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in

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Spring 2005
Volume 8, Issue 1

*Serving Christ by equipping pastors,
teachers and lay leaders in Reformed,
Biblical doctrine in Central and Eastern
Europe and the former Soviet Union*

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International Theological Education
Ministries, Inc
P.O. Box 31456
St. Louis, MO 63131
Tel.: (314) 537-6020
Email: item@item.org

NEWSITEMS

Spring Edition

CHRISTIAN FAITH IN LIGHT OF ORANGE REVOLUTION IN UKRAINE

By Andre Bouravnev, M. Div
(Covenant Theo. Seminary)
ITEM Director of Publications

The Orange Revolution is over. And we praise the Lord that it was peaceful and in actuality could not be called a revolution.

And it is no secret to us who believe that it was peaceful because millions of His people around the world have been committed to praying for the people of Ukraine. The prayers of the faithful have been answered to a particular request and now Ukraine is on its path to democracy. One of the most exciting events after the presidential elections in Ukraine was the inauguration of the new Prime Minister Yulia Timoshenko. Among other things, she said, "Before Ukraine can get on its feet; Ukrainians must first get on their knees." Moreover, one of the first appointments she endorsed as the new Prime Minister was the office of the director of the SBU (successor of the KGB in Ukraine). She chose to give this office to none other than Oleksandr Turchynov, her good and trusted friend and a prominent Baptist pastor. And it is with a sense of providential irony that this believer takes the reigns of the very institution that for more than three generations persecuted and imprisoned Christians in Ukraine.

And thus it brings us to a comforting realization of the simple, yet mysterious fact that the prayers of the faithful avail much. Hence, it gives us great encouragement as we labor in the Lord's mission field to fulfill the



Kiev, Ukraine, December 2004 Presidential Elections - Ukrainian Christians did not stay on the sidelines. They brought their agenda to the streets as well – they came to proclaim the Good News and tell people that God loves them as this banner reads.

Great Commission, to make disciples of all nations and equip them in sound doctrine for the sake of the Gospel needy countries that have been deprived of the Word for generations and now face attacks from left and right: agnostics, atheists and cults of all shapes and forms, seeking to dilute the Truth and pervert the Gospel.

This is a great testimony of the greatness of God and faithfulness of believers.

Therefore, we thank our supporters as we together co-labor in Christ to equip the Church to bring the Good News to every corner of the world with all eagerness and authority of God's Word.

Developments in Ukraine make it possible for ITEM to continue to serve brothers and sisters in Christ there unhindered (This reminds me of how the Lord allowed Apostle Paul to teach about Christ with all confidence and no hindrance for two whole years in Rome - Acts 28:31). The doors of opportunity remain open and ITEM utilizes it to the fullest as the funds and professors allow. Yet how much more can be done and not only in Ukraine, but in the neighboring countries as well – Romania, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, etc. The Harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are still few. And we are all called to change that!

AVB, May 2005

VISITING WARSZAWA (WARSAW), POLAND

By Dr. Michael Williams, Professor of Old Testament, Calvin Theological Seminary

For ten days this spring, from March 3–12, I had the great privilege of briefly witnessing first hand and participating temporarily in the efforts of Moner and Stenia Shaded, who are seeking both to engage their beloved country of Poland with a solid Reformed world- and life-view and to train and equip leaders to serve the church as it grows. It is an ambitious and demanding vision that requires a loving commitment to the church, steadfast perseverance and faith in our Lord, trusting patience in the mysterious work of the Spirit, and significant personal and financial resources. With the exception of the last, Moner and Stenia have been blessed with ample supplies of all of these. As pastor of Good Shepherd church and director of the fledgling Warsaw Biblical Seminary, Moner has his hands full. Add to this his everyday involvement in men's groups, Bible studies, coordinating efforts with missions agencies, and fulfilling his responsibilities as husband and father and it is plain to see that Moner has a very busy life indeed. An equally energetic Stenia engages and encourages the women of the church and seminary, leads Bible studies, actively seeks new contacts outside of the church, and provides support for her husband and family—in addition to tending to the needs of the occasionally visiting professor. So, it is hard for me to imagine how my visit to their busy world, staying in their home, eating meals with them, requiring escorts for my journeys into the city, and generally taking up space, time, and food could have been so warmly received. I was told a popular Polish saying is, "Guests in the home, God in the home." This proverb was clearly demonstrated by my Polish hosts. Most important thing is that the message of God was spoken and it surely touched many hearts.

My Polish experience began Thursday afternoon at the airport, where Moner picked me up and drove me to their home, the bottom floor of which is reserved for the seminary. After introductions, the Shadedes showed me to the comfortable room they had prepared for me. Once I had settled in,



Poland -
Warsaw -
front of Good
Shepherd
Evangelical
Reformed
Church
pastured by
Rev. Moner
Shaded

I had the first taste (literally) of Stenia's fabulous cooking. As the week progressed, I actually began to worry that I might have to explain a weight gain to my wife when I returned from my "missions trip." Friday evening, after some sight-seeing, I began the first weekend course. These dedicated students work the whole week at regular jobs and attend Bible studies and men's and women's groups during the week and attend classes at the seminary on Friday and Saturday. It certainly causes one to reflect on one's own commitment to growing in the Word. This first course on The Prophet and His Message continued from the previous evening all day Saturday, from around 9:00 in the morning until around 10:00 in the evening. This was followed by some discussion time with the youth of the church. It was a full day in every sense of the word—full of eagerness to learn, full of committed Christians, full of opportunities, and full of appreciation for the grace of God that binds believers from all over the world into one family.

Sunday enabled us to celebrate God's goodness in a worship service in which I was given the opportunity to preach to my Polish brothers and sisters. This was followed by a fellowship time where I was engaged in several meaningful conversations by parishioners who obviously have a great excitement and thirst for the truth. After being fed with the Word, Moner, Stenia, their daughter Miriam, and I retired to a local restaurant, where we enjoyed some traditional Polish food and conversation in a wonderfully relaxed atmosphere.

The intervening week before the next weekend class was a whirl of activity, including individual counseling sessions, a Bible study on the book of Job, two evening Bible studies in the homes of parishioners (one on the book of Job, one on the principles for reading biblical narrative), and a Bible study for the men's group and a Bible study

for the women's group on love and respect in marriage relationships. It was a wonderful time of building relationships and learning from each other. God is doing wonderful things in and through His Church in Poland! Somehow during this busy week there was also time for visits to the National Museum, the Winter Palace, and the Old City.

During the last Friday and Saturday of my visit, I offered a second course, this one on the wisdom books of the Old Testament—Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. This course was well-received and resulted in many good conversations with the students. It was with a genuine sense of sadness that I saw my time with Moner, Stenia, and their flock come to an end. While recounting it in brief fashion makes it seem like a lot of work, and perhaps it was, it didn't seem burdensome at all at the time. The classes, Bible studies, and counseling sessions seemed more like conversations with friends. While I was in their home, Moner and Stenia caused me to feel as though I were one of the family. Even their grown children, Philemon and Miriam, made me feel right at home. As I was preparing to express my appreciation for their gracious hospitality and for the opportunity to participate in kingdom work a bit removed from my zone of familiarity, I was again surprised by their giving nature. Moner and Stenia, together with the students of the seminary, presented me with an inscribed book as a token of their own appreciation for my time with them. It is entitled, 100 Most Beautiful Places in Poland. It is filled with pictures of magnificent sites, architectural and artistic wonders, and natural splendor. It, nevertheless, has one glaring omission. It leaves out what I found to be the most beautiful place in Poland—the beauty of our Lord, Jesus Christ, as it is manifested in his faithful servants who labor selflessly at kingdom work at a place called Warszawa.

March 2005

TEACHING TRIP – AN AMAZING EXPERIENCE

By Kristofer D. Holroyd, ITEM professor to Lithuania and Romani

This past January, I spent a week in Lithuania and a week in Romania teaching "The Person and Work of Christ." This trip was an amazing experience for me, as well as being profitable for those to whom I was teaching.

In Lithuania, I spent 2 nights teaching at the church in Vilnius, the capital city, followed by 2 nights of teaching in Kaunas, a city of about 40,000 people, and finally I taught for 2 nights in Papylis, a village in northern Lithuania. The students were primarily lay members of the congregation who simply wanted to know better their God and Savior. However, there were also non-believers and a large number of Catholics that attended the classes, especially in Papylis. The people were so hungry for the Word of God. I am thankful that I allowed a lot of time in my lesson plans for questions, because they asked so many. Their questions, however, were not necessarily related to the class material. Many of the students had questions about basic Biblical doctrines, such as salvation, the fate of the unbeliever, and the eternal destiny of people of different religions. This intense spiritual hunger may stem from the fact that they only worship twice a month, due to lack of pastors. The students-which varied in ages from high school students to retirees-kept asking when I would return, because of their intense desire for spiritual education. Moreover, the pastor of the Lithuanian churches explained that the congregants were encouraged, just to know that there are other Christians in the

world, that they are not alone. God indeed used me to minister to the lives of the people in Lithuania. One man decided at the end of the week to enter the ministry and train for the pastorate, an incredible sacrifice, especially since the church there is so poor that their ministers are not paid. I also saw many people encouraged and one young lady make a profession of faith.

My time in Lithuania was spent not just teaching, but also information gathering for future work in this ripe country. The Lithuanians have been free from communist oppression only a short 15 years, and though their economy is slowly growing, the effects of communist control linger. The government, though a republic, is run by former communist and KGB officials. Lithuania, I was told, also has the highest suicide rate in Europe, because it is so difficult for older men to find work. Unable to provide for themselves or their families, they result to drinking and eventually suicide. To add to this despair, many Lithuanians fear the demise of their culture and natives, because so many people move out of Lithuania each year, hoping to escape the poor conditions of the country, and, moreover, more Lithuanians, I am told, are killed every year than are born.

Generally speaking, the people are without hope and are in desperate need of the gospel and her heralds. Furthermore, due to the poverty in this country, the church does without many "luxuries" we often overlook. For example, their church is not heated in the winter, because it costs too much, so the worshipers bundle up for services, and the pastor wears a coat under his robes. In fact, due to Lithuania's history of being occupied by so many different nations, much of their church property has been seized by the government, and one such building-the

church in Kaunas-is owned by the police, who are trying to turn it into a basketball gym, leaving the church with no place to worship. In addition, the pastor is not paid; rather, his wife works two jobs to support their family, so that the pastor can be free to minister to the people of the congregation. More importantly, though they have many financial needs, the church is famished for spiritual teaching. The people hunger to know more about their God and Savior, and they need pastors and teachers. Please pray for the church in Lithuania, especially for financial provisions and for God to provide them with ministers and teachers.

In Romania, I spent the entire week teaching a class on the person and work of Christ to a group of students at Maranatha Bible College. I taught Monday through Thursday, and then I administered a final exam on Friday. The students at the Bible college were much younger than those in Lithuania, many of which were still in high school; however, there were also a number of older church members who regularly attended the class. The gospel seems to be prospering in Romania: they regularly have 20 to 30 students who attend these classes, many from diverse denominations including Baptist, Orthodox, and Charismatic. They, like the Lithuanian church, hunger for spiritual truths and are full of questions. They are eager to study the sacred Scriptures. Please pray for God's people in Romania, for the spread of the gospel, for financial provisions, and for theological education.

Kristofer D. Holroyd
February 2005

Vilnius, Lithuania - Vilnius is the capital of Lithuania and one of the country's oldest cities (Founded in 1323). It stretches along both banks of the fast flowing Neris River, and is set among hills and pine forests.



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Rodney Gorter, Th.M., *Professor*, *Odessa*
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PATRICK PARHAM REPORT ON POLAND

By Patrick Purham, ITEM Professor

After spending ten days in Warsaw, Poland, on my first trip with ITEM, teaching and preaching at a small reformed church my emotions were all over the board. I was tremendously blessed to be used of the Lord to teach these brothers and sisters in the Lord during this time. I taught two Friday nights for three hours and two Saturdays for seven hours. In addition I conducted four Bible studies during the week on various topics and preached the two Sundays I was privileged to worship with these dear Christians. This was incredibly wonderful while at the same time very tiring.

My personal state ran the gamut from a wonderful sense of joy in the Lord to the other end of almost unbelievable loneliness from being in a foreign country, with my wife hundreds of miles away. I stayed in a beautiful home with the Pastor of the Church, the host for my trip and two of his seven children. All of these spoke English fairly well which made life much easier on a day to day basis.

When I arrived in Warsaw. It was raining, windy and cold. The pastor of the church, Moner, met me at the airport. He shared that only 0.5% of Polish people are Protestant and that as far as he knows his church is the only Presbyterian one in Poland. They call it the Good Shepherd Church for this is acceptable to the Catholics around them. Later that evening classes began. I began with a chronological view of the life of Christ from the Gospels.

The last hour of the evening I taught through the first chapter of Ephesians. Everyone was getting fairly tired and sleepy and cold. The room was not very warm but talking of the greatness of our God, His Sovereign power over our lives, and His personal work in us as individuals will warm any Christian's heart. Time went well, even though it was late. Overall, the people (about 12 in all) were very friendly and a joy to teach.

The following morning, Saturday, January 22, we began our first class around 10:00 a.m. There were about ten people there, of which four were men counting the pastor. In our question and answer time we spoke of how to treat an ex-communicated person. Should they be allowed in any church services or activities? These dear folks struggle with the same problems we do in our Churches in the States.

I taught through the Gospel of John, the book of Acts, James and Galatians, also providing Hendriksen's assessment of when the N.T. books were probably written. I decided

to give the outlines, the dates, the themes and other basic information but then also go through the books explaining some of the content.

After a teaching day of about six and a half hours following teaching last evening for two to three hours, I was rather tired and my throat was about done in. A long tiring but exhilarating day with God's people studying His Word – a great way to spend a Saturday in Poland.

The following Friday and Saturday went basically the same way as I taught through I-II Thessalonians, I Corinthians, Romans, Hebrews and Revelation. Long and exhausting as well as exhilarating days. At the end of the teaching time, they brought me a present, a book about the city of Warsaw and a beautiful pewter/silver mug with the Polish Eagle on it. I was deeply touched as they handed me the present and clapped for me thanking me from the bottom of their hearts for coming to teach them God's Word. It was a fitting climax to some wonderful teaching times with them.

On Sundays church did not start until 1 pm. The Good Shepherd Church meets downtown in an old beautiful but rented Reformed Church building. Before the service, the elders came in and we all prayed together (them in Polish and me in English). The service started with about 30 minutes, maybe more, of praise songs ending with the offering. It was truly a joy to worship with these people as they sang the choruses. The Spirit was definitely present. Then the elder leading the service introduced me and I spoke from John 3:1-11 on the necessity of the new birth. He said my message reminded him of an experience he had had in the States on a bus. A lady got on and walked up to a Catholic priest and asked him if he was born again. He said he was a priest. She said yes, but are you born again? He said no. She then talked with him and they prayed together for him to be saved and receive the new birth. Then the pastor and elders served communion.

The following week I continued in John 3 concentrating on our Lord's evangelistic approach. Over the course of the week I taught four

Bible studies on three different topics. First, there was a study on, "How to be a Blessing to Others", taught from the first two chapters of Philippians. Later in the week I taught two different women's studies on, "Godly Priorities", and one men's study concerning "How to be a Godly Father to Your Children". Much of my material came from Tedd Tripp's book, "Shepherding a Child's Heart". I learned to leave out many explanatory comments and shorten the studies to more of the main points because of the time involved in translation and the difficulty of the language barriers. They were really nice people for each study. The most we had was around 12 and the least about 8. Like Americans, they enjoy eating and nice refreshments were provided each time.

At each study, we had time for questions and answers. At the men's Bible study their questions revealed they are facing typical problems in their homes. One has rebellious teenagers. One asked about disagreements between his wife and himself over how to discipline. One asked who should administer discipline, he or his wife or both. Some wanted to know specifically how to discipline. Another was interested in knowing when we can consider our job as parenting basically completed. When are the children grown and we can more or less turn the responsibility over to God. All good questions and I did my best trying to point them to Scripture and the grace of our Lord. The pastor finally closed in prayer and the meeting broke up.

Sunday morning January 30th, 2005 I spent reading the Scripture and preparing for the worship service which began at 1 pm. I preached the second of my sermons from John chapter 3. The service was again warm and Spirit filled. I preached with a young man translating. Later, Moner took me to the airport and I returned to Budapest Hungary where my wife was visiting my daughter, tired, exhausted mentally and spiritually tremendously blessed. Overall, it was a wonderful trip, and remarkable.

experience in serving our blessed Lord. I hope and pray to be able to return one day.

Patrick Purham
March 2005



Moner Shaded, his wife and fellow Christians hosting ITEM Professor Patrick Parham