the church militant, and of all those who labor on behalf of ITEM.

Consider for a moment to whom this prophetic statement was spoken.

Still in his twenties, Nebuchadnezzar II was in the second year of a forty-three year reign over one of the ancient world's great empires. The young sovereign had just risen to the throne of the kingdom of Babylon after the death of his father Nabopolassar two years earlier. In that same year he had crushed the armies of Egyptian Pharaoh Neco at Carchemesh. Only eight years prior to that, Nineveh had been overrun by his father's Chaldean forces, ending Assyria's reign of terror in the Near East.

Consider also when this prophecy was uttered, at the beginning of the golden years of the New Babylonian Empire. Having gained military supremacy, Nebuchadnezzar was just starting to embark on a building campaign that would make the city of Babylon the envy of the world, with its temples, boulevards, and the famous hanging gardens.

It was at this moment when a new king stood at the threshold of greatness, that God spoke to him in a dream. It fell to Daniel, a hostage from the tiny vassal state of Judah, to tell the king what his dream meant. "As you were lying there, O king, your mind turned to things to come, and the revealer of mysteries showed you what is going to happen." (Daniel 2:29).

This revealer of mysteries, the LORD of the Universe showed Nebuchadnezzar that his kingdom would rise, but someday all kingdoms would serve an everlasting, all-conquering King. Nebuchadnezzar himself was



only in an exalted position because the Sovereign of the Universe had decreed it to be so for a moment in time.

And so it came to pass that the Babylonians fell to the Persians; after that Alexander arose, and swept through the entire world, but died at the age of 32. Eventually, the Roman Empire, the mightiest of all, would arise. But during the life of Caesar Augustus, its first and perhaps its greatest emperor, God did indeed send another conqueror.

This King was born in the humblest of circumstances, lived in relative obscurity, and died the death of a criminal. In spite of this, his kingdom today spans the globe, and claims subjects in the billions. It has crushed the other four kingdoms. They all lie under centuries of dust, while the kingdom of Christ lives on and has yet to see its brightest morn.

The prophecy of Daniel is true not only for those four ancient empires, but also for all the kingdoms of man since then. The reign of Christ has outlasted the Hapsburgs, and Charlemagne; it lives still after the Ottomans, and the Ming Dynasty, and continues after Hitler, Hirohito, and Lenin lie in their graves. It is a rock not made with human hands, a rock that is becoming a mountain that will fill all the earth.

Today the work of ITEM continues because it is the work of the Kingdom of God, conquering the geography of the heart, not of the soil. ITEM continues to send Bible teachers to Ukraine and Latvia because Christ compels us to lay claim to human hearts by the power of His Work and His Word and His Spirit. ITEM plans to expand the kingdom of Christ in Russia and other states of the former Soviet Union because we believe the Bible to be true and the Word of God

to be powerful above all human schemes of power.

Christ for Russia began at the time of the fall of the Communist Empire in the Soviet Union. But the work of Christ is not dependent upon the rise or fall of any empire. Our mighty God merely uses the kingdoms of this world for His purposes.

"He changes times and seasons, he sets up kings and deposes them." Daniel 2:21a. Nebuchadnezzar and Caesar and Cyrus the Persian were only instruments in His hand; so are the powers of our age.

ITEM has linked arms with fellow believers in Eastern Europe to help set up the largest seminary in Ukraine, to start classes in Latvia, to translate Christian works into Russian, to send Rev. Rod Gorter to teach in Odessa, and to plan for greater works to come. These are exciting accomplishments that give optimism for the future.

But our hope lies not in these works, as good as they are. Our hope lies in the Omnipotent Revealer of Mysteries, who has spoken in human history through his Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. He is the Rock, the Mountain who fills the whole earth. He will go before us, conquering all his and our foes, establishing a kingdom that will endure forever.

"Lead on, O King Eternal, till sin's fierce war shall cease, And holiness shall whisper the sweet amen of peace.

For not with swords loud clashing, nor roll of stirring drums, But deeds of love and mercy, the heavenly kingdom comes."

-Ernest W. Shurleff, 1888

On behalf of the Board of ITEM, I thank each of you for the resources you have committed to this work of God's Kingdom, and urge you to work and pray and give in the future as God's Spirit leads. Rev. Leon D. Pannkuk, Chairman