

Equipping Reliable Leaders in  
Sound Doctrine  
in

Russia  
Ukraine  
Latvia  
Hungary  
Romania

Spring 2003  
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Training Shepherds in the  
countries of the former Soviet  
Block

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*We offer you an opportunity to share in the preparation of His Bride... there is room for you! Please prayerfully consider your participation in His work through ITEM, and call or write us.*

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# NEWSITEMS



## Spring Edition

### THE LORD'S ONGOING WORK IN LATVIA, ROMANIA, AND SIBERIA

By Dr. R. David Ludwick, ITEM President

ITEM seeks to meet the needs of equipping pastors and teachers and lay leaders in the former Soviet block

**In this issue of newsITEMs I hope to bring you up to date on His three growing works in Latvia, Romania, Siberia. This will give you an opportunity to become more fully acquainted with the nature and extent of these works and our desire and attention to see them grow into full-fledged seminaries!**

**Riga, Latvia:** Presently RRTS meets five times per year. The faculty consists of professors primarily recruited by Dr. George Van Groningen and follows a curriculum developed by Dr. Van Groningen, Dr. Warren Lammers. By these means ITEM seeks to meet the needs of the students as they prepare for life-long ministries. Many of the students at this seminary have completed Bachelor as well as advanced degrees in a variety of disciplines: law, architecture, information technology, etc. Among these there are several Reformed pastors, who serve local churches and give opportunity for the students to practice in real life setting what they have been taught.

There is substantial growth potential in this region, ITEM representatives having just recently gone to Lithuania on a fact-finding expedition determined this to be so. One denomination there may have interest in RRTS either as individual churches or corporately. Interest may extend to funding of theological education! In an effort to expedite matters four of the pastors/students have been accepted in the Master's program of Distance Learning through Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis MO. It is anticipated that the sooner these four finish this program the sooner their churches and RRTS will have trained Latvian pastors and professors!

**Tyumen Siberia:** The work in Tyumen Siberia similarly has at least one denominational tie – the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. Missionaries Jim and Sally Foote through their persevering efforts to establish a cultural exchange there have come to find the absolute need for theological education in order for the Christian people there to advance further in their Christian maturing and growth. Currently meeting three times per year they hope to expand to six or more or to start a second class of students who will proceed through first year of classes while the matriculated students will begin to complete their second year. Several professors have served there laying a solid foundation for the curriculum in the basics of systematic and biblical theological courses.

There is some concern about the window of opportunity here so we encourage your inquiries concerning our opportunities and how we may all work together for His glory.

**Campina, Romania:** Five years ago Maranatha Bible College of Romania was but a fledgling in the arena of theological education. However, the challenge from Rev. Jonathan Taylor to the youth of Campina to meet the challenge of translating the lectures of the professors sent by ITEM and/or the Kirk of the Hills, St. Louis, was met and so the work began to grow.

The curriculum at Maranatha is as Bible specific and rigorous as that of solid Bible colleges in America and its students committed to the learning of the Word and the acquisition and the ability to pass this Gift of God to the congregations for generations to come.

These three schools, vastly different from each other, are held by the common thread of the ITEM professors' teaching of Reformed theology.

## BUILDING A GLOBAL COMMUNITY OF TRUST

Article reprinted upon request from the International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education (IAPCHE)

**As Christian higher education continues to thrive around the world, the International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education (IAPCHE) continues to draw Christian academics into a community of trust with the hope that our reflections will strengthen the whole body of Christ. This past year we convened three conferences and published two sets of proceedings. We are now poised to dramatically increase our range of services by offering a series of faculty development courses.**

In 2002 IAPCHE organized three major regional conferences. We convened a conference in Budapest around the theme, "God's Word for the Academy in Contemporary Cultures(s)." This conference divided into three tracks:

- 1) strategizing on the nature, place, and task of Christian higher education in contemporary culture(s);
- 2) identifying ways in which Christian higher education can serve elementary and secondary education; and
- 3) reflecting on the relationship between church, society and Christian higher education.

We were pleased to receive input from ITEM member Rod Gorter at the Budapest Conference. One of the most important outcomes of the conference is the creation of a regional teacher-training institute in Nagykörös, Hungary.

Our Latin American regional organization, AIPESC, took the lead in organizing a conference in Barranquilla Columbia on "the challenges of knowing to Christian education in a

globalized world." Finally, IAPCHE convened the first conference dedicated to Christian higher education throughout Asia and Oceania in Manila. We are in the planning stages for several conferences over the next three years and will certainly keep ITEM members aware of developments in the European region. This last year we brought out Conference 2000 and AIPESC 2000 proceedings.

The Budapest and Barranquilla proceedings from this past summer are in the final stages of preparation and will be available later this year. All proceedings can be ordered through our North American office.

Perhaps the most exciting is the development of the Christian Academic Studies Certificate (CASC). By September of this year we will offer faculty the opportunity to further reflect on the place that faith takes in their academic calling. Courses will examine the implications of a Christian worldview on scholarship, the relationship between the Bible and scholarship, the history of Christian thought, issues in Christian philosophy, and foundational issues in Christian scholarship. The certificate will be awarded jointly with a participating member institution.

**April, 2003  
IAPCHE**

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## TYUMEN BIBLE COLLEGE HAS NOW BEEN OPEN FOR ONE FULL YEAR

After several years of dreaming and planning and praying Tyumen Bible College got off to a fine start in September 2002. The first lessons in the College were very intensive for the students, professors and the interpreters. There were long hours of lectures during the day on Monday through Friday and four hours on Saturday morning. The students were then given two weeks to study for the final exams — one for each course. All were very pleased with the report that the students in the first sessions did extremely well with the examinations and the students will continue to take courses on the credit basis. Other students have the opportunity to audit courses. We give thanks to the Lord as He has provided us with His people who are willing and able to study His Word in a very serious manner!

Tyumen Bible College operates on the basis of three sessions per year. Each session lasts two weeks and includes two three-hour courses. The rigor of the course schedule for the remainder of 2003-4 can be seen in the following:

- May 2003 - Doctrine of God / Doctrine of Man;
- October 2003 - Doctrine of Christ and Salvation / Ecclesiology;
- February 2004 - Eschatology / Homiletics;
- May 2004 - Church History / Personal

Spiritual Development;  
October 2004 - Worship and Pastoral Theology / Missions and Evangelism.

There may be a future need for professors at Tyumen Bible College. If you have an M. Div. (or an equivalent degree or training) and you sense that the Lord may be leading you to teach a class at Tyumen Bible College and you would like more information, please contact Dr. R. David Ludwick, or Mr. Ron Rustin (see info on next page).



At IAPCHE Europe Conference in July 2002: Rev. Rod Gorter (ITEM full-time missionary in Ukraine), Dr. Vaentin Pessenko (Russia), Dr. Wayne Kobes (USA)

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*It has now been one full year since Tyumen Bible College started offering classes in various Christian disciplines.*

## TYUMEN, SIBERIA?

Tyumen is a capital city of the Tyumen region, just east of the Ural Mountains in southwestern Siberia. It has a population of about 500,000 people and it is approximately the size of the eastern United States. The city is about 1,400 miles east of Moscow and was established in 1586 as a Russian frontier fortress on the Tur river and since that time it has served as a gateway to Siberia for European Russia.

It has been for some time a strategic center for commerce, education and the Arts. As a result of recent developments, largely due to oil and gas which have been found there, the city is enjoying an economic surge. The travel between Moscow and Tyumen is convenient, there being several non-stop flights daily between Moscow and Tyumen.

Tyumen Bible College was an original proposal of Footprints International. Footprints International is the fieldwork of missionaries Jim and Sally Foote. They began their work some years ago founding a working cultural and educational center. Its primary purpose in Tyumen at that time was a community outreach missions effort designed to foster good relations between Russian Siberians and the United States, particularly through Christian work. Tyumen Bible College is associated with International Theological Education Ministries, Inc. of St. Louis, MO, which seeks to support the formation and operation of the theological education facilities there. They are partnering with the purpose of facilitating the planting of indigenous reproducing evangelical churches in Russia, utilizing various both American

and Russian missionaries in various cultural, educational and humanitarian activities.

The Mission of Tyumen Bible College is to build up the body of Jesus Christ by providing Reformed theological education throughout the Tyumen region of Russia.

Specifically, it is the partnering purpose to perpetuate a Christian organization which seeks to glorify God through theological education and study, whose primary responsibility is education of pastors and future pastors, planting new, and assisting existing churches. It also provides theological education for others who will serve in the Christian community and in the larger Russian society.

The College is located in the downtown area of Tyumen and is easily accessible by automobile, bus or walking distance from the hotel.

A library is available in the cultural and educational center where the college classes have been held. The library holds scores of volumes as well as audio/video collections and a computer lab. Footprints International provides resources to augment the library content, which includes a collection of works on Reformed theology, in addition to materials in biblical studies and Church History. Each professor that goes to teach in this college (in fact all ITEM professors) is asked to sign subscription agreement and acknowledgment of faith that he is in agreement with at least two of the five basic Reformed standards.

Professors teach a curriculum that includes both a certificate and a degree program and includes courses as a standard Bible college/seminary type, including but not limited to Biblical Theology, Hermeneutics, Doctrines of God / Man / Christ / Salvation, Homiletics, Worship and Pastoral Theology, Greek, Hebrew, Pentateuch, Prophets, Gospels, Acts, Paul, Apologetics, Ethics, etc. Several practical courses are included, namely Methodology and Church Planting, etc.

Should you have any interest or know someone who may be qualified to teach at the Tyumen Bible College, please contact David or Ron and they will discuss with you the procedures for application and the costs which are \$4,000 for the entire two-week term including air and ground travel, accommodation - room and board, administrative costs, facilities, equipment and supplies costs, students, interpreters and library costs. Air travel can be made through Footprints International or ITEM and spouses are invited to attend (and work!) at an additional cost of \$1,800.

Serious adventure attends flying into Siberia, especially for Westerners! If you have a spirit of adventure we welcome you to join us.

May God be given the glory!

**Dr. R. David. Ludwick**

# DR. VAN GRONINGEN'S VISIT AND WORK IN RIGA, LATVIA

The Van Groningens arrived on schedule in Riga, Latvia in March of this year in preparation for lecturing and working with the administration to continue growth and development of the Riga Reformed Theological Seminary. With them were Dr. and Mrs. Chalkwijk teaching for two weeks on Post-Reformation Church History. During the course of his teaching tenure there he emphasized that the Church was alive and had experienced some stress in Europe and Eastern Europe since the seventeen hundreds upto the present. The students responded positively to this professor who had served more than 35 years as a missionary, evangelist, pastor and professor in Brazil, and who now resides in the Netherlands.

In both classes taught the professors were gratified to observe the lively and keen interest of the students. The participation and interaction with professors was excellent and the average attendance was 20-22 pupils. Some of the advanced students were not required to attend because they were enrolled in the "distance learning" program – called Access – offered by the Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, MO. There are currently four students busily preparing for those classes during their one time per year trip to Covenant Seminary in August as they prepare to receive a Master of Arts degree in Theological Studies.

The demographics of the students are that they come from a variety of social and ecclesiastical backgrounds - some Lutheran, some Baptist, some Orthodox, a few Roman Catholic. These created a mix and the opportunity for cultural exchange. Others became believers through the witness of the Reformed believers in their various communities. All of the students demonstrate a real interest in Reformed theology and in the Reformed world and life principles. Riga Reformed Theological Seminary is purposefully Reformed and intends to remain faithful to the Reformed faith, Reformed theology and Church and Kingdom life and service under Christ the Lord.

The school is functionally operated through the efforts of the director of the seminary Artis Celmins, who is responsible for a wide range of academic and administrative and developmental opportunities in the continued search of the resident professor to take up some of the duties of course teaching and administration of the theological / academic works.

Curriculum for the three tracked academic axle is being developed which will include an M.A.T.S. and an M. Div. and an M.G.S.

The seminary was restructured during this past visit and a Board of Trustees was established. Four qualified men were given and accepted the responsibility to serve on it. The Trustees assumed responsibilities in the legal and broader business and financial areas. Membership on this Board requires that a majority have Latvian citizenship. The Board was established and its full eight members represent Latvian and Lithuanian churches.

Serious effort is under way to extend the influence of the Riga Reformed Theological Seminary into the wider Baltic region. The Lithuanian Evangelical Reformed denomination, numbered about 75 congregations before the Soviet era but was totally decimated. Church buildings were confiscated and seized for secular and military purposes. Fourteen small congregations are now struggling to restore their Reformed heritage and worship; there are only three pastors, (two of them are Lithuanian men attending RRTS). This denomination has some serious issues and RRTS is providing assistance in both theological and administrative respects and is more and more becoming a Baltic institution of our Lord.

Future RRTS development is assured from several directions. For example, during their March visit, Dr. and Mrs. Van Groningen drove to Vilnius and visited the Vilnius Evangelical Reformed Church. Their meeting there was with a group of men who plan to develop a Lithuanian Academy (at the university

level) and they hope and trust that within a few years they will have laid the groundwork sufficiently so that the academic and administrative structures would be in place and RRTS could, and likely would, become theological department. There is also a distinct possibility that in time an Estonian and a Finnish department could be included as well. An organizational chart was proposed which included philosophical, sociological, psychological, historical, cultural and technical aspects and departments. The prospect that the Lithuanian government would be open to granting an accreditation to the Baltic Christian University is a potentiality. A visit to Kaunas, Lithuania, brought Van Groningens in contact with the faculty and some of the administration of the Lithuanian Christian College, a Liberal Arts college, operated by a Christian staff and faculty that has approximately 550 students and offers a Bachelor's degree in Theology. This is primarily a Mennonite institution which faculty represents various theological preferences. Due to the differences in theological preferences it was concluded that the RRTS could provide information to LCC and its student body concerning what RRTS is doing, and if it offered a curriculum in which the students were interested, then relations might be established. At the present time no specific action was undertaken.

*(continued on page 5)*



*Dr. Van Groningen and the RRTS staff*

## DR. VAN GRONINGEN'S VISIT AND WORK IN RIGA, LATVIA

(continued from page 4)

RRTS could potentially offer a Master's degree program to the students at LCC, it being the largest and the only school teaching theology from evangelical perspective in Lithuania. There were tentative arrangements that RRTS would send a delegation back and present the study opportunities at RRTS to LCC last year theology students. Other cooperation was discussed including the possibility of cooperating with professors who arrive to teach at both of these institutions! The Evangelical Reformed Church in Lithuania (ERCL) now consists of twelve congregations and is seeking through its three pastors to lay a foundation as it struggles in its growing pains. Since July two Lithuanian students have entered the Riga program with the financial support from RRTS and it would appear that after several meetings the vice-president of ERCL and RRTS are pursuing real possibilities of working in ways that could effectually offer training and help to ERCL. To God be the Glory!

Algimantas Kvedaravicius, pastor and vice-president of the synod of ERCL, was elected an associate member of the Board of RRTS and upon election said that "RRTS is the only hope" for the ERCL and future cooperation is in the planning.

Lectures given by professors from the United States have been gratefully received and even now it appears that the opportunities for those visiting professors to teach in Lithuania as well as in Riga are becoming a reality.

As we are sure you are all aware our economy has not been conducive to missions growth. However, the need to sustain mission in place does not change with the economy. Trying times surely affirm the need for leadership in His Church which must be well grounded and equipped to meet the results of the Fall. We seem to be in such times... Please do not forget that the need goes on. We are ready, able and already working toward the purpose of our mission mandate of equipping the Church's leadership. Please prayerfully consider your participation and co-labor with us for the first time or in a sustaining



*Latvia's central location makes RRTS a strategic and convenient center for theological education*

capacity.

We need your financial support but we need your prayers more. Thank you on behalf of all whom we serve together, the staff, faculties and Board of Directors of ITEM.

### **The status in the Baltic countries at present:**

**Latvia:** in 2002 two Reformed church plants were discontinued and people joined the three existing churches which are growing and flourishing - Riga Reformed Bible Church, Riga Reformed Church and Marupe Reformed Church.

**Lithuania:** of the fourteen parishes in the ERCL in 2002 four have asked the denomination to seek training in Germany and Poland and the remaining ten, with two pastors and most accommodating building facilities throughout the country, which gives us hope that there are great perspectives for revival in coming years.

**Estonia:** at the present time there are no Reformed churches known in Estonia; either historical or at the present, or at the moments being planted. RRTS is in contact with one church planter missionary who is Reformed Church USA and works presently with an evangelical church there, the Evangelical Church in Estonia. As RRTS seeks to develop a relationship in Estonia all who read this are asked to pray.

Should you be interested in teaching at RRTS or should you know someone who might be, costs are \$3,500 per professor, plus airfare round trip to Latvia. The costs cover ground transportation, interpreters, room and board accommodation, library fund, administrative costs, etc.

For a unique adventure in an historic and beautiful part of Eastern Europe the Baltics provide an excellent academic teaching adventure.

**Dr. R. David Ludwick**  
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## ROMANIAN MARANATHA BIBLE COLLEGE IS A REALITY

In the Fall of 1998, pastor Vasily Ion on ministering in Campina Romanian said, "the work is not ours, it is God's!" Pastor and head of the small Romanian Maranatha Bible College, located in the most populous region of Romania and least penetrated by the gospel stands today as a work of God. Their overcoming the vicissitudes and obstacles placed in its path by those forces, powers and principalities would slow the work of those who teach the biblical doctrines of Reformed theology. In some places where they have not been heard or presented. Pastor Vasily has seen first-hand the power of God to accomplish His work. It was the work of the Holy Spirit, which gave him the opportunity to receive a seminary education in the first place. In 1987 during the days before the 1989 revolution that swept the oppressive Ceausescu regime from power, only three students per year were allowed to enroll in the Baptist Institute in Bucharest. This was then the country's only accredited seminary, established in the pre-Communist times. That in itself was a demonstration of God's power but it added to the suffering for his faith to which pastor Vasily had become accustomed. As a result of his decision to prepare for the ministry he lost his government provided apartment and was forced with his wife and four children (now six) to move into his in-laws two room flat.

It was in this context that pastor Vasily dared to dream about a church planting and leadership-training program in this gospel starved southern part of Romania. He was at the time the only seminary trained pastor in Campina, the city of some 40,000, that is the hub of the most populous agricultural and industrial region in the country. From a human point of view, the work indeed can seem overwhelming. The south-central region of Romania stretching from Brasov, just north of the Carpathian Mountains, southward of the capital city of Bucharest, is predominantly Russian Orthodox, and has very few evangelical churches.

Work where Vasily ministers and lives stands in contrast to the northern part of the country where Hungarian Reformed Church and certain evangelical groups are well established and thriving.

Enrollment in the Baptist Institute in Bucharest, which is attached to the university there is open, but the cost has prohibited students from pursuing studies there for three years; and, in doing so it removes a man from serving in the active ministry and meeting the needs of the local church. Under pastor Vasily's ministry several churches have been planted and the Bible College established to serve the region. Under the plan adopted the Bible College operates a four year basic Bible curriculum offering two programs of study, one is a general Certificate program that will offer basic Bible training for lay people who lead in the church and work at various jobs in society; the second program is Pastoral Certificate program that will include additional courses: preaching, pastoral theology, etc. The goal being to develop the college into a degree granting institution as the Lord wills and directs in the future. The first courses were held in September of 1999.

Again and again and again pastor Vasily acknowledges that this work is the Lord's. We want to extend it for His glory. To this we can only say, "Amen." His "Amen" accompanied by the commitment by the Campina area that helps support the cost of the church is truly a commitment. In the country where the average monthly salary is less than \$200 pastor Vasily's \$100 per month and the income tax rated at 40 per cent reflects a substantial commitment both in time and effort expended.

ITEM's Christ for Romania ministry requests your prayers during final phases of the next four years of the school and that you pray for the recruiting of professors and for fund raising. Pastors interested in the challenging and enriching two week refreshing trip are asked to contact ITEM. The costs are approximately \$2,000 plus round trip airfare.

In conjunction with the partnership between ITEM and the Maranatha Bible College it is acknowledged that in obedience to the Great Commission this union between the two exists to serve the churches and people

of Commonwealth of Independent States, the former Soviet Union, and Central Europe and their effort between biblically sound pastors and church leaders. To this end ITEM and MBC work to secure prayers, labor, resources, finances to establish seminaries and other pastoral training centers, assemble theological libraries and translate and publish solid biblical literature.

Growth of the Maranatha Bible College will be a direct result of your prayers and your assistance. It is a work worthy of commendation as illustrated by the following anecdote:

When Rev. Jonathan Taylor, missions pastor of the Kirk of the Hills Presbyterian Church (PCA), St. Louis, MO, went on his first trip to Campina Romania, he challenged high school youth to become translators so that they could translate for the professors sent by ITEM to teach at MBC. Three years later when the classes started they were prepared, having met the commitment with self sacrifice of time and other opportunities. They were prepared to participate in the bringing forth of the glory of God in one small spot, but all to His glory!

An adventure of a unique kind in the community and country where obstacles have been truly obstacles with the hope and prayers of God's people that they prevail. It is a beautiful place to serve and the opportunities to feed open minds and hearts for the glory of God. Amen!

Dr. R. David Ludwick, April 2003



Map of Romania with Location of Campina