

# Christ for Russia

Summer 1998

Equipping reliable leaders in sound doctrine for the sake and hope of gospel-needy cultures

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## Huizengas of Zeeland honored in library name

The Donetsk Regional Theological College (DRTC) has acknowledged with deep gratitude a Zeeland, Mich., couple's generosity by naming the school's library in their honor.

Known throughout the Zeeland area for the supermarkets that for more than 70 years bore the family name, Mrs. Genevieve Huizenga and her late husband, Cleo, contributed almost \$30,000 to the construction of the college's new facilities adjacent to the Central Baptist Church in Makeyevka, Ukraine. The library will be named the Cleo and Genevieve Huizenga Theological Library.

Mr. Huizenga had taken over his father's grocery business when the couple's children were young.

"The Lord brought us through those years of difficulty," said Mrs. Huizenga. "All our children are walking with the Lord and He has so blessed us. We feel humbled we can be used of the Lord."

In a July 7 meeting that coincided with the week of the anniversary of Mr.

Huizenga's death, DRTC President Rev. Sergei Karpenko and Christ for Russia Vice President Rev. Jonathan Taylor presented to Mrs. Huizenga a letter of thanks and a brick bearing a brass plaque.

"It may seem odd to affix an engraved plate to a brick," the letter said. "Indeed, we hope such a symbol will be a constant reminder of the eternal spiritual significance of your generosity."

Citing Psalm 118 and 1 Peter 2:6-9, the letter continued, "The bricks laid because of your gifts will be used to build up the spiritual building of the Church in Ukraine, with Jesus as her precious cornerstone."

In the past 18 months, Christ for Russia has invested almost \$68,000 in the operation and construction of the Donetsk school. While construction is very near complete, unfortunately the high rate of inflation in Ukraine and the unexpected high cost of installing a natural gas line have left a need of \$20,000 which the ministry hopes to raise by August 31.

## Christ for Russia is getting a new name

Don't throw out that mail you'll soon begin to receive from *International Theological Education Ministries (ITEM)*. That's the new name approved for Christ for Russia by the Board of Directors at their spring meeting.

"Our most established work has been in Ukraine and the ministry is rapidly expanding to other former communist countries. Increasingly, the name 'Christ for Russia' was presenting difficulty as we began to work in a wider geographic area," said Vice President for Ministry Development Jonathan Taylor.

Appropriate filings are underway to change the official corporate name, Taylor said. Meanwhile the new name will be

introduced gradually in the ministry's correspondence and publications.

When the name change takes full effect, *ITEM* will operate in two ministry groups with divisions that include Christ for Russia, Christ for Ukraine, Christ for Latvia, Christ for Hungary and Christ for Romania.

"Our name is all that is changing," Taylor emphasized. "Our purpose, philosophy and commitment to effective training remain unchanged."

Taylor said correspondence and donations should still be addressed to Christ for Russia until the corporate filings are complete.

# ITEM receives Ukraine Academy of Science grant for translation

The Ukraine Academy of Science has announced a \$15,000 grant to ITEM/Christ for Ukraine for the translation of Dr. Gerard Van Groningen's *Messianic Revelation in the Old Testament*. ITEM/Christ for Ukraine accepted the grant on July 27.

Academician Dmitro Malishko, Ukraine's foremost linguist with a specialty in ancient languages, backed the grant application and will supervise the translation project. Ukraine's top translators, with backgrounds in linguistics and philology, will do the translation work.

The backing of the Academy of

Science will gain international exposure in academic and scholarly circles for *Messianic Revelation*, but more importantly, it will secure for the book a wide reading in Russian-speaking countries.

"The Academy of Science recognizes Dr. Van Groningen's book for what it is: a biblically-based piece of scholarly and intellectual literature," said ITEM president David Ludwick. "This grant will take a significant work of Reformed scholarship and ensure its dissemination throughout the universities to the population at large, thus having a major impact on the Ukrainian secular and Christian culture."

Earlier this year ITEM received a \$20,000 gift for the project. Another \$55,000 is still needed.

## Reflections of a DRTC lecturer

(Revs. Dennis Royall (URC), Gerald Koning (CRC) and Perry Tinklenberg (CRC) lectured at Donetsk Regional Theological College this spring. From Rev. Tinklenberg's field notes:)

I came out of homiletics class as if walking on air or carried by angels. At the beginning of class we were talking about the classes and curriculum and Roman said that he would like to address the class. He informed us that he had always preached allegorically. He said that he had been reading Erasmus of Rotterdam and Erasmus preached allegorically, so he did too. He also mentioned that deep within himself it bothered him that Erasmus called the Bible an allegory because that implied the Bible was no different from any other philosophical text or religious story. But, he has been learning from me that the text is historical and authoritative and is to be preached as such. He said he would like to report publicly that he was changing the way he preached because of this class.

I see this not so much that I am doing a good job teaching them to preach, but the Holy Spirit is pulling together many themes for them. It was the Spirit that began the unrest in Roman's mind and the Spirit that brought me and appointed me to teach homiletics. . . I told Anatoli (DRTC administrator) at the opening meeting that I had been praying for the Spirit to lead me and bless my thoughts. After I said I would submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit through him, Anatoli's eyes misted over and he said, "You have reminded me of my calling to pray for you and to direct the school according to its needs, and you Perry will teach homiletics."

I have been appointed to call the students in this mining district to mine the text for its riches and not opt for the easy message of allegory or spiritualization. Now God is yielding fruit. I am humbled. I am blessed.

### Excerpts from recent letters from Rod and Lydia Gorter, serving in Odessa, Ukraine

The biggest news for our family right now is that we are moving to a different apartment this summer—one being vacated by another missionary family on our team. Note our new address:

Odessa 270045  
Kuznechnaya 52, kv. 3  
Postal Box No. 72  
Rod and Lydia Gorter  
UKRAINE

Mom and Dad were very proud of the hard work of Nathan, Michael, and Matthew, who finished their school year by the end of May in spite of missing 6 weeks of school while we were in transition. They were not terribly excited about having to continue their Russian language classes until mid-July! Can't imagine why!?!  
~~~~~

A 93 year old "babushka" deeply touched our hearts a couple of weeks ago. Rod, along with Daniel in the stroller, stopped to talk with her as she sat on the sidewalk begging for money (a genuine need for seniors here). When Rod told her that he has 4 young sons, she could not conceive that anyone with 4 children could possibly have enough money to care for the family. So she immediately took the 25 kopeks (c. 12 cents) that she had in her hand and put them in Daniel's hand, in spite of protests

from Rod. She would not even consider taking a gift from Rod, which he intended to give her. This was humbling as we saw such sacrificial giving from someone so poor!

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*Editor's note: Some unexpected circumstances in early July forced Lydia Gorter to return to Canada to renew her visa. She has now rejoined the family in Odessa. Thank you to all who prayed in the midst of this situation. God graciously provided. Here is an excerpt from Rod's update:*

## Gorter Update

Lydia arrived safely in Canada early July 15. With her brother and sister-in-law's help, in TWO DAYS she had a new visa for Ukraine! Lydia then went to her parents' place on the 17th (their anniversary!), where she is enjoying some time with them and her sister before she flies back to Ukraine on July 23. She [arrived] in Kiev on the 24th, then [took] the overnight train with the group returning from the two weeks of seminary classes there.

On the Ukrainian side, God provided in MANY ways. One key way was with the help of the other missionaries on the team, who took care of the boys during the week last week while I was teaching for the Odessa Project. They also gave much encouragement, advice, etc.

Thank you for demonstrating that you care—through notes of encouragement, concern about our best interests, and especially for your prayers for us.

# Latvia school begins in September

Following his advance set-up trip in March, Dr. Gerard Van Groningen plans to return in September with his wife, Harriet, to Riga, Latvia, to lecture in the newly established Reformed Pastoral Training School there. Dr. Van Groningen will lecture in Biblical Theology and Mrs. Van Groningen will participate with him in discussions on the Covenant Family.

Dr. Van Groningen's advance trip this spring included extensive meetings with Rev. Alvis Sauka, pastor of the Reformed Church in Riga, and four church elders.

He also lectured for several hours to 35+ people at the Technical University as an introduction to the kind of teaching they could expect. A loud, spontaneous, "Ya!" erupted when Rev. Sauka asked if they would like Dr. Van Groningen to

return for more in depth lectures.

Rev. Alvis Sauka said the new school is vital to the church's goals of planting five new Reformed churches by the year 2001. Having begun just a few years ago through the personal evangelism of Rev. Sauka and now numbering 350 worshippers, the church has a vibrant small group ministry and a weekend leadership academy. However, future pastors and church planters need deeper training.

Dr. Van Groningen said the church elders have a deep-seated, heart conviction that Riga needs the Reformed witness. "A school is a necessity, all agreed," he said, but they are looking to ITEM/Christ for Latvia to help structure and develop a credible program.

During his spring trip, Dr. Van

Groningen outlined with Rev. Sauka and the church's elders a 3 1/2 year curriculum to commence with his September lectures. Dainis Smits, one of the elders, will be the school's administrator.

ITEM/Christ for Latvia seeks \$5,000 per bi-monthly lecture trip. Interested donors and lecturers may contact Dr. Van Groningen at (314) 434-1165 or e-mail at [vgrohstuj@juno.com](mailto:vgrohstuj@juno.com).

## Nederhood to lead tour

Mark your calendars now for May 1999 and plan to participate with Dr. Joel Nederhood in an exciting Ukraine tour and Dniepr River cruise.

Dr. Nederhood will be inspirational speaker for the tour, whose theme is "Beyond the Curtain: Ukraine Faith and Culture Before and After Communism."

The tour's centerpiece is a 10-day cruise on the river-sea-going vessel Viktor Glushkov. Departing Kiev on May 24, participants will cruise down the Dniepr River to Odessa, visiting daily ports of call where they will see local sights, enjoy indigenous foods and folk programs and interact with local believers.

In Kiev, travelers will visit the Christian sites of this 1,000+ year old city, including the Monastery of the Caves and the 800+ year old St. Sophia's cathedral that survived Stalin's war on the Church.

Other ports of call include:  
-- Zaporizhzhya, home of the Cossacks and birthplace of the evangelical movement in Ukraine;

-- Sevastopol/Yalta, site of the Romanov summer palace and the 1945 Yalta conference;

-- Odessa, the beautiful Black Sea port city to include a visit with your missionaries Rod and Lydia Gorter.

Participants can choose an optional add-on to visit Donetsk and the believers there who, by hand, have built their churches and the Donetsk Regional Theological College.

Details are being finalized and a brochure prepared. A special package is available for pastors and others who would like to organize groups. Reserve an informational brochure by calling Christ for Russia toll free at 1-888-522-4319, or use the reply card enclosed with this newsletter.

## R. David Ludwick From the President

Isn't it Great News!?

The hunger of the people of the former Soviet Union for the usefulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is making itself known! And more and more trained pastors return to their congregations equipped with the Truths of the Bible.

In Donetsk, Eastern Ukraine, those students who attend the Donetsk Regional Theological College (DRTC) return to classes each semester having studied, digested, and absorbed the great doctrines of the faith. They come back respectfully demanding more Truth, more theological explanation, more and more of how to make that knowledge relevant and applicable in useful ways in their lives and the lives of their people. They are respectfully demanding more of the Reformed faith. And this scenario is playing itself out over and over in Russia, Ukraine, Hungary, Latvia, Romania and, we hear recently, in Bulgaria!

How we respond to God's Grace is truly the measure of our gratefulness for that Grace.

He has enabled some to be preachers and teachers; some to be administrators; some to go; some to give and send; and all to pray. You are among these, perhaps in more than one group.

We have a world to reach for His Glory -- not our own -- and we ask you to pray.

**Pray** for professors and pastors to teach in regular rotations in all the cities where we work.

**Pray** for translators, interpreters and the presentation of solid biblical literature.

**Pray** for those who come and who will come, that their physical and spiritual needs will be met, their hearts and intellects prepared and made ready.

**Pray** that we each may see our part in this His great work as we seek to share with others the doctrines of grace He has already given to us.

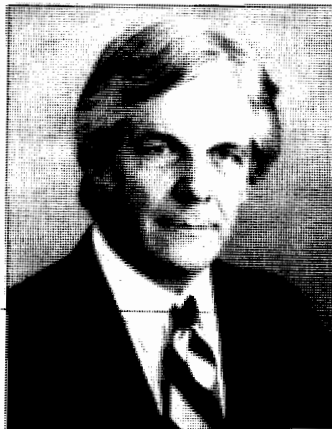
**Pray** for the financial resources to carry the work forward. Pray for individuals, churches, corporations and foundations to invest major gifts in establishment of training centers, sending of lecturers, student scholarships, translation work and publishing.

**Pray** for the staff who labor daily that the work might go forward. Pray for the new staff who are in the process of raising their salary support. Pray for financial gifts to underwrite the establishment of a home office and its expenses.

**Pray** each of us will act on what He reveals to be our part in His Kingdom Work.

**Pray** that as he carries we each will be found, not idle.

**Pray**, and may our gracious God bless you!



# Your participation: Adding ornaments to heavenly garments

by Duane Sjaardema, board member, Denver, Colorado

Have you been denied God's blessing because someone failed to provide you an opportunity to participate in an exciting kingdom activity? Come with me as I share with you a ministry that has provided me with tremendous joy and blessings.

I've just completed an interim term as Chairman of the Board of Christ for Russia. Our name has recently been changed to International Theological Education Ministries, a name more appropriate for this rapidly expanding ministry. The expansion is not the result of our seeking additional fields in which to work. It is the result of calls for help from countries that desperately need the services we are able to provide. Dr. David Ludwick, Rev. Jonathan Taylor and Dr. Gerard Van Groningen have provided outstanding leadership but our organizational staff and finances are being stretched beyond limits because the need is so great.

I have thrilled to accounts by our representatives who have reported lecturing to as many as 6,000 persons during their visits and have spoken in churches filled to overflowing. Their listeners are people who hunger for the Word of God. They respond with excitement as they hear new truths from God's Word come alive – even in spite of the tedious speak-translate-speak-translate delivery. Our lecturers have taught students with ferocious appetites for learning, students who devour every word. They come in spite of the fear of losing their jobs because they have taken time off to attend school.

I have shed tears of joy and sadness as I've heard that more than 150 new churches are being established in Ukraine each year, but they lack qualified, trained pastors, teachers and evangelists to serve them. Existing churches are being shepherded by over-worked pastors who have no training or have only received the very basic rudiments of the gospel. We receive cries for help from Russia, Hungary, Latvia, Hungary, Romania and other regions in that part of the world. Our efforts are focused toward pastoral-theological training, translation of theological books and establishment of libraries. Our staff and resources seem miniscule in contrast with the tremendous needs, yet God has blessed beyond measure and, with His help, we have been able to accomplish far more than we ever envisioned or thought possible. Sometimes we just pray and watch God work (Deuteronomy 7:21, Psalm 66:5). "Come and see what God has done, how awesome His works in man's behalf."

Yet there is the pervasive sadness and hopelessness of the general population in the countries in which we serve. Organized crime, the blatant sensualism, the corruption, the cults, the economic disarray, the struggling poverty – all these things remind us the Devil is working his absolute best to keep these people enslaved. The time is now! We never know how long the window of opportunity will remain open. Already, opportunities in Russia have diminished because of the 1997 "religion law."

How can you be part of this exciting and uniquely strategic ministry? We need professors of theology and pastors willing to give a short time in field service. We need prayer warriors. We need small, medium and large donations of financial support. We need you! "Lift up your eyes and look around; all your sons [and daughters] gather and come to you. As surely as I live, declares the Lord, you will wear them all as ornaments; you will put them on, like a bride" (Isaiah 49:18).

You can have a part in the work. You can be adding ornaments to your heavenly garments as men and women, boys and girls come to our Savior through your assistance and support. We are in the ministry of preparing the Bride (His Church) to meet the Bridegroom. We need to reach the congregations, pastors, and higher denominational leadership with distinctively Reformed, biblical teaching and with instruction that is practically relevant.

Christ for Russia, Inc./ITEM has developed its unique ministry through existing denominations in the countries in which we serve. Because of this approach we experience less of the oppression caused by influences like the Russian religion law. Come, join us! Experience the blessing and the excitement as you take part in this growing ministry today!

## Urgent Current Needs

- \$20,000 DRTC building completion
- \$10,000 Fall '98 Latvia lecture sessions
- \$11,000 Office space (1 year's rent @\$550/mo) plus set up costs
- \$25,000 Home office staff support, operating reserve

## Other Needs

- \$55,000 Messianic Revelation translation
- \$600 each Hungarian student scholarships; need 10 for 1998-99 (\$600 pays for a full year's study.)

For information on how you can meet any of these needs, please contact Jonathan Taylor toll free at 888-522-4319.

### Christ for Russia, Inc.

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In obedience to the Great Commission, Christ for Russia exists to serve the churches in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS, formerly Soviet Union) and Eastern Europe in their efforts to train biblically sound pastors and church leaders. To this end, Christ for Russia works to secure prayer, labor, resources and finances 1) to establish seminaries and other pastoral training centers, 2) to assemble theological libraries and 3) to translate and publish solid biblical literature.