

Equipping Reliable Leaders in  
Sound Doctrine  
in

Russia  
Ukraine  
Latvia  
Hungary  
Romania

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Training Shepherds in the  
countries of the former Soviet  
Block

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# NEWSITEMS

## Fall Edition

### MY 76 DAYS IN TYUMEN SIBERIA

By Rev. James Bultman, ITEM  
Board Member and pastor of the  
Third Christian Reformed Church  
of Zeeland

**"Sin diverts man from God and man in his yearning for God goes on in life unfilled, having a thirst that never is quenched and in his frustration turns to shameful and hurtful lusts. All that is what I see in such tragic proportions in Tyumen."**

First thing let me express my thanks to Third Christian Reformed Church of Zeeland, Michigan for the sum of \$2600.00 given to me for my expenses in going to Tyumen in May of 2001 and for the abundant prayer support of the good people of Third CRC, Zeeland.

I left May 7 and arrived in Tyumen at midnight May 8-9. I left Tyumen on July 24th. I had the freedom to set my own time frame; so I thought that my stay should not be too brief because in the event that I be involved in something that was flourishing a short stay would be regretted. I found that my time involved teaching adults in the evenings. Summer holiday activities and involvement in tout-of-town dachas cut down attendance. On May 11 there was a meeting of ministers interested in starting a seminary there.

I was able to make a good general appraisal of Tyumen as a place for future work. I lived in four different homes and I learned the present state of the people I stayed with. By knowing these people I had a window into what life was like for the people in Tyumen generally.



The Russian flag goes up with the American flag at morning devotions at the Youth Bible Camp near Tyumen, Siberia

I started a class on the Heidelberg Catechism open to all adults three nights a week, two hours per night plus two hours preceding the evening classes helping the interpreter prepare.

I preached three or four times, taught an adult Bible study class in the afternoon on Sunday following the church communal meal, had lengthy visits with people interested in Christianity as well as talking and counseling people with whom I lived. I attended several interesting meetings at the Culture Center, meetings conducted by Jim and Sally Foote geared to helping college students with the pronunciation of English words, a meeting with the man from the state department who represented the Department of Religious Affairs, and I visited the flourishing Youth Bible Camp at which great numbers of youth declared Jesus Christ as their Savior.

I managed to get out of town to visit the dacha (a gardenplot) of a family with whom I stayed. I also worked on my lectures before class time seeking to improve them and making helpful changes.

Continued on page 2

# MY 76 DAYS IN TYUMEN SIBERIA

*Continued from page 1*

I made visits with Jim and Sally Foote in home settings of people of Trinity Presbyterian Church, the one Jim and Sally started as well as people of the Pentecostal church. I attended an Internal Youth Organization banquet, an organization serving all of Siberia. Some young people traveled six to eight hundred miles to attend this event.

A few words of explanation should be made about the Culture Center since the name might suggest an organization that is totally non-spiritual. The Culture Center is entwined with a positive spiritual presence and has been a feeder for the church.

Jim and Sally Foote went to Tyumen at the invitation of a friend in Moscow. They had D.V.B.S. schools and planned to begin evangelism in '95 only to learn that Russian laws changed and they needed an invitation from someone in Siberia to do evangelism. Providentially, they occurred so that Jim and Sally could stay for a year and teach English in high school, which they did. They were not allowed to do any public Christian ministry; so Russian friends arranged for them to have private Christian ministries.

These Russian friends discovered that a Russian-American organization could invite Americans to come. In May of '96, a Culture Center was registered. Nationals were invited to this Center and felt comfortable about it because it was not a church or primarily something religious; if it had been many would not have come. The Culture Center had a library, office, and permanent reading and study room.

Promise Keepers from America came to help the Culture Center in '98. One of the Promise Keepers was heavily involved in A.A. and Narcotics Anonymous. Programs were started for recovery of persons who had been physically detoxicated in a hospital and then were sent to the Culture Center to be mentally and spiritually detoxicated. Many people came to the church, Trinity Presbyterian Church, and are now vibrant, happy Christians as a result of these recovery programs. Members of the church are invited to public schools to teach a program on how to say 'no' to persons selling drugs. Evangelism is now being done by people at the Culture Center inviting people to come to Christ.

People from the Narcotics Hospital are sent to the Culture Center. Jim and Sally never intended to start a Culture Center; they came to do evangelism. But when the door closed for them to do evangelism the Lord in his providence led them to the creation of the Culture

Center and it has served as a way of introducing many to Jesus Christ.

Sergei Ionov broke his life-long drinking habit through the work of the Promise Keeper who was with A.A. Now he heads up a recovery program for drug addicts and those who have A.A. treatment. His work is to teach these people how to stay off drugs and alcohol. Sergei has only been a Christian for 2 1/2 years; it is a joy to know him. I lived with him for about three weeks. His spiritual fervor makes me envious. Most of the addicts who come to the Center are professionals who seem to want the Reformed Faith.



*With the help of two of his interpreters, Katya (on the right) and Vera (on the left), Rev. Bultman taught intensive Bible classes in Tyumen .*

I shall now give my spiritual appraisal of Tyumen pertaining to the wisdom of establishing a seminary there. The government that once was so hostile to Christianity is now giving full freedom. There is no other Protestant seminary in Tyumen. The young men of Tyumen who wish to get a seminary education go to the large cities, Moscow or Kiev, according to the ministers in Tyumen. After the young men receive their seminary degrees, they usually choose not to go back to places like Tyumen, to use a slang expression, "the boondocks." If there were a Protestant seminary in Tyumen, there is confidence that the young seminary graduates would stay.

The low moral and spiritual climate in Tyumen is cause for any spiritual help that can be given. Communism was very successful in removing nearly every vestige of Christianity from the area. Jim Foote estimates that only about a thousand Protestants gather to worship God on Sunday, he qualifies that estimate by saying it is too high.

The Orthodox Church has a prominent presence in Tyumen, but the spiritual in-put of the church is minimal with its predominant emphasis on ritual, external beauty and form. Vibrant preaching of the Word of God is scarce.

Tyumen is a city of between one-half and one million people. I was never able to get the exact number. The population is growing noticeably due to the oil industry in the extreme north of the Tyumen Oblast (Region).

Drug addiction is like a plague. Thankfully the government faces this problem and drug addicts spend a year in prison if caught. Use of alcoholic beverages is extremely heavy; drunks can be spotted nearly every time a person walks a few blocks. Walls in stores from the floor upward have shelves filled with alcoholic beverages. The people are extremely heavy smokers, men and women. Lying and stealing are rampant. Divorce is at a sickeningly high rate. Men divorce their wives for younger women and leave their former wife and children emotionally devastated and seem not to have any feelings about it all. The marriage ceremonies have no reference to God at all, just promises from one to the other. The army seeks new recruits every year to meet its annual quota. A knowledgeable woman told me that the army is unable to fill its annual quota because so many of the young men are drug addicts, alcoholics, or have aids.

All of the above are evidences of a very low moral life and of a spiritual emptiness. Jim Foote says that he loves to be with the people of the church but the culture outside the church is depressing.

As I write I think of the words of Paul in Romans one. Paul speaks of the world of God's invisible qualities, the things of nature speaking without doubt of a supernatural being, punctuating the knowledge already in the heart of man that there is a God. Sin diverts man from worshipping God. Man is insurably religious; he yearns for God to know him and love him. Unlike the animals, he cannot be satisfied until he is held in the embrace of God. Sin diverts man from God and man in his yearning for God goes on in life unfilled, having a thirst that never is quenched and in his frustration turns to shameful and hurtful lusts. All that is what I see in such tragic proportions in Tyumen. The bringing of the Gospel of the love of God through Jesus Christ will come to great numbers as a cup of cool water to a thirsty man in the desert. The pastors of tomorrow must be equipped and trained!

"Lord of harvest send forth reapers, the fields are white unto the harvest and the laborers are few."

In Christ alone,

~~~~ JB, August 2001



Rev. Perry Tinklenberg about the students at Donetsk seminary: "I have been appointed to call the students in this mining district to mine the riches of the text [of the Scriptures] for its riches..."

## BIBLICAL TRUTH

By Dr. Merle A. Messer, ITEM  
Board Member and Professor

**"I came out of Homiletics class as if walking on air or carried by angels... I have been appointed to call the students in this mining district to mine the riches of the text for its riches and not for the easy message of allegory or spiritualization. Now God is yielding fruit. I am humbled. I am blessed."**

We all have convictions (truth to us), but God desires us to know Biblical Truth. Jer. 9:23-24 "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises loving-kindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the Lord" (NASB).

In Rev. Perry Tinklenberg's 1988 report about a class he taught in Donetsk, Ukraine, a part of what he wrote is as follows:

*"I came out of Homiletics class as if walking on air or carried by angels. At the beginning of class we were talking about the classes and curriculum and Roman said that he would like to address the class. He informed us that he had always preached allegorically.*

*He said that he had been reading Erasmus of Rotterdam who preached allegorically, so he did too. He also mentioned that deep within himself it bothered him that Erasmus called the Bible an allegory because that implied that the Bible was no different from any other philosophical text or religious story. But, he has been learning from me that the text is historical and authoritative and is to be preached as such and he would like to report publicly that he was changing the way he preached because of this*

*class.*

*I see this not so much that I am doing a good job teaching them to preach, but the Holy Spirit is pulling together many themes from them. It was the Spirit that began the unrest in Roman's mind and the Spirit that brought me and appointed me to teach Homiletics... After I told Anatoli (at the opening meeting) that I had been praying for the Spirit to lead me and bless my thoughts and after I said I would submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit through Him, Anatoli's eyes misted and he said, 'You have reminded me of my calling to pray for you and to direct the school according to its needs and you, Perry, will teach homiletics.'*

*I have been appointed to call the students in this mining district to mine the riches of the text for its riches and not for the easy message of allegory or spiritualization. Now God is yielding fruit. I am humbled. I am blessed."*

Rev. Tinklenberg's experience is an outworking of Jeremiah 9:23-24. Truth broke through to Roman and he expressed a greater understanding of Holy Scripture and thereby he knows God better. Roman is typical of students in our seminaries in the former Soviet Union. I wonder how many readers of this article have studied Erasmus of Rotterdam as Roman has?

I couldn't help but notice that the above quote is from Perry's journal. So many positive and exciting things take place that it is necessary to write them down or they fade into the back of our minds due to the heavy teaching/preaching schedule and unfamiliar surroundings in which we find ourselves. When I read my journal upon returning to the U.S., it reminds me of both serious and humorous events that I might well have forgotten.

As we travel into the former Soviet Union and teach our respective classes we experience the "humbling and blessing" that

Perry referred to. Without a doubt we have far more extensive formal education than the pastors and students we teach, yet we learn and are encouraged about our ministries at home through seeing such drastic changes take place in the thinking of our students. The humility that we are exposed to through their learning process and their private lives is an education in itself.

Recently I was talking to a Missions Professor at a seminary in the U.S. about teaching Missions in Ukraine. He asked about the level of understanding of the students. Here is a concise version of my reply. "The students know Bible facts and Bible trivia that is absolutely amazing. They memorize huge portions of Scripture, but they realize that they need more than that. I said that if he were teaching first year students he would find allegory firmly implanted in their thinking. If he were teaching third year students, the allegorical beliefs would be replaced with a proper understanding of Scripture and their theology would be completely turned around."

If we approach the students where they are in their understanding and lay out our teaching based on ample Scriptures, they change for the better. Roman and others when challenged study and grow spiritually.

In my opinion, some of our fastest growing churches in the U.S., in their attempt to draw crowds, are doing nothing more than "unchurching the church." I have been encouraged through my experiences with I.T.E.M. to preach and teach Biblical Truth and not water it down thinking that will attract crowds. Positive experiences such as the one Perry experienced with Roman encourage us to persevere as we are reminded that it is not us, but the Holy Spirit who does the changing.

The Gospel teaches us that God takes the initiative and we see reinforcement of that truth as He works through the least of His sheep to do His Will. One of the many rewards associated with I.T.E.M. is seeing the Holy Spirit replace the wisdom of man with the wisdom of God.

~~~~ Dr. MM, October 2001

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# THE TIME IS COME... THE TIME IS COMING...

By Dr. R. David Ludwick, ITEM President

The time is come when Andre's term as an M.Div. student has been met and fulfilled - he graduated in August. And the time is come when he made application for and received admission to Ph.D. program in Philosophy and History. The time is come when he has completed the vast majority of his training in publications, database management, missions presentations, preparation and delivery, and a cross-cultural analysis and experience... And so the time is coming when he will begin his deputation to raise the necessary funds to complete his academic training and begin to assume his responsibilities as a visiting professor at the various ITEM seminaries/schools and as Field Ministries Administrator with responsibilities for Russia, Siberia, Latvia, Romania and Ukraine.

And so... the time is coming, and is now here that we ask for your prayerful support of these things which have come and are coming, for his family (see picture), as they are preparing to respond to their mission mandate. And so the time is both come and coming when we ask that you prayerfully consider inviting Andre to come to visit your church, your missions committee, the business associates or your personal friends so that you may co-labor not only with ITEM as you have been and with ITEM as it will be in the years to come - we ask that in addition to your regular support that you prayerfully consider adding Andre and his family to your mission family.

~~~ Dr. DL, October 2001



The Bouravnevs (Andre, Elizabeth and little Anna) are preparing for ministry in the former Soviet Union. Andre has finished his Masters of Divinity at Covenant Theo. Seminary and now it is time to raise funds to serve in his homeland...

## ROD GORTER REPORTS FROM ODESSA, UKRAINE

By Rev. Rod Gorter, ITEM Missionary/  
Professor

Dear friends,

We just got back a couple of days ago from being in Prague for a weekend, and we have two all day meetings the next two days (we leave early this morning, Thursday), so unfortunately I haven't been able and won't be able to write up a full report:

- 1. I have spent a large portion of time since we returned in activities with the Evangelical Reformed Seminary of Ukraine (ERSU). I was the moderator for a course on Acts and Pauline Epistles during the summer. The two weeks of lectures were in early June with a guest lecturer (I did some of the lectures as supplement). As moderator, I was responsible for preparing the syllabus, course requirements, and follow-up which included monthly one-day tutorials, grading course work, dialogue with students on progress, etc.
- 2. In early September I taught a course for two weeks in ERSU on Biblical Interpretation (Hermeneutics). The students were very responsive and enjoyable to teach. I am now involved in follow-up for that course.
- 3. I am serving as "Church Developer" in three different churches of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ukraine (EPCU) - in Odessa, Belgorod, and Izmail. In each of these churches, this is not a church planting role specifically, but rather a developmental role - mentoring/discipling the leaders in each of those churches, and helping them develop the young churches they are serving.

4. On a broader level with the EPCU, I am involved with the Proto-Presbytery, which just met yesterday (October 3). I am a part of the Credentials Committee and the Presbytery Diaconal Committee. These are mentoring roles, training the Ukrainians involved in the licensing examinations, oversight of those under care of Presbytery, ordination exams, development of diaconal ministries in the churches, etc.

I am also involved in addressing theological issues and the church order issues for the denomination, as well as resolving problems in the churches.

5. I am likewise active with the MTW team. I plan and usually lead our weekly "team worship" in Odessa (Sunday afternoons - the Ukrainian service is in the morning). We often work with short-term groups that come - to work in the church building, do ministry (VBS, medical, music, seminars, etc.) and we have team meetings and follow up, in which strategy and functional issues are addressed.

6. I am expecting that this fall would also involve some teaching with other ITEM ministries - a week for the Conference in Donetsk and two weeks teaching in Tyumen, Siberia. However, those have fallen through for now, so we will stay active this fall with our other ministries.

7. Lydia remains active at home (caring for four boys, a husband and a dog - also male!). She participates a little bit in the missionary school here and is active in team functions. We often have opportunity to host people in our home - ministry Lydia enjoys. She also has opportunity to disciple some Ukrainian women of the church, and touch the lives of neighbors - especially neighborhood kids who frequently come to our home.

Greetings to all involved in ITEM's ministry, and thanks for their involvement and for their prayers, and for all they do for the ministry.

In Christ's Service with you,  
~~~ Rev. RG, October 2001

R. David Ludwick, J.D., M.Div., *President*,  
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