



## International Theological Education Ministries, Inc.

May 2012

*Equipping Reliable Church Leaders in Sound Doctrine*

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### **Christ for Croatia from Tom Smith, ITEM Teacher and Missionary**

At the moment, I am in Osijek, Croatia at the church of the Good Shepherd. I will return to Zagreb tomorrow evening. I preached in the Reformed Church in Tordinci yesterday. Tordinci is the oldest surviving Protestant church in Croatia (461 yrs.). Their pastor is Dr. Jasmin Milic, who is also the head of the PRKC denomination. Dr. Milic also planted the church of the Good Shepherd in Osijek 12 years ago. Milic is a type "A" go-getter and a real dynamo. He has a heart to spread the gospel, has his hand in many projects.

After planting Good Shepherd in Osijek, he split from the liberal Reformed Calvinist church and then the troubles began. They (mainline liberals) lied about Milic, had the government seize the church. Milic spent the last 7 - 8 years to clear his name and get the building returned. The church plant disbanded for about 7 years. After the Supreme Court ruled in Milic's favor, the keys were returned last year.

So yesterday was the one year anniversary. About 70 people were here. Such a beautiful service! I loved hearing "How Great Thou Art" sung in Croatian.

The language study is going well. Some days I think my brain gets stupid, other days everything clicks. Overall am making progress. It will take a couple of years to get good enough to preach/teach in Croatian.

I must work on the next 3 lectures for Saturday. Dr. Milic is glad that we are doing these lectures as both instruction for believers and for outreach, though the first 3 lectures were attended only by church members. Those who attend all lectures will get a certificate from the Mihail Starin Seminary of the PRKC.

I told Milic about talking to Dr. Tom Sibley at the Biblijski Institut in Zagreb and the possibility of teaching a class there in the upcoming school year. But I am waiting to hear from Sibley and if he/they can use me. They may not want me. I told him that I am a Presbyterian and Reformed. Sibley said that they are "ecumenical" and conservative. A huge praise is that I have library privileges and they have a nice little library in English. Biblijski Institut is Church of Christ. If I have any relationship with them in the future, I do want to clarify their teaching on baptism. Milic thinks that church of Christ's teaching on baptism is heretical. But I think the Church of Christ (some of them) may not teach/believe in the way that the original founders did. Baptists, Pentecostals, and Free Church people attend at Biblijski Institut.

Another praise to report is about Almir, who is a student at Biblijski Institut wants to join the PRKC. He has been a Reformed Baptist, but his conviction on baptism has changed. His Baptist pastor did not take the news well. However, Dr. Sibley did and said his "internship stipend" would not change even if Almir switched to the PRKC.

Also, a praise to mention is that Milic and the PRKC have a new church plant forming in a little village west of Osijek in Donji Mihalovac. But also must report the spiritual warfare. Today, here at the church in Osijek, we had a card table with free Bibles and devotionals on it. Praise God, many books & Bibles were



*Panorama of Osijek*

taken. But Kresimir and I heard some people mocking the Protestant church and saying that "those Protestant worship the devil". Yes, the Protestant Reformation was 500 years ago, but there is still a real divide between Protestants and Catholics.

Prayer requests: need stamina and wise time management, also that this summer will be a profitable time reporting on the work and in finishing the fund-raising.

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*Sarah Torrens and the children*

### **Alistair Torrens, ITEM teacher and missionary to Ukraine announces...**

*"We are delighted to announce the birth of our son. Thaddeus Phillip Torrens was born on Saturday, 28th April at 11:55pm (on what was an usually sunny and beautiful Northern Irish day). He weighed 7lb (3.18 kg) and was 51cm (20 in) long. He and Sarah are doing well."*

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Pray for the recovery of Vitaliy Tkachuk director of the Kiev Regional Bible College as he heals from intensive heart surgery, after he recovers from the intensity of surgery he must return to the hospital for more heart procedures.

Pray also Dr. Jeff Richards as he teaches at Kiev Regional Bible College this month. This month is the graduation occasion for about 30 students. Dr. Richards will also address the graduates as they go to their new vocation in many churches where they fulfill one of the purposes of ITEM, training church leaders and pastors to work in indigenous cities towns and communities.

Professor Mark Vander Hart will be teaching at Baltic Reformed Theological Seminary this summer. Professor Vander Hart will be teaching biblical languages. Please pray for Mark and the seminary students.



*Rev. Mark Vander Hart*

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### **Teaching at the Crossroads in Manipur**

by Rev. Ryan Laughlin, May 7, 2012

Most Bible teachers and pastors spend much of their time asking the question, "What am I going to say to my students that connects the truth of Scripture with the reality of their daily lives?" That's a good question. But when you are asked to teach in a place like Manipur, India, there are other questions that seem even more urgent. For instance, during the fifteen total hours in the air from St. Louis to Imphal, plus another two hours weaving through Indian traffic from Imphal to Lamka, one begins to wonder, "Will I ever get there? And if I do, will I arrive in one piece?" But as disconcerting as these questions may sound, I have found that they make us better teachers. They force me to remember that long before I opened my mouth, God had been preparing me to speak and our students to listen. Before I ever booked my trans-Atlantic passage, the God Who rules over sea and air and Indian highways had providentially arranged my every passing second. I may have freaked out over the unpredictable flight schedule (and did I mention the traffic in India?) but God was not caught off-guard. We must admit that these lessons can be difficult to learn in our world of cul-de-sacs and clean tap water and comfortable beds but they are hard to miss as your plane sails by Mount Everest on the way to Manipur.

Our church in West County St. Louis has supported the gospel work in Manipur for many years, specifically the ministry of two PMI (Presbyterian Mission International) missionaries who labor in Lamka (which means "crossroads"), Manipur, their native city: pastor Khen Tombing and pastor Lian Tombing. So,



*Main street in Churachandpur*

when Lian invited me and our missions chairman, Mike Galbreath, to spend some time in Manipur, I was eager to see for myself what I had heard so much about over the years. Half of our visit was spent visiting various ministries the Tombings have developed; and there are many: from church plants to Christian schools to vocational schools to seminaries. The other half was spent with twelve pastors and their wives who had gathered in Lamka from the surrounding villages for pastoral training and mutual encouragement, some from over 100 miles away. Lian, who supervises pastoral training for the denomination, asked me to teach on “The Pastor and his family” while Mike taught on “Evangelism and the

Sovereignty of God.”

Teaching in a different culture presents various challenges. Every word must be interpreted, not just translated. Furthermore, I found that students’ questions often reflected cultural concerns I was unfamiliar with. Since I was teaching on the biblical roles within a family, these cultural differences were even more accentuated. For instance, when I taught a lesson on disciplining children, I learned that American child-raising differs significantly from Indian child-rearing. In my church in St. Louis, I often call special attention to the importance of parents to be parents, not pals, with their children. In a preaching series on Proverbs last summer, when I preached on proverbs dealing with parenting, I emphasized the significance of a parent’s loving discipline and compassionate correction because I know that families in my church struggle to set appropriate boundaries for our children. In Manipur, family rhythms are different: parents don’t hover over their kids nearly as much as we do. They don’t coddle them well into their twenties a la American parents.

As pastor Khen explained to me during one class, because of cultural patterns and expectations, his congregants sometimes discipline their children with anger and harshness. Equipped with this knowledge, I focused the class on modeling our parenting after God’s fatherly care, paying special attention to passages like Psalm 103:13 and Ephesians 6:4. Not that these passages are excluded from a classroom full of Americans but, as teachers, we need to exegete both our Bibles and our people.

Over that two-day period in Lamka, I taught the following classes to the pastors and their wives: “The Pastor and His God: Reflections on Isaiah 40,” “The Pastor and His God: Reflections on Philippians 3:1-11,” and “The Pastor and His Family” (biblical-theological reflections on marriage and parenting). I

should also mention that both Khen and Lian are gifted administrators and wonderful hosts. Our accommodations were comfortable and clean. Our meals were delicious, too, thanks in large part of Rith Tombing (Khen’s wife) who gently introduced us to authentic Manipurian cooking. Finally, the pastors’ conference itself was well-planned and seemed to be appreciated by all in attendance.



*Pau Gualmaun teaching in the church building in Churachandpur*



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