

## Experience of a Lifetime

### Reflections on my Trip to Ukraine

I was not sure what to expect when I landed in Kiev. I guess what I had in mind was king's welcome: where people look forward to meeting you, just exuberant with the privilege of meeting someone that came so far, and gave up so much to open God's Word to them. However, this was not the welcome I received, neither was the week anything I could have imagined. I experienced something far greater.

I was called with this opportunity by David Ludwick, five days before I would need to fly to the Ukraine, while on my way to a much needed but brief vacation period. The tickets were purchased, many sleepless nights were spent preparing my lectures and syllabi and I was on my way.

When I landed I was greeted by two wonderful men, Nitaly and Vitaly. They told me on the way back to the church/college when I was to teach, when I was to eat and where I was to sleep. With the directions in hand they ushered me not into their homes, but to a nursery room in the church that was equipped with a cot, a table and a chair. My bags were dropped off, they told me goodnight and closed the door. As the door closed I realized that for the first time in many years I was by myself, with no one to talk to, no cell phone to ring, no television to watch...only a table, a chair, and a cot: nothing more. So as I sat at the edge of my cot, I pulled out my Bible and began to read.

My days were structured in the following way:

4:00 am -- alarm rings and I get up to prepare for my day.

8:15 am -- breakfast in my room (some of the best food I have ever tasted by the way) brought to me by a wonderful Ukrainian woman who would look at me, tell me to eat and close the door behind her.

8:45 am -- door opens and I meet with my translator to go over any words that might be hard to translate.

9:00 am -- I begin my lectures (we make it through all 39 books of the Old Testament!)

11:00 am -- students insist that we stop to have tea and fellowship together (one of the highlights of my trip, these people can bake!)

11:20 am -- we resume class. I give out the homework.

1:00 pm -- we conclude the class for the day and have lunch together.

It was so heartwarming to see the love and camaraderie the students and Pastor had with one another. Even the old men, would laugh together, and sit so close to one another, that at times it was hard to see where one began and the other ended. At 2:00 I was ushered back to room, instructed to rest and the door was closed once again. At 6:00, my door was opened once more, I was given food and instructed to eat and my door was closed once again. I would prepare my lectures until around midnight and the routine began again four hours later. On Wednesday evening, I was asked to preach at the church's mid week service which was fun.

With this regimented schedule, and so much to prepare every day, I soon began to realize, that I was not invited to the Ukraine to be a celebrated hero, I was called to fulfill one major part of being a teaching elder-- to teach; to teach well, to teach rested, and to teach with much passion and conviction.

It was during these long hours, that I realized how little time I was spending with God. It is so easy to be distracted when you have more than a table, chair and a cot. It takes so little effort to replace the time you need to spend with God, with things that really do not matter. I am so grateful that I had this opportunity to go to the Ukraine, to meet with the students who were eager to hear God's word, to serve my Savior. I am thankful for the opportunity to do things that I truly love to do, to teach, worship and fellowship with God's people.

Thank you to everyone who made this trip possible for me. It was an experience of a lifetime.

In Christ, Rev. Paul DeYoung



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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

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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**

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### BALTIC REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

*By Simon Kistemaker, Professor of New Testament Emeritus, Reformed Theological Seminary*

Dr. Larry Stout came to Latvia in 1991 at the time when the country gained its freedom from Soviet occupation. He noticed a need for spiritual revival and theological education in that part of the world. He dreamed about opening a theological seminary in the capital city of Riga and after a few years talked about his dream with Dr. Gerard Van Groningen, whose expertise in starting and developing a theological seminary were well known in various places around the globe: Geelong, Australia and Sao Paulo, Brazil.

ITEM developed a plan using Dr. Van Groningen's model in part to establish a regional theological seminary. Professors from the United States will come to teach for short periods of time. ITEM works in cooperation with professors attempting to raise funds to cover the necessary expenses of transportation, accommodations and the rental fees for office and classroom facilities, etc. ITEM contacted prospective faculty members serving in Presbyterian and Reformed theological seminaries to travel to Riga and offer specific courses in their fields of study. In 1998 Van Groningen was among the first professors to teach in Riga. ITEM also promoted this fledgling seminary then called Riga Reformed Theological Seminary by asking in the USA professors of New Testament, Old Testament, Systematic Theology, Church History, and Missions to travel to Riga and teach for one or two weeks at a time. Mr. Artis Celmins, a native Latvian, filled the post of a long-term administrator.

I had the privilege of teaching at the Riga seminary offering a course on the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Epistles of Peter to seven or eight students who took it for credit and a few others who came in as auditors. Much to my surprise I noticed that I could lecture in English and the students were able to understand me. One or two students needed the help of a translator. I asked why the students were sufficiently advanced in understanding English. I was told that upon liberation in 1991 the younger generation realized that to get ahead in the world at large they had to learn English, and they did.

Once again, in 2003, I was asked to return to Riga and present a course on the Book of Revelation. The enrollment had increased and many of the students I met two years earlier were continuing their education. There was progress and further development also in regard to building a functional library. But the greatest advance was when Artis Celmins approached the administration of the University of Latvia and asked them if their students would be interested in taking courses at the seminary. If they were, then the question of accreditation could be pursued. If university students would receive academic credit on a provisional basis, could accreditation also be extended to all the registered seminary students? The answer to both questions was affirmative.

The university was willing to extend credit on a provisional basis for a two-year term to the students taking seminary courses. Because of this arrangement, the enrollment at the seminary increased. Also, the Board of the seminary decided on a name change. Instead of calling the seminary Riga Reformed Theological Seminary, the Board broadened the appeal by naming the school Baltic Reformed Theological Seminary. This was a step in the right direction, for now students from other parts of that region could apply for admission. Indeed, one student came from Lithuania and three from Sweden.

Another advance took place recently – and that was a relocation of the seminary itself. Instead of renting space near the apartment that provided accommodations for visiting professors, the newly named BRTS now

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has its office and classroom in a Reformed Church building located in the downtown area. The church building dates back to the early 1700s and was owned by the Reformed people of Riga. But in the Soviet era the building was used for other purposes, including a restaurant. When liberation came about 15 years ago, the city government gave the building to the Lutheran Church. Fortunately, the seminary Board has been able to make an agreement with the Lutherans to rent part of it.

I returned once more in December 2005 and offered a one-week course on the Gospel of Matthew and one on the Book of Acts the following week. The enrollment of registered students reached 16 with 9 auditors. The class room was full. And by all indications, the seminary experiences steady growth on a solid foundation.

The Lord has blessed BRTS in numerous ways. I pray that in faith and prayer the members of the Board and the administration, the students, as well as supporters look to God for the continued growth of the school and gradual development to the glory of His name.

**Simon J. Kistemaker, December, 2005**

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### FIELD REPORT ON TEACHING AT RIGA REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY RIGA, LATVIA, MAY 2002AD

By Rev. Stephen Estock

The Kirk of the Hills Presbyterian Church, St. Louis, MO

"The man in the pulpit faces the pressing temptation to deliver some message other than that of the Scriptures. Yet, when a preacher fails to preach the Scriptures, he abandons his authority. Most modern preaching evokes little more than a wide yawn. God is not in it."

In his book *Biblical Preaching*, Haddon Robinson uses those words to introduce the great need that exists today for good expository preaching. It was this same concern that motivated me as I traveled to Latvia to teach homiletics last May. Now that the class is over and the grades have been completed, I want to give you an assessment of my trip and the work of RRTS.

Logistically, everything went well. I had no problem with my ticket as I used the travel agent in Chicago. The accommodations in Latvia were very good. I stayed in the Hotel Eurolink, which is on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Hotel Riga. Though the Hotel Riga was under renovation which resulted in noise and dust, it really wasn't that bad. I really enjoyed being in the Old City as there was much to see and do.

Overall, the class went well. We had 11 people who began taking the class for credit, and 8 persevered to the very end. The average attendance was higher as others came to hear the content, especially when we covered the practical lessons (e.g., illustrations, outlining). The attendance was somewhat discouraging in that some of the students had such hectic schedules that they were only able to attend a handful of classes. Only 2 were able to make all 9 classes.

#### **Strengths of RRTS**

Artis does a very good job organizing the materials and taking care of the professors. He is a very gifted man and is committed to making the Seminary a place of excellence. There were a couple of times where I wanted to lighten up on the requirements so as to make the class easier for some of the students. Artis pleaded with me not to do so. He wanted to have an excellent program, even if that made it difficult for some of the students. In the end, the final grades included 1 A, 3 B's, 2 C's, and 2 D's (these two struggled with their English).

I was impressed with the students' hunger to learn and their commitment to evangelism. A number of their sermons had an evangelistic tone. They also displayed a desire to keep their preaching practical, which I is very important in their cultural context. This desire for practical application brings with it a tendency toward moralism, which was also evident in some of their written sermons. I was glad to see that the pastor's of the reformed churches (i.e., Alvis and Ungars) were very committed to and proficient in maintaining a grace-based ministry.

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Although still at an early stage, RRTS has the potential to impact some significant groups within the city of Riga. Not all of the students attend reformed churches, yet they were eager to hear reformed theology. Some of the students, as well as those associated with the school, have already developed relationships with key people in the city.

### **Challenges for RRTS**

As I interacted with the students, and especially as I read their sermons, there is a great need for them to integrate all that they are learning. In some cases, the student dealt with the text from a reformed perspective, but later in the same sermon would come from a definite Arminian position. I got the impression that they were piecemealing a variety of things that they had learned from other places, and they were not readily aware of the contradictions. They will be greatly helped by professors that examine the Scriptures from a good reformed Biblical theology. There were times when I wondered if I should have been teaching them homiletics when what they really needed was basic Bible study.

Although the language barrier was not a significant problem, it understandably hindered some from really incorporating the concepts into their sermon project. It will take time for them to digest the homiletical concepts and make them a part of their practice. I wish that I had left some written copies of sermons so that they could have "hard copy" examples of the principles we covered.

As the students grow in their understanding of reformed theology, there may be a danger of an incipient "reformed exclusivism". In a few of my conversations, there was a faint tone of condescension toward those who were not reformed (i.e., the "big churches"). We should be very careful that the professors we send and the materials we provide do not cultivate an attitude of superiority. Rather, we should continue to promote what I believe is the dominant attitude, that of graciously ministering the truth of Scripture from a reformed worldview.

### **The Future for RRTS**

As my time came to an end, Artis asked me to be on the lookout for a man to serve as a full-time professor. He believes, and I agree, that this would give their program a greater measure of credibility. At the same time, they would like to continue and expand their relationship with Covenant Theological Seminary and the ACCESS program. I believe that is a great idea, as long as Artis stays on top of the students to get their work completed in a timely fashion. I believe RRTS has great potential to make an impact on the future of the reformed church in Latvia and the Baltic region. The city, people, facilities, and accommodations make RRTS an attractive place for men to teach classes. As I spoke with the students, it is evident that God has already done a great work, and I look forward to seeing what He will do in the years ahead.

Yours truly in the service of Christ,  
Stephen Estock

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**Riga Report**  
**Hans F. Bayer Ph.D.**  
**Riga, May 30 and St. Louis, June 13, 2003**

1. General report:

From May 21-30, I taught a 27.5 h course on "Hermeneutics and Exegesis" at RRTS in Riga, Latvia. Additionally, I gave a 3h lecture (May 24) to pastors and church workers in Vilnius, Lithuania (Lithuanian Evangelical Reformed Church), a 90-minute lecture (May 26) at Latvia University in Riga (2 university students and 4 RRTS students attended; exam week...), and preached twice on Sunday, May 25 (Alvis Sauka's Reformed Church and Malcom Firth's International Baptist Church).

I took 28 books, purchased by ITEM, for my course and for an upcoming summer 2003 CTS ACCESS course. Attendance at the RRTS course ranged from 20 to 25. I had additional personal meetings with Artis, Ungars, and Alvis; in Vilnius I had lunch with Algimantas Kvedaravicius, senior pastor of a Reformed Church in Vilnius. Through the arrangement of Alvis Sauka, I also had lunch with Prof. Juris Calitis (Ph.D. Harvard), dean of the faculty of theology at Latvia University, Riga. Eleven students took the final (oral) examination on May 30. They will also write a 10-page response paper to K. Vanhoozer's "Is there Meaning in this Text?"

2. Impressions:

The students were very motivated and engaged. The group as a whole is now much more homogenous and academically prepared than during my previous two visits. Artis and Nikolai are doing a fine and dedicated job in running the day-to-day affairs of the growing seminary. Artis is happy that the administrative-clerical responsibilities now rest on Nikolai's shoulders. Artis is thus able to tend to his own responsibilities and studies. RRTS' contacts to the Lithuanian Evangelical Reformed Church are very much appreciated, and two of their main pastors attended my class with great interest.

The four CTS-ACCESS students remain very motivated, and at least three of them still plan to pursue doctoral studies at Latvia University in Riga following their successful completion of the ACCESS M.A. at CTS in St. Louis. In due time, they should form the indigenous core-faculty of RRTS.

The seminary is taking shape and should continue to pursue contacts with the Lithuanian Evangelical Reformed Church. Further contacts with Latvia University and Luther Academy in Riga will widen its witness to thoughtful biblical faith and reformed confession in the context of liberal and Lutheran academia, respectively. In our personal meeting, the dean of the faculty of divinity at Latvia University, Prof. Juris Calitis, sounded very open to the idea for me to give future lectures at the University.

In summary, I believe RRTS is developing in a very strategic place and time as it provides Biblical-theological training in the Baltic region. However, it should not do its important work in isolation, but rather seek contacts of cooperation or contribution.

Sincerely,  
Hans F. Bayer



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### 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, .....

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.

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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**

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**Report on Baltic Reformed Theological Seminary**  
by Larry Sibley

*May 22, 2004. 35,000 feet above Labrador and watching the progress of my flight on the little monitor attached to the back of the seat in front of me. Home is not far away.*

I begin again to think back over the last two weeks spent with 22 students in Riga, Latvia, at the Baltic Reformed Theological Seminary. A few pastors and elders, along with many worship leaders, gathered in a classroom at the Reformers Church building in Old Riga. We began each evening with prayers: praying a Psalm or two, hearing passages from Matthew, and petitioning God for the needs of the church and the world and thanking God for the blessings of the day. We were following an ancient pattern of prayer that is reflected in Acts 4:23-31.



We also explored the biblical background for this pattern of daily prayer and followed it into the early church as described in our textbook, *Worship: Reformed According to Scripture* (Hughes Oliphant Old, Westminster John Knox, 2002). Most of our class time was spent on the full Sunday morning service of word and sacrament. Starting biblically with the assembly in the Sinai desert (Acts 7:38; Exodus 19-24) and historically in 16th century Geneva, we spent much of the first week on the major biblical passages that set the pattern for Sunday worship and on the history of what the church has done to practice this. We spent a few evenings on culture and worship so that worship in Riga might be Latvian, not merely an import from the West. And we looked at several working models from other urban churches, not so they could be copied, but rather to understand various ways of implementing biblical and historic patterns.

The students were ready to look at the worship practice of their churches in Riga, especially the three Reformed Churches that have been planted in the last fifteen years, and evaluate this by the scriptural norms. Much has been renewed and reformed in the last few years, but they were able to see more to do. We talked about what could be done to enrich the diet of prayer in their services, both in music and in the various prayers. The final prayer of thanksgiving (patterned on the practice in Geneva) that we used in the opening prayers each night is a good candidate for regular use. Indeed, when I preached at the Riga Reformed Church, which meets in a *salle* at the Technical University, such a prayer was used for the first time.



So, John Calvin was not the last to seek to bring weekly worship more into line with Scripture and the uses of the early church. His heirs in Riga are following in the same path, enriching and reforming the worship patterns they inherited from American missionaries in the 1990s and looking to Calvin's example for wisdom. In order to broaden this renewal, we held a conference on May 15, to which 50 members from the three Reformed churches came, with their music groups. We had a wonderful day together worshiping and studying.

To develop leadership for the Reformed churches of Latvia,

Lithuania, and Estonia, Riga (newly renamed Baltic) Reformed Theological Seminary was begun six years ago. Guest professors, largely from United States seminaries and pastorates, have covered a comprehensive curriculum of biblical studies, systematic and historical theology, and pastoral theology. The school has a regional vision: equipping pastors and other leaders for the Baltic and Scandinavian churches. As part of their larger program, they will begin to offer an accredited master's degree through Latvia University in the fall.

This is a strategic ministry and I appreciate so much your partnership, making these two weeks possible. The seminary class sent me off on the last evening with a couple of gifts, plus greetings to you and appreciation for your supporting prayers.

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ITEM Field Ministries:

Christ for Hungary, Christ for Latvia, Christ for Lithuania, Christ for Poland, Christ for Romania, Christ for Russia, Christ for Ukraine

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*“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few...”*  
*“...therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”*

June 30, 2003

*Rev. Will Hesterberg, Concord Presbyterian Church (PCA)*

***A New Opportunity: Reformed Theological Institute in Bucharest, Romania***

***Dear Friends of Missions,***

A new opportunity to impact a new country with Reformed teaching awaits ITEM as we explore a potential relationship with the Reformed Theological Institute of Bucharest. This Institute has come through the efforts of Hong Key Chung, a Korean missionary with Ambassadors for Christ. Affable, creative, and completely committed to missions Hong Key has planted a church near one of the centers of Bucharest. The church is housed in a three-story building which includes a sanctuary, classroom, offices, kitchen, dining room, and numerous bedrooms for students and visiting professors. Quite the visionary, Hong Key has also purchased a former school with numerous large classrooms and space for additional dorm living areas. The building has undergone some updating and awaits considerable additional capital infusion in order to be completed. Already the facility houses some of the men students and provides a meeting area for a children's ministry reaching about 200 children in that area. The church also runs another children's ministry of about 200 children at another site in the city.



*Reformed Theological Institute facility is three-storey high, with the third floor children ministries, Hong's office, second - with classrooms, admin office, first - with kitchen, dining room, and unused offices.*

These two children's ministries plus the church provide practical ministry experiences for the students at RTI. The students, about 12-15, range in age from primarily 23-27 with three in their 30's.

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They come from a variety of church backgrounds such as orthodox, brethren, and evangelical. They appear to have been recruited through radio advertising and through Hong Key's personal visits to churches throughout Romania.

While the facilities leave something to be desired, the students will immediately cause any professor to overlook the physical facility limitations to see the tremendous potential to prepare these bright young servants for the kingdom. I found the students engaging, eager to learn, and enthusiastically committed to reformed, covenantal, Presbyterian doctrine. They are warm, respectful, helpful, and also fun-loving. They learned quickly the concepts and the practical applications of the course on Hermeneutics and Homiletics that I taught for two weeks. They definitely require and desire more theological education, but they know their Bible and the Reformed faith. They definitely need more training in Christ-centered preaching and teaching, as it appears that most preaching/teaching throughout Romania and the former Soviet Satellite countries appears to be legalistic, moralistic, and exemplary. These students have tasted the doctrines of grace, seen the damage legalism has done in many churches, and are eager to proclaim the gospel of grace in Romania and beyond.

The pastor of the church who is also the administrator of RTI, Hong Key Chung, is thoroughly Reformed and covenantal, as well as Presbyterian. A visionary, he is nevertheless practical and personable. He is well-liked and respected by the students. While he appears to be a very capable and energetic man, he recognized he needs help and is eager to partner with ITEM to offer more education for the students.

He appears to be a modest humble man living sacrificially with his wife Esther so that they may give themselves to serve God. I believe we have a great open door in Bucharest to partner with RTI to reach Romania with God's grace and an opportunity for which ITEM is well-suited and positioned.

Slava Domnelui (Praise the Lord)

Rev. Will Hesterberg, *I.T.E.M. Secretary and pastor of Concord Presbyterian Church (PCA)*

(From top to bottom):

Picture 1: Flying over Bucharest Romania, one can't help enjoying the beauty of God's Creation.

Picture 2: Hong Key Chung's wife Ester preparing Children's ministry and Sunday School class material.

Picture 3: Dr. R. David Ludwick, *I.T.E.M. President*, observing classes on Self-Assessment at the Reformed Theological Institute prepared and delivered by a professor from Virginia.

