

Equipping Reliable Leaders in  
Sound Doctrine  
in

Russia  
Ukraine  
Latvia  
Hungary  
Romania

Summer 2003  
Volume 6, Issue 2

Training Shepherds in the  
countries of the former Soviet  
Block

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# NEWSITEMS



## Summer Edition

### NEW OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE THE LORD THROUGH THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

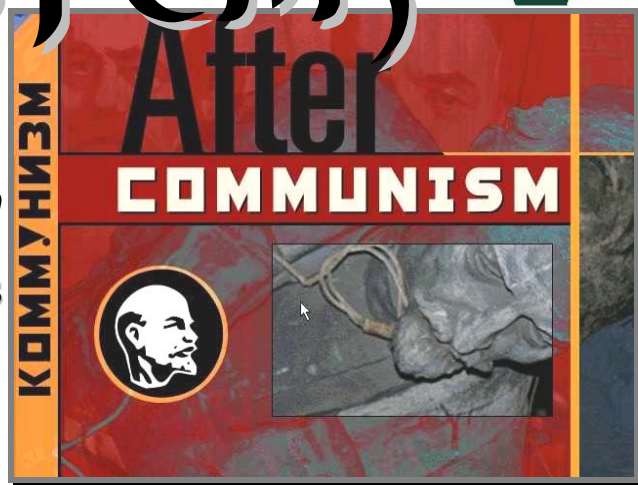
By Dr. R. David Ludwick, ITEM  
President

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,  
We are excited about the opportunities that our Lord is presenting to serve Him through theological education and translation of theological literature in the countries of the former Soviet Union. As the mission fields multiply, so do the opportunities to serve God's people through the equipping of the pastors, teachers, and lay leaders of His Church.

New opportunities are opening up in Romania and Lithuania; and new possibilities in Poland. As He opens these doors, He providentially closes others. One door, which has closed recently, is the Eastern Ukrainian Theological Seminary/Donetsk Regional Theological College in Eastern Ukraine, that is, these schools are now arranging for their own professors and financing. See article on page two for an update on those works. May He continue to work His will through those schools!

During the next several months we will be investigating these new opportunities as well as maintaining the current work in Odessa through the ministry of Reverend Rod Gorter in Odessa and the work in Riga, Latvia. Truly this is an exciting time to be in missions' work.

Please pray for professors to go to these new mission fields and for translators to translate additional works into national languages other than Russian. If you are a potential professor OR if you know a potential professor, please let us know. Pray for God to lead churches, business organizations



*"To be able to stand in the shadow of Lenin (literally!) and preach and teach the Gospel openly and freely in a satellite country of the former Soviet Union is something that few of us could have imagined only 15 years ago."*

or other groups to serve as partners with the fledgling schools in these new works and for the administration of ITEM to assume new responsibilities.

Please, would you also send us names and contacts of any persons in these countries who might have an interest in Reformed theological education.

We are blessed, because He has chosen us to labor together in His fields...

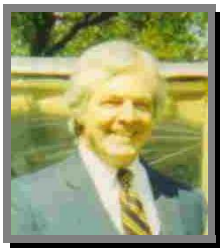
Dr. R. David Ludwick  
August 2003

**"Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and courageous; be careful to do according to all the law, which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."**

**Joshua 1:6-9**

# DONETSK, UKRAINE

By Dr. R. David  
Ludwick, ITEM  
President



For the past several years ITEM's work in Donetsk, Ukraine, has been prominently featured in this newsletter. From a small beginning, that ministry became the major work of ITEM in the countries of the former Soviet Union. Regular readers of the newsletter are aware of the strategic ministry ITEM has had in Donetsk in partnership with the All-Ukrainian Union of Associations of Evangelical Christians/Baptists. The highlights of the Donetsk ministry have also been featured. Dozens of Pastors, Ruling Elders and Seminary professors from the United States and elsewhere, including Brazil and Canada, have had the privilege of teaching in Donetsk. These "missionary" professors have been truly touched as they have touched the lives of hundreds of believers directly and for generations to come.

Working alongside the largest evangelical denomination in Ukraine, ITEM was able to establish a strong Reformed teaching ministry in the Donetsk Regional Theological College and the Eastern Ukrainian Theological Seminary. These two schools, along with satellite schools in rural areas and correspondence students, comprise the largest, theological (non-Orthodox) training institution in Ukraine. Over 1000 students are currently enrolled in the programs offered by these schools (Bible Certificate, Bachelor's and Master's Degrees, lay training, correspondence courses, etc.). In addition, the semi-annual "Power in the Pulpit" preaching conferences, under the leadership of Dr. Joel Nederhood, have attracted thousands of pastors from all over Ukraine and even from Russia for a full week of training in preaching. Most of these men have had no formal Bible or theological education.

The Lord has certainly been gracious and abundant in His blessings of His work through ITEM in Ukraine!

It is of special note that it has never been the intent of ITEM to have a permanent presence in any school with which it works. The stated goal has always been to train our graduates to be able to return to the schools to take over the teaching and administration requirements as well as the ministry. Initially, it was anticipated that it would take 18-20 years to arrive at the place where ITEM could finish its work in Donetsk having trained sufficiently

Ukrainian pastors and teachers to take over the full responsibility. It now appears that the Lord has providentially accelerated this schedule!

With the phenomenal growth of the Donetsk Regional Theological College and Eastern Ukrainian Theological Seminary, came an increasing demand for funds and resources to maintain the ministry. Funding the ministry in Donetsk became the major focus of ITEM's budget. With increased funding needs and in response to concerns raised, the ITEM Board believes it was necessary to put in place a more comprehensive program of fiscal administration to assure that funds were being received and duly distributed. After several months of review and negotiation, ITEM's Board adopted a standard accounting procedure to be implemented by the Donetsk schools by August 2003. Copies of these procedures were sent to the president of the schools in Donetsk, the board having oversight of the schools, and also to the president of the Ukrainian Baptist Union who is ultimately in charge of all the schools of the denomination.

After reviewing ITEM's new accounting requirements, the president of the Baptist Union affirmed them and supported their adoption by the Donetsk schools. However, the local leadership in Donetsk declined to accept the requirements as too strict and so declined to adopt them. In doing so, they acknowledged ITEM's termination of the relationship since continuation of the relationship was conditioned upon local compliance as well as denominational acceptance. This severed the schools' relationship with ITEM.

While, from a human perspective, it is easy to become discouraged by such unforeseen developments, we recognize that our sovereign Lord is in control of even this situation. In His wisdom our Lord has providentially chosen to redirect ITEM's work to other needful places and so to end ITEM's work in Donetsk a few years ahead of our schedule. Our plan was to phase out the ministry over a period of time and provide for a transition to national teachers. But the Lord has different plans and His are always better!

Looking back over the years of ITEM's involvement in Donetsk, there is much to celebrate and much for which to give thanks to the Lord. He has indeed done amazing things over these years. A vibrant theological college and seminary grew where none existed before. Hundreds of students (most of whom are pastors) have been trained in the Reformed Faith and are preaching and teaching these truths to their congregations. Dozens of new churches have been planted by students from these schools. Plans are being made to plant the first Reformed/Presbyterian church in Donetsk region. Solid Reformed theological books have been translated and more are in process. And all of this has happened in a country that suffered under the iron

boot of atheistic communism for over 70 years! The Lord has indeed done wonderful things in Donetsk and we pray He will continue to do so.

Each of us who have been to Donetsk can speak for ourselves. We are sure that our sentiments express the feelings of every professor that has had the privilege of teaching in Donetsk. It has been a life-changing experience. To be able to stand in the shadow of Lenin (literally!) and preach and teach the gospel openly and freely in a satellite country of the former Soviet Union is something that few of us could have imagined only 10-15 years ago.

"On each of my four trips to Donetsk, I have been touched deeply by the love and faith of the Ukrainian believers, challenged by their commitment to Christ and His word, and humbled by the Lord for the privilege of serving Him there". (Rev. Scott Churnock, St. Louis, MO)

"It is truly difficult to determine who has learned and benefited the most from the teaching opportunities at DRTC – the professor or the students. I discovered the definitions of commitment and contentment, of exemplifying and enjoying the Lord, and of sacrifice and service to the Lord through these students." (Rev. Will Hesterberg, Waterloo, IL)

"Teaching in Donetsk, Ukraine was a life-changing experience for me. The little that the people have materially is overshadowed by their rich culture and even more, by how much they give and share with each other and with us in Christ. I'll never forget the widows, and other 'heroes of the faith', kneeling on a hard floor in a little village building with no electricity, pouring out their hearts to God with earnest tears and abiding smiles. I will always remember the once persecutor of the church who held my hands and with broken English, looked me in the eyes and said, 'You preach, thank you, I see God'. In the presence of such testimonies of His grace, I couldn't help but see God in Christ too." (Professor Zachary Eswine, Covenant Theological Seminary)

ITEM is now in the process of locating other ministry opportunities in the Ukraine and within other countries of the former Soviet Union. The work in Donetsk gives us confidence and assurance that our Lord is truly "able to do exceedingly and abundantly beyond all that we ask or think."

To our brothers and sisters in Donetsk, we give them the continued assurance of our prayers and abiding love. With the Apostle Paul we say, "by His Grace, until we share further opportunities to co-labor with you, individually or collectively, we now commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified."

**David Ludwick, President on behalf of all  
who send and serve. August 2003**



# IMPACTING AND CHANGING THE WORLD THROUGH CHRIST

*The following are excerpts from a message preached recently in Romania by Will Hesterberg, Secretary of the Board for ITEM.*

A classic movie called "It's a Wonderful Life" tells about a man named George Bailey, whose Christian character affects his community. George runs a building and loan institution that helps countless families during the Depression. At some point, George becomes extremely discouraged by some problems that aren't his fault. He wishes he'd never been born. At that point an angel appears to show George what the world would be like if he'd never been born. His mother would have been a widow scraping to make ends meet; his uncle Billy in an insane asylum and his wife a spinster. His town of Bedford Falls would have become a dark city of bars and strip joints. The subdivision he helps build for families is a dark graveyard called Potter's Field. George asks the angel, "Why am I seeing all these strange things?" The angel answers, "It's because you weren't born. You have seen what the world would be like without you."

Perhaps at times you've wondered about your purpose in life and your continued presence on earth. If so, Jesus has an answer for you in Matthew 5:13-16. Could it be that God has placed you as an influence in your part of the world? This passage follows the Beatitudes, which tell us how God blesses us. These verses tell us how we are to be a blessing to the world. They explain that Christians must be on earth what they have become in Christ. Jesus impacts and changes his followers so they will impact and change their world.

Actually Christ's followers are the only ones who can truly impact and change their world. Wm. Hendriksen, commenting on this passage wrote, "The ones the world hates the most are exactly the ones it needs the most." To impact our world, a number of things must happen. Here are just two. We must be distinct from the world. Jesus says we are salt and light which implies the world is neither.

Christians become the standard by which the world is measured and defined, not vice versa. Christians are automatically different from the world. They are called to live "right side up in an upside down world." While the world says that the powerful, the wealthy, the well-educated, and the intelligent are those who count and who impact the world, Jesus pointed to the disciples, ordinary fishermen, laborers, tax collectors, and the poor and told them they were absolutely vital to the world. That's true for every Christian today. It matters little whom the world says we are – it matters little whom our friends, our enemies, our family, our teacher, our employer, our fellow employees, or our neighbors say we are. It only matters whom Jesus made you to be. If we're following Jesus, then He saved us to be different. At the 1993 annual meeting of The American Heart Association, 300,000 doctors, nurses, and researchers met to discuss, among other things, the importance low fat diets play in keeping our hearts healthy. During the meals the attendees consumed fat-filled fast foods like bacon cheeseburgers and fries at the same rate as people from other conventions. A reporter asked one cardiologist whether or not his eating high fat meals set a bad example. He replied, "Not me; I took my name tag off." When we go to work, to school, to the store, to our clubs, do we try to take our name tags off and be like everyone else? We don't need to think like the world, dress like the world, act like the world, spend like the world, or live like the world. Instead, let us stand out, stand up, be who we are in Christ. With that settled in our minds, we can proceed to the next step. We must be distinct from the world but not distant from it. We must not be detached from the world. In Jesus' time a group of Jews saw the corruption of the Jewish religious leaders and despaired of the Roman occupation forces ever leaving Palestine so instead they abandoned society and moved into caves around the Dead Sea area. They spent much of their time copying the Scriptures but then hid the copies in jars in the caves. Several years ago these very scrolls were discovered and named the Dead Sea Scrolls. The group was known as the Essenes and oddly enough called themselves the "sons of light." Yet, they hid themselves and the light of the Scriptures in the caves and had no impact on the people around them. Jesus said that light must be shared so that everyone might benefit from it. Light must spread and touch things. We cannot see something until light touches it. Darkness won't be seen for what it is unless light gets

up next to it. For salt to work as a preservative, it must touch the meat; in fact salt must be rubbed into meat thoroughly to protect it. Salt permeates the meat. How shall we impact our world if we keep distant from it and don't get close enough to see what's good and what's bad. How can we reach out to unbelievers unless we are actually willing to touch them?

Unfortunately, often we don't mix with the world in the right way and we often mix with it in the wrong ways. We lose our saltiness, our distinctiveness because we become like the world so that there's not much difference between our lifestyles, our entertainment choices, our spending habits. We still look like Christians but we don't work like Christians. Being in touch with the world instead of being detached from it will result in dying to self and deeper dependence on Christ. As salt permeates meat, it dissolves and disappears. As light burned in a lamp, the oil and wick were consumed. Being salt, being light, doing good works for others every day means we have less time to do things for ourselves.

The reason we don't do more good works for others may be because we're spending our resources, efforts, and time on ourselves to pursue our goals, live by our schedule, satisfy ourselves and take care of our own needs first. Salt makes other foods taste good. I don't like corn on the cob without salt on it. When I have eaten delicious corn on the cob, I put the cob down and say "Boy, that was great salt!" No, I say, "That was great corn." The job of the salt isn't to make us think how great salt is, but how great is the food to which we added the salt. When we do good that benefits others and that brings God pleasure and praise, that's being salt and that's dying to self so that ultimately God gets the glory.

The little children's song really says it well. "This little light of mine; I'm gonna let it shine. This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine." God has a mission for you. Missions isn't only in Ukraine, Latvia, Romania, or Russia. Missions is wherever there's evil and you can be salt to preserve and promote whatever is good. Missions is wherever there's darkness and you can shine God's light.

**Rev. Will Hesterberg, Concord Presbyterian Church, Waterloo, IL August 2003**