

Equipping Reliable Leaders in
Sound Doctrine
in

Russia
Ukraine
Latvia
Hungary
Romania

Spring 2002
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Training the Shepherds in the
countries of the former Soviet
Block

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International Theological Education
Ministries, Inc
P.O. Box 31456
St. Louis, MO 63131

NEWSITEMS



Spring Edition

TRIAL TIMES FOR SEMINARY IN RIGA

By Artis Celmins,
RRTS Administrative Director

During the January term Dr. Beeke teaching Soteriology, there happened an exceptional incident bringing troubles and testing of faith for those involved in the work in Riga.

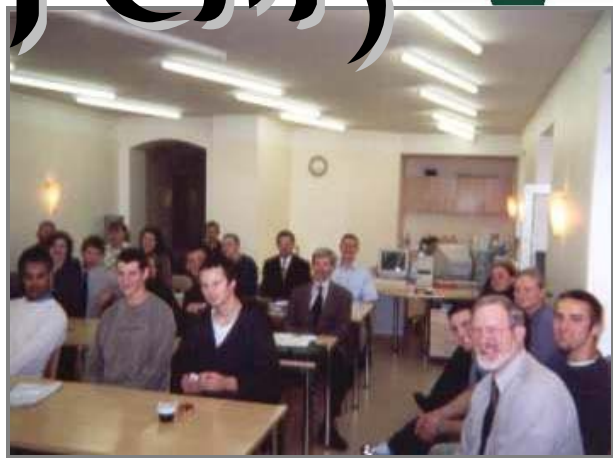
What Happened?

On the evening of January the 9th, after the evening class, professor went back to the apartment where he (and our other visiting professors in past) was staying. It is in the adjacent building to the building where RRTS library and lecture-hall is. As he opened the door and went in, before locking the door two (by professor's report) men broke in, attacked him, threatening with a knife, tied him and robbed the personal things including the notebook PC and money.

After they had gone, Dr. Beeke succeeded to break free from the ties and call police. After the incident Dr. Beeke moved to live in hotel. Later the same night we discovered that seminary office was robbed, too, as professor had the office keys in his pocket. Two notebook computers and a video-player were stolen, obviously in great hurry.

What Happened Next?

The Professor's health turned out to be well despite the accident, and lectures could be continued and course was completed, and professor was able to fly back home as planned, by God's grace. It was great shock however for him and seminary staff and board, nevertheless. Seminary staff, board, and all involved were cooperating great in prayer and in work to help our dear visitor to recover and also to continue the lectures. Classes were held in a conference room of the same hotel where professor was staying, to make it safe.



Dr. Van Groningen teaching a class entitled "Wholeheartedly Biblical" at Riga Reformed Theological Seminary

With Dr. Beeke's help, the police was able to identify several suspects and that they reasonably certain had perpetrated this crime. On March 15 police arrested the main suspect and have proofs that he is guilty of this crime.

What Did RRTS Do After the Incident?

RRTS has taken extra steps to increase the security even more - the next visiting professors are staying in a hotel in center of Riga and being escorted every day to and from the classes.

Does This Incident Characterize the General Situation in Latvia?

This is the first incident of its kind we have had in our three and a half years of existence. Riga suffers from high incidents of non-violent crime, but no more than any other major city in the world. Incidents of violent crime are somewhat rare, and generally limited to organized crime elements. Crime has not been a major concern for us nor has it before been a hindrance to our work.

What is the Out come: Bottom Line.

RRTS Academic Dean Larry Stout said: "what Satan meant for evil, Lord meant for good!" More people found out about the seminary and churches in Latvia, we were encouraged by our friends and supporters while going through the difficulties, learned to be more dependent on God in our work - all is in His hands!

We rejoice that seminary work had not been distracted and proved to be strong. Professors of upcoming courses have confirmed to us that they are ready to come! By God's grace the seminary is growing up; more students; greater optimism and certainty of His grace.

April 2002
Artis Celmins

ANOTHER MISSIONARY

By R. David Ludwick, ITEM President



Andre Bouravnev born 1975, son of a military officer, having lived in Russia, Belarus, Siberia, Mongolia, attended Moscow State Linguistic University (1992-1996), studying linguistics, emphasis: English, attended UT Texas in 1996, translated for Christian missionary groups in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kazan, Volgograd, Nizhnii Novgorod, etc/, completed an M. Div at Covenant Theological Seminary in 2001, employed by ITEM for the past 4 years

It gives me great pleasure to introduce Andre to you. During the time of his volunteering and employment with ITEM I have come to know him personally and professionally; his work on the data and donor bases; prayer calendars and newsletters; his creation of informational documents – fliers, bulletin boards, response devices even professional (business) cards, have equipped him with administrative/marketing capabilities capabilities.

He is further equipped by his translation work of syllabi, correspondence, documents, his ability to critique Russian theological literature, and his translation of *Escape From Reason* by Francis Schaefer (as well as by upcoming translation projects).

His Master of Divinity degree gives emphasis to apologetics, outreach to contemporary culture as well as biblically based theological perspective, conservative, Covenantal and Reformed.

Now undertaking Ph.D. studies focus on Philosophy and History and includes courses such as Advanced Church History, Moral Theories in the History of Philosophy, Reformation Ethics – these are equipping him for teaching and reaching those whom God sends to our schools.

He will not be isolated on his return to the former Soviet Union (anticipated to be 2003) because of his bride Elizabeth and their daughter Anna Yekaterina.

We are presently in the process of preparing a job description which will include his responsibilities as they are agreed but which will surely include being a “circuit riding professor!”

This introduction carries with it petition for your considered and prayerful support of the mission mandate which God will surely give to Andre through ITEM. This then is a request not that you substitute your prayerful and financial support of ITEM's work but that you prayerfully consider an annual gift of support to Andre as he undertakes field service in his homeland. For your information we anticipate his wages to be \$30,000 for wages, a percentage for retirement fund, \$3,000 for health/medical/life insurance, \$5,000 for logistical, travel and presentation expenses, etc.

Dr. R. David Ludwick
April 2002

USA donations and correspondence:
P.O. Box 31456, St. Louis, MO 63131-0456
Tel. +1.314.568.0174; Fax: +1.636.861.1613
e-mail: item@item.org
christforrussiaukraine@juno.com
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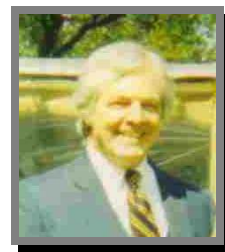
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HOW LONG, O LORD?

(OUR RUBRIC)



Dr. R. David Ludwick, President

As I begin what I anticipate to be a whirlwind visit in the Pacific Northwest, I pause to give thanks for those dear brothers and sisters with whom I will visit and share the victories of our work together. This trip will be the beginning of a “circuit ride” around the United States, sharing the victories in Ukraine, Latvia, Siberia, and, hopefully, Russia.

If there is opportunity for me to share or make presentations in your church, or circle of friends, please contact the ITEM office by email in order that we might work together to select a date to share the victories.

How Long O Lord?

Not Long!

In His Service and in yours,

Dr. R. David Ludwick
March 2002

Joshua 1:6-9

HOW CAN WE ASSESS THE VALUE OF YOUR INVESTMENT IN THEOLOGICAL TRAINING OF PASTORS, TEACHERS AND LAY LEADERS

Donetsk, Ukraine:

- ◆ January 2002 – 910 pastors attended a Preaching Training Conference;
- ◆ August 2002 – 70+ students enter the theological college.
- ◆ September 2002 – 40+ become students in the Masters Program;

Riga, Latvia:

- ◆ 25 students.

Tyumen, Siberia:

- ◆ Awaiting opening in September 2002.

Your prayerful support and the foundation you laid financially by investing in these lives and the lives these will touch will produce return for generations to come.

GOD'S WORD BEARING FRUIT IN UKRAINE

By Dr. Van Lees, ITEM Professor

"Each time I travel to Ukraine I have the idea in mind of serving Christ's Church in that part of the world. While that hopefully occurs, I have found that God's people there greatly encourage and motivate me."



Dr. Van Lees held classes in Shakhtyorsk, with the local church intrinsically involved in the education process

In February 2002, I taught for the third time in Ukraine. I taught a class on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in Donetsk and an overview of the prophets in Shakhtyorsk.

I discovered that the class on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit was a needed study because of the growing influence of various cults and sects in Ukraine. The students were especially interested in being able to show Scripturally the deity of the Holy Spirit and the personhood of the Holy Spirit. They had encountered the teaching of the Jehovah Witnesses against the deity and personhood of the Holy Spirit and against the doctrine of the Trinity. Therefore, they were very interested in being able to refute that false teaching. They are also having problems with the faith formula or word of faith teachers. We examined some of the aspects of that theology with a particular focus on the Gnostic elements in it. Anatoly, the director of the school in Donetsk, asked me to preach on that subject in his church because of the difficulty he had been having with those issues in his congregation.

I was pleased that the class touched on issues that were pertinent to the students in addressing falsehood from these various groups that are now active in Ukraine. I was also warmly received in Shakhtyorsk as we studied Old Testament history and did a basic overview of the prophets. I taught for fifty-five hours in Donetsk and ten hours in Shakhtyorsk.

Each time I travel to Ukraine I have the idea in mind of serving Christ's Church in that part of the world. While that hopefully occurs, I

have found that God's people there greatly encourage and motivate me. Pastors in the United States sometimes hear complaints from their people that the sermon was too long or too theological. It is encouraging to observe the intensity of desire for the Word of God that is present in the students and in the churches. As I taught, I watched the students carefully and quickly try to write down every sentence. Even though I was speaking to them through a translator, which is certainly not the easiest way to listen to a lecture, they maintained their concentration and interacted with the material with good questions and comments.

The concern and love the students expressed for the body of Christ in prayer was also encouraging. One morning, as we stood to pray, I shared with the students the needs of a young woman in our church, Donna, who is going through chemotherapy for breast cancer. I asked them to remember her in their prayers. I then bowed my head and started to pray. Before I could say a word, one of the men in the class started praying earnestly for Donna. Natasha, the translator, softly translated the prayer for me. It was a passionate and focused prayer for the needs of a woman he had never met. After he finished praying, another student prayed in a similar manner. Around six or seven people prayed for Donna. After the prayer time, one of the men told me they would add Donna to their prayer list and pray for her daily. It was a very moving experience to pray with these brothers and sisters in the Lord. Even with the

the language barrier it was clear that we loved, served, and worshipped the same Lord and truly, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4:4-6).

It has been observed that sermons have a cumulative effect on people as they sit under the preaching of the Word of God; biblical teaching and preaching gradually build a God-centered worldview. This principle is evident in the students in Ukraine. When I first taught in Donetsk in 1998, the interpretive skills of the students were somewhat low. They tended to use a great deal of allegory in their reading and interpreting of Scripture. Now even the beginning students are approaching the Scriptures with good hermeneutical skills. A sound theological perspective is also growing among the students. In 1998, I taught a class on biblical soteriology. Several of the students discussed and debated the points with me. When I was there last year, many of those same students are now thoroughly biblical in their theology. I saw the same thing this year. There is a growing commitment to the principles of God's sovereign grace not only among the students, but also in the churches where they are involved in various ministry activities. I had a strong sense that as I and other professors with I.T.E.M. are teaching and preaching in Ukraine that seeds are being sown that will affect future generations in that region. Asked about his accomplishments as a Reformer, Martin Luther said, "I simply taught, preached, wrote God's Word: otherwise I did nothing... The Word did it all." That is my prayer for the legacy of the work in Ukraine. As Isaiah 55:10-11 states: "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth, and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; So shall my word be which goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it."

Dr. Van Lees

February 2002

FIELD REPORT ON TEACHING AT EASTERN UKRAINIAN THEO- LOGICAL SEMINARY

By Dr. David Dively, Senior Pastor, Community Presbyterian Church (PCA), Stated Clerk, Ohio Valley Presbytery, Professor, Donetsk Theological College, Professor, Dorothy Sayers Classical School.

"By the end of the course, many of the students understood much better where the worldview that dominated their culture came from and which worldviews are competing for their hearts and minds now."

I tried three times to go to Donetsk. In 1999 a variety of scheduling conflicts prevented me from going. In 2000 my health and the death of my father kept me away. But finally February 2002 would be the month I'd make it.

My hopes for the trip were high in part because my six weeks leading up to the trip were the busiest in many years. I left Louisville Friday Jan 31 tired but excited. The flight on Lufthansa, first to Frankfurt and then to Kiev, was very pleasant. I was pleased to find Sasha and Anna waiting at the Kiev airport to escort me to the Ukrainian airlines terminal. While waiting there I encountered my first "hole in the floor" restroom facility.

When I arrived in Donetsk, Sergei was there to meet me. He took me to a cozy apartment that would be home for my two-week stay. There my teaching partner and I would be blessed with dinner every evening we needed it. Sergei would be our transportation, apart from the few times we took the trolley ride to the internet café to reach out and e-touch folks back home. I sent a daily message to our church email list, and our church family felt very connected with me throughout the entire trip.

I was glad I chose to pair up on my first trip with a veteran. Van was an excellent roommate and companion, even though I could not compete with his saxophone or his "saxophone fuel" (you'll have to ask him what that was).

Max and Natasha were a delight to work with as they translated our lectures. They succeeded in making me feel comfortable, and the experience exceeded my expectations. The 70+ students represented a wide range of age and background. I told them on the first day that I came seeking the blessing others had experienced in ministering to them. On the last day they asked me if I received that blessing and I told them most certainly. They were attentive (except for a couple girls a couple days), and their questions were insightful.

I taught the Understanding the Times curriculum from Summit Ministries (summit.org). We covered four worldviews (Secular Humanism, Marxism/Leninism, Cosmic Humanism and Biblical Christianity) and ten disciplines (Theology, Philosophy, Ethics, Biology, Psychology, Sociology, Government, Economics, Law, and History). I have taught this course in a local Christian school for several years. My students (and perhaps even others in the school) were curious as to where I would be going with all this. By the end of the course, many of the students understood much better where the worldview that dominated their culture came from and which worldviews are competing for their hearts and minds now. I was challenged to come home and seek to better understand the transition from communism to freedom so that in future teaching trips I might be more helpful and encouraging to them.

My ministry was not complete when I boarded the plane in Donetsk. I spent most of the flight counseling with a couple who had come to adopt a little girl. Circumstances and events overwhelmed them. There were language barriers and conflicting agendas. They were wondering whether the trip was a failure. I told them not if they sought to learn what God wanted to teach them. I encouraged them to leave the little girl in God's hands, and find ways to help the organization be more efficient and perhaps help spare future prospective parents similar hardship and pain. On the flight from Kiev to Frankfurt I observed an "effervescent" pastor "evangelize" a European gal for a couple hours. Finally, he played his trump card. He spoke of the end times and tribulation, informing her that 90-95% of Christians agree about these matters. Right or wrong, I caught up to her in the terminal and told her in passing that not all Christians were as overbearing.

On both flights I was reminded of the beauty and practicality of our doctrine. I reflected back on the two weeks I had to plant seeds that God might use to strengthen His church and extend His kingdom throughout the Ukraine. Already I am eager to return. I think daily of Sergei, Max, and Natasha. The faces of my students are always there in my memory and high on my prayer list.

I have told my congregation that I am reluctant to say this because I know my own heart (which is deceptively wicked), but I can't help believe that this trip will be life changing. May God use it to His glory, and may this short testimony of my experience arouse in you an interest in going too.

*Dr. David Dively
February 2002*



Classes at the Donetsk school are intensive: students study from 8:30 am to 5:30 pm. Dinners are served as shown here between the classes so that the students could regain some energy for next session of the theological preparation.