

Equipping Reliable Leaders in
Sound Doctrine
in

**Hungary
Latvia
Poland
Romania
Russia
Ukraine**

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NEWSITEMS

Spring Edition

NEW THINGS HAPPENING AT RRTS

*By Dr. R. David Ludwick,
President of ITEM, Inc*



Dr. Ludwick and Rev. Scott Churnock recently met with the members of RRTS Board to consider Latvia University proposals

Accreditation proposals are being considered between the Riga Reformed Theological Seminary (RRTS) and the University of Latvia in Riga. RRTS courses are being considered as Faculty of Theology for inclusion in the Program at the University of Latvia as ITEM prepares "to people" such Faculty of Theology. These courses will parallel the university curriculum already established but will remain "distinctively Reformed." This joining together offers the university a curriculum that is committed to doctrinal standards and teaching while retaining excellent academic quality and thus adding flexibility to the university's accredited program.

While negotiations are not yet complete it is potentially possible that a student can earn a Master's degree in Theology pursuing a curriculum consisting of about ninety percent of RRTS present content, and about ten percent remaining university material – a condition required by the university. This ten percent can however, be chosen in the area of language study. The university will agree not to intrude in any way on the content of RRTS courses, accept possibly in the area of titles, which is necessitated by a restriction of not more than forty percent modification in an existing curriculum in order to maintain accreditation status. The university is very interested, since with such an arrangement they obtain access to quality professors and academes to teach there at no cost to the university. Some of the RRTS courses have been isolated for inclusion

as a mandatory part of the university's own programs.

The style of teaching in the European system will provide some new emphasis for ITEM professors by reason of the emphasis on one main Thesis – about thirty percent of the degree program. ITEM and RRTS are confident that we are able to organize this work and accomplish its completion under the supervision of our professors. One extremely beneficial point is that the whole degree is done in two years with studies in the evenings only. Teaching terms are thus able to be structured on one week modules; professors able to attend for two weeks are then able to teach two courses in succession. Use of both live lectures and videos from the RRTS archives ensure neither sacrifice of quality nor omission of any content necessary to maintain excellence.

While there is no reasonable space for all RRTS subjects in the present program, one proposal is to use the video courses as a requirement that students must complete in conjunction with the completion of a fixed percentage of live professor courses. This would cut down on a need for a high number of live classes and still accomplish its purpose.

Your prayers are requested for the following needs:

- 1) a resident scholar for RRTS with skills in theology and church history, as well as administrative skills; a one five year term;
- 2) administrative director for RRTS responsible for planning budgeting and

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If you know of any missions conferences where an ITEM presentation might be appropriate, PLEASE contact us at www.ITEM.org or by phone at 314-537-6020

With the expanded growth into Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine we are recruiting professors to go and to teach for 2 weeks modules every month of the year except July and December – locations and the courses should be mutually agreed. Pastors and other qualified persons are encouraged to contact us.

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controlling finances, and reporting to the RRTS and ITEM Boards and the Latvian government; oversight of the offices, classrooms, library, facilities, professorial logistics; oversight of archives, the website, educational planning and development, including the education track for Lithuanian students accreditation development, and the development of the local financing;

3) a coordinator from either the USA or Latvia to work with Lithuanian students seeking to start their own institute seminary in Vilnius.

4) for enhanced communication at all levels from “senders” and “goers” in and from the US to the administrator of logistics in the countries where ITEM serves;

5) for those who come to learn, for those who send them, and those who receive them back.

All this would allow RRTS to grow both within the university system and independently. Even to the point of providing professors from its own programs to the university, its own faculty and that of other universities throughout the world.

Course subjects would include by way of example some of the following: Hermeneutics, Augustinian Theology and Early Church, Natural Law and Ethics, Reformation History and Theology, Pneumatology, Ecclesiology, Eschatology and the Reformed Tradition, various Books of the Bible, Apologetics, Philosophy, which would include Comparative Theologies and Philosophy (Bultman, Tillich, et. al.)

We are excited about the potential here and look forward to the opportunity to grow in an academic arena already established by the state university systems. Therefore we will beseech the Lord of the harvest (Lk. 10).

We covet your prayers with these and all of the other undertakings produced by His Grace and as a result of last Fall’s opportunities investigation.

**Dr. R. David Ludwick,
February 2004**

EXCITING DEVELOPMENTS IN POLAND NEED YOUR PRAYERFUL SUPPORT

*By Rev. Scott Churnock, ITEM Board
Member and pastor of Christ Presbyterian
Church, Hazelwood, MO*

In October, I had the opportunity for my 5th teaching session with ITEM. The previous four were in Donesk, Ukraine. This time I traveled to Romania where I taught for one week in Bucharest at the Reformed Theological Institute and one week in Campina at the Maranatha Bible College. While in Campina, I met up with Dr. Ludwick. Dr. Ludwick, Ruling Elder John Lindley and I had begun our travels together in St. Louis, but upon arrival in Amsterdam, Dr. Ludwick headed for Wales, various cities in Holland, and Ukraine (to investigate sites for new schools and to recruit new professors), while John and I went to Romania to teach. After meeting up with Dr. Ludwick in Romania, he and I flew to Poland to investigate the possibility of beginning a work there.

For a number of years the ITEM board has desired to establish a Reformed Seminary in Poland. After making contact with a Presbyterian pastor in Wales who had conducted a few seminars in Poland, we were given the names of several pastors in Wroclaw, Poland who desire to establish a seminary. Arriving in Wroclaw, we were met at the airport by two pastors (Bogumil Jarmulak and Marek Tomic) and an elder from the Evangelical Reformed Church in Wroclaw. Due to the late hour of

our arrival, we were only able to talk briefly with these three men that evening. But the next day we met for several hours with pastors and elders from the Reformed churches in Wroclaw, Poznan, and Warsaw.

The Reformed church in Wroclaw started in 1996 as mission of a Baptist church in that city. It was originally an enterprise of the principal at the Bible Theological Seminary in Wroclaw. Interestingly enough it was entrusted to a co-worker (Marek Tomic) who happened to be a Calvinist. Marek’s Reformed teaching began to influence the student body and church. Challenged by the new thinking and pursuing Reformed principles, the church left the Baptist Union and became the Evangelical Reformed Church in Wroclaw. Assistance in the form of theological education and access to the UK schools came through Llandaff Presbyterian Church in Cardiff, Wales. The church now serves a number of students and the movement is spreading from Wroclaw to Poznan and Warsaw! These churches have organized conferences, summer camps, Reformation Day meetings, etc. They publish a journal called the “Reformation in Poland”, and are seeking to publish, in Polish, Lorraine Boettner’s “The Reformed Faith,” Cornelius Van Til’s “Why I Believe in God,” John R. De Witt’s “What is the Reformed Faith?” and John Calvin’s “Truth for All Times.”

Our meeting with the pastors and elders from the three cities was very productive and encouraging. The church in Wroclaw is well taught and led by very capable pastors who are well-grounded in the Reformed faith. Their desire is for ITEM

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In their most recent trip to Poland Rev. Scott Churnock and Dr. Ludwick discovered a strong desire from Polish Reformed pastors for ITEM to assist them in establishing a Reformed study center or even, a theological seminary.

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to assist them in establishing a Reformed study center. This would include periodic lectures, seminars and conferences staffed by ITEM professors. However, the church in Warsaw has requested that ITEM assist them with the establishment of the first Reformed seminary in Poland! Their desire is to offer Master’s level programs for pastors and lay leaders. After meeting briefly in Warsaw with the pastor and 9 prospective students (during an overnight layover there on our return to the US!), one of the men said, “This meeting is the answer to many years of prayers for a Reformed seminary here.” What a way to end a trip!!

Dr. Ludwick and I found that in Poland “the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.” We went to Poland not knowing what to expect, merely hoping that we would be able to establish contact and continue a dialog with the Polish churches with a view of someday beginning a school there. We came home with far more than this! Right now we have a church in Wroclaw that has asked ITEM to provide professors for periodic lectures or conferences and to assist them with beginning a Reformed study center. We also have a church in Warsaw that has requested that ITEM begin a Reformed seminary in that city as soon as possible. They have about 15-20 students “ready to go.” In fact, Rev. Moner Shadid, pastor of the Warsaw church, wants to begin the seminary in April!

As we look at the opportunities in Poland, there are three things ITEM needs. First, we need your prayers. This is obvious, but so essential. Without the fervent prayers of God’s people, all our efforts, plans and labor will be futile. Pray with us and for us. Second, ITEM needs the resources to begin and sustain these new works. It costs money to send professors, provide translators, write curriculum, rent meeting places, etc., etc. These are new works and so are not in the ITEM budget. Third, we need professors to teach in Warsaw and Wroclaw. Jesus exhorts us to ask “the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.” Join us in this prayer. We have immediate needs for a professor in April for Warsaw, a June conference in Wroclaw, and a July conference in Warsaw. If you have been an ITEM professor or have considered being one, we need you now in Poland!

Rev. Scott Churnock
February, 2004



The Romanian Christians are eager to dig into Scripture discovering their own bounty as noted by Rev. Jim Carmichael on his recent trip to Campina Romania

GOD’S WORD MADE MORE ACCESSIBLE TO GOD’S PEOPLE

By Rev. Jim Carmichael, ITEM professor

I had no idea of the opportunities that God was preparing for me! Dr. Van Groningen planted the seeds for what I have been prepared and led to teach in Eastern Europe when I sat in his Biblical Theology class back in the early 1990’s. I can’t discuss my small part in ITEM’s outreach without musing over how he impacted my life; both as a person and the subject matter of his courses. Teaching has had the same influence on the students with whom I have been privileged to share the Golden Cable now on two trips to the former Soviet Union. My most recent excursion to Romania was well worth the energy expended because the results prove the same, whether in Ukraine or in Campina, Romania: students are eager to look practically at God’s Word and see its constant and reassuring message from Genesis through Revelation.

When David Ludwick, president of ITEM, asked me to go to Campina [pronounced kãm’pê-nà], I immediately thought of the Ploesti oil fields made famous by the Allied bombing raids during World War II. I arrived in Bucharest exhausted but quite interested in seeing the oil fields. A low cloud cover limited my visibility as we drove right through Ploesti [pronounced plô-yèsht]. During the days that followed, my host and president of the Maranatha Bible College, pastor Vasile took me on a tour

of the circuit he covers each Sunday ministering to his flocks. He and his son Andre drove me right into the middle of one of those fields where one of his parishioners lives. One of my personal goals was reached.

My other objective proved more rewarding as I knew it would. Teaching the Biblical Theology of Kingdom, Covenant, and Mediator to students who have never thought in those terms takes a few days for students new to this Bible based teaching to digest “the meat of it” before the cranial lights start flashing. Perhaps the reward arrived when the four giggly students in the front row began to dig into Scripture discovering their own bounty. They in turn assisted the less sure students. Team competitions helped drive home the subject they had been studying. God compensated me for the long air miles when following the final exam several of the less rigorous students pumped my hand thanking me through my translator, Daniel. But I know who buttered my bread. I’m just the messenger. I smiled and in my best Romania said, “Cumpla cherries,” [“you’re welcome”]. I realized that this and my personal remuneration are not on the ITEM job description. Yet God provided it nonetheless.

There are continuous “tangible” compensations to serving with ITEM. The Vasiles welcomed me into their home and thus into their family. Daniel showed me Campina, a city of about 40,000. The sun shines in Campina 300 days a year. On Saturday, he drove me to see Peles [pronounced Pelesh] Castle. Here in St. Louis we have the beautiful Fox Theatre.

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Peles Castle far surpassed the Fox in magnificence. I wonder what Solomon's Temple looked like? Daniel has taken many professors to see it and I'm sure he was "eager" to take another American, but he did. Following the Sunday meal, he spoke to me about his future plans and asked what I thought. He didn't have to but he did. I was made privy to life in another culture, another worldview. I took the family to eat which was a treat in itself. Romanian families do not as a rule dine out because of the expense. Christian families do not because of the possible gossip. We threw caution to the wind and God blessed the evening. Ion [pronounced Yon] had his first glass of Lipton Iced Tea. The music was too loud as we laughed above it and had a great time. This eight-member family is very close and I am thankful that God allowed me trespass for two weeks.

I missed the Super Bowl so Daniel taped it. He wanted me to explain American football to him. (No, we didn't see the half time show.) The Vasiles have a dog named Rex and he and I became good friends. Off the leash he jumps over the fence and does his neighborhood visiting. Scratching a dog for me is one of life's pleasures. Helen Vasile fed me well. Her "chorba" soup is wonderful. Sitting at a dinner table where everyone speaks Romanian and all are speaking at the same time does take getting used to. Most of the family speak some English so they included me when certain Romanian words and facial expressions piqued my interest.

I preached five times in two weeks. Four times I preached for Ion's congregation. One of my students, Andre, asked me to speak at his church before I left the country. Andre is Pentecostal and that made my experience all the more interesting. Andre's father pastors this flock. Andre was excited to show me the sanctuary they are building. They have been working on it for 12 years. They still have years to go.

By His Grace the basic ingredient remains when we, the professors, have long gone: God's Word is made more accessible to God's people. Little "nobodies" in the eyes of the world, whom they do not recognize or know, are being taught by a "nobody," me. What a privilege!

Rev. Jim Carmichael, Feb. 2004

Lithuania

Follow-up to the meeting of Oct-Nov 2003 regarding theological education being provided to the second of the Baltic States, Lithuania, has begun! Meetings with pastor Algimantas Kverdaravicius caused me to realize that I was in the presence of a visionary seeking ways and means to provide his people with Reformed theological education ultimately leading to the establishment of Reformed seminary. Initial plans called for a second professor to be sent with those bound for Latvia - the logistics of this arrangement seem burdensome so an alternative plan was pursued: Lithuanian students would sign up through a Lithuanian coordinator for courses to be taught at RRTS, now Baltic States Reformed Theological Seminary. This will provide professors with two bodies during each teaching term. A new excitement was breathed to the "Lithuanian arrangement" by reason of the Latvia University's inquiry/offer to people the Faculty of Religion Latvia University with Reformed theologians currently serving as professors through ITEM to Latvia.

This new program would ultimately permit students enrolled for credit with a Master's degree! Lithuania and Latvia are two countries with predisposition to accreditation and the recognition of advanced academic degrees. Such credentials are not required by those institutes or colleges where they seek to obtain education more pastoral than professorial. It is a great opportunity and we will bring you more in the subsequent issues.

Ukraine

Dr. Gregory Kommendant has been in contact with ITEM President Dr. Ludwick in order to investigate how the provision of faculty for the Kiev Christian University Department of Religion/Theology might be undertaken. Establishment of a new Bible Institute College (some 10 miles from Kiev) is being pursued, as the pilot project for the undertaking of numerous other teaching responsibilities at sites throughout the country of Ukraine. More on the developments in Ukraine in the next article.

Tyumen, Siberia

Tyumen Bible College (TBC) will receive professors and funding for the first time during the upcoming academic year! Courses have been and are being taught at the present time on a "loan" basis. The academic year 2004-5 will see a focused attention on the curriculum structure and ultimate use of the degree conferred - whether in professorial contacts or in practical pasturing responsibilities. ITEM will then respond through the agreement with TBC providing ITEM's contribution to furtherance of theological education in Siberia by agreement with the people whom ITEM serves.

Riga, Latvia

Due to diligent efforts of the local board in Riga and particularly of Artis Celmins, administrator and Master's degree student, there is the distinct possibility of engaging Latvia University with RRTS supplying to Latvia University Reformed theological faculty to be part of the university system for the awarding of a recognized accredited Masters Degree. This accomplishment would not impair the independent status of RRTS as it enters the next phase of growth by bringing in a "sister institution" from Vilnius, Lithuania - more on this as it develops.

Poland

Leaders in Warsaw, Poznan and Wroclaw are eager to start regular classes as soon as possible. Warsaw is interested in starting an "actual seminary" this year. Moner Shadid, pastor of the Reformed Church in Warsaw, would like to begin the first teaching session between April 29 and May 10 of this year! Wroclaw would like a lecture for a Biblical conference - possibly to teach Covenant Theology. Poznan would be looking towards to lectures in the Fall of 2004.

Warsaw Biblical Seminary!

Preliminary plans for January 2004 to establish a Master's Degree in Church Ministry: also available are certificates in Biblical Studies, Theological Studies or Church Ministry. Courses would include the following: Biblical Studies, Pentateuch, Psalms and Prophets, Gospels, Acts and Paul, Hebrews to Revelation. Theological Studies would include Covenant Theology, God and Man, Christ and Salvation, Ecclesiology and Ministry, and Hermeneutics. Church Ministry would include Pastoral Counseling, Evangelism and Discipleship, Nature of Church Leadership, Spiritual Formation, Theology and Preparation of Bible Messages. The Masters Degree qualifications are the successful completion of 15 classes. The program is eagerly anticipated in Warsaw after the January visits by Professor Doctor Zach Eswine (CTS Homiletician) and Joshua Moon, and senior seminary student who taught Covenant Theology. [Eswine and Moon taught in Poland under the endowed program established by an anonymous donor for professors and students of Covenant Seminary to travel to the former Soviet Union two times per year. The traveling and visa cost being paid by the endowment]

Upcoming Mission Conference

Covenant Presbyterian Church of St. Louis, MO - March 7-13th. Dr. Ludwick will be making a presentation of ITEM's ministries for which 1/2 of the annual mission conference offerings is dedicated. He will be leading prayer meeting beginning March 7th and continuing through March 12th at 7a.m. - you are invited to join them in prayer at that time wherever you may be.