

REFORMED INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION - CANADA (RITE - CANADA)

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Who are we?

Let me introduce Reformed International Theological Education—Canada (RITE—CANADA) to you. Reformed International Education—USA (RITE—USA) was formed in 2003 when the supporting agency for a Baptist seminary in Donetsk, Ukraine stopped supporting it, both in terms of finances and visiting professors. Two board members of this supporting agency asked the students if they wanted to continue as a seminary, but now as a distinctively Reformed seminary. Since a group of students wanted this, RITE—USA was formed.

The two board members of the former supporting agency met with students in May of that year, formed a board in June and started classes that September. At first, the seminary met in a very small Sunday School classroom with just one class where some of the students sat on stools in the hallway. The seminary had one administrator and translator, Natasha Seleznova. The next year, the seminary moved to another building, started a second class and hired Yana Matveyev as a second translator.

RITE—CANADA was

incorporated on July 29, 2010 and received charitable status on February 1, 2011. RITE-CANADA was primarily formed because donations made to RITE—USA from Canada were not tax deductible. Now that we have charitable status, they are when given to RITE-CANADA. Our goal is not to compete with RITE-USA, but to enter into partnership with them. In addition to supporting the Seminary in Donetsk, RITE—CANADA would like to be instrumental in supporting the work of Reformed Church plants in Donetsk and the surrounding area.

What do we teach?

When we started the seminary, we tried to build a curriculum which would address core theological classes and practical ministry work. In terms of theology, we offer classes on all the core systematic theology

subjects: God, man, Christ (person and work), doctrines of salvation, ethics, eschatology, apologetics. We also have classes in Biblical theology dealing with God's covenants and the flow of redemptive

history. We offer a course on Calvin's Institutes that fits into both of these categories at different points. We usually cover the sacraments under these headings although they come up under the systematic courses

also. We provide classes on Bible survey, hermeneutics, and various books in the Bible (Pentateuch, poetic books/wisdom literature, prophets, Gospels, Pauline epistles, Revelation have been taught) and we provide courses in Church history.

At times we have also addressed particular subjects that our students have requested. For example, last year a class was taught dealing with the gifts of the Spirit and the arguments for cessationism at the request of several students who felt they needed material on that subject.

On the practical side of things, we have classes on homiletics, pastoral counseling,

evangelism, worship (not only a theology of worship, but practice work in putting together Reformed worship services), church administration, church leadership. We have taught classes examining the offices of elder and deacon and how they should function in the church.

We also set up a program for ministry experience. We require all our students to be involved in some ministry which is different from their regular ministry duties. Eugene Polyanitsa, one of our students, coordinates these activities. Some of the ministries are evangelistic outreaches in the community, youth work, prison ministry, work with the poor, and teaching Bible classes.

At the moment we offer a four-year bachelor's degree in theology and a two-year master's degree.

It should be noted that not all students are at the seminary to become pastors in local churches. In fact, of the thirty students we have this year only one third either are pastors or would like to become one. The other twenty are at the seminary to become Reformed leaders in their churches.

We offer classes two weeks per month ten months of the year. No fewer than 10 United Reformed ministers from Canada have taught at the seminary since 2003.

Ivan and Natasha Gerasichkin, leaders of the Reformed church plant in Breanka



Reformed Churches in the Ukraine

RITE is not the only organization promoting Reformed theological education in the Ukraine. Mission to the World (MTW) and the Ukraine Mission of the Reformed Churches (liberated) in the regions Gelderland and Flevoland (Hattem) are also involved. The work of MTW has been instrumental in the

formation of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ukraine (EPCU). The work of the Ukraine Mission of the Reformed Churches has been instrumental in the formation of the Ukrainian Evangelical Reformed Church (UERC). These two church federations

together operate the Evangelical Reformed Seminary of Ukraine located in Kiev.

RITE is very interested in how the Lord Jesus Christ is gathering Reformed churches in the Ukraine at this moment. At the same time, it would like to contribute to this ongoing church gathering work by supporting students from its own seminary who wish to begin planting Reformed churches in Donetsk and surrounding areas. Since a fundamental principle of Reformed church planting is that

you always look to see if there are already other Reformed churches in the country in which you are working, RITE also wishes to foster contact with the Ukrainian Evangelical Reformed Church federation (EURC). A beginning in this direction has been made when RITE sponsored four of its students to travel to Kiev and attend an "All Reformed Conference" in November, 2010.

At the moment, Ivan, a fourth-year RITE student has begun a church plant in Breanka, some

150 kilometers to the east of Donetsk. On Sundays, he, his wife Natasha, also a student at RITE, and a number of people from the area come together for worship. During the week, when Ivan and Natasha are not at the seminary, the group comes together to study the Heidelberg Catechism. Beginning in July 1, 2011, Ivan would benefit greatly from a small amount of financial support of about \$200.00 a month.

Our Latest Teaching Trip

On February 17, 2011, Rev. James Folkerts and I left for the Ukraine and returned on March 4, 2011. It was James' first trip and my second. James reports the following about his experiences:

A number of months ago Dick Moes, pastor from Surrey, URC invited me to join him on a two week teaching stint with Reformed International Theological Education. I am writing this now, on my second last day of teaching, reflecting on the blur and the "burr" of those last two weeks of teaching among the Ukrainian believers. What a privilege it has been to see the lives that God has touched with the gospel, and the lives He is using for His cause in this hurting land. It is evident that the physical and spiritual needs of our brothers and sisters are great, yet it is also amazing to witness how these people are taking hold of the Reformed Faith and being actively mission minded in their needy situation. Though they experience great

challenges and difficulties, these are also exciting times as the Reformed Faith in taking root and bearing fruit in Ukraine.

We began our first day and a half recovering from jet lag in the capital city of Kiev, staying at the home of a Dutch missionary – Rev. Jos Colijn and his wife. The Dutch in partnership with some American Presbyterians have been laboring there for a number of years and have a full-fledged seminary up and running. We had a blessed time of warm fellowship with this couple who gave us an overview of the physical and spiritual landscape of the country.

With that we headed back to the airport and flew to the eastern part of Ukraine to the large industrial city of Donetsk. In some ways, the city reminded me of my old home town of Winnipeg – with its -20 temperatures,

wind chills, iced up vehicles, and roads filled with pot holes. It made me think,



Rev. Jos Colijn, Marlies and Dick Moes

if it like this here, I wonder what the Gulag is like... and also why so many Ukrainians moved to Winnipeg, it must have reminded them of home – especially the pot holes.

In Donetsk, the warm hearts of the RITE staff and students have made up for the sub zero temperatures. For two weeks now I have had the privilege to teach Pastoral Care and Counseling to approximately 25 students through a translator into Russian. This has been my first time getting up close to brothers

and sisters from this part of the world. It has been a rich blessing and encouragement to see what God is doing here through RITE. I have been really impressed with the overall knowledge base that the students have in the Reformed faith and also their mission mindedness among their own people. It is evident that the many pastors and teachers who have come here in the past have done a good job in

James Folkerts, Natasha Seleznova (RITE administrator and one of the two translators) and three students.



instructing these students. Clearly there is much to give thanks to God for, and much, much work to be done.

Please keep your brothers and sisters in Ukraine in your prayers. Pray for them in their studies, and for the advance of the gospel, and the building up of Christ's church in that land.

I wrote my report two weeks after I had returned home. In addition to what James

writes, I would write the following:

In April of 2010, I had the opportunity to teach book one of Calvin's Institutes. This year, I had the privilege of teaching book two. Since the Institutes have been translated into Russian, the students have the benefit of reading the Institutes themselves. Book two deals with (1) the need for the work of Christ: Adam's fall and our bondage to sin; (2) because of our bondage we are totally dependent upon the work of the Holy Spirit to convert us to Christ; (3) salvation is in Christ alone, and the law points to him; (4) the Ten Commandments; (5) continuity and discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments; (6) the Person of Christ; (7) the work of Christ. While all seven areas were a joy to teach, I especially experienced great joy in teaching about the continuity and discontinuity between the Old and New Testament.

Calvin does an excellent job in this area and since the whole issue of infant baptism stands or falls with understanding this continuity and discontinuity properly, you will understand why I enjoyed teaching this area so much. My hope and prayer is that this section left a lasting impact upon all the students.

A second highlight was my trip to Breanka and to deliver the message, prayer of application and benediction in this fledgling church plant with the help of a translator. I preached on Ecclesiastes 6:10-7:14 in which the Lord teaches us to wisely look for the good in times of adversity since He upholds and governs our lives by his eternal counsel. What struck me was how Ivan, the leader of the worship service, had structured the liturgy almost identically to what we would be accustomed to in the United Reformed Churches in North America. As there is a clear hunger



Discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments

for Reformed theology at the seminary in Donetsk, so there is also a clear hunger for Reformed worship and preaching in Breankā. This young church plant deserves our prayerful and small financial support.

In May, 2011, Rev. Mitch Persaud and Rev. Harry Zekveld are scheduled for a two-week teaching mission at the Reformed International Theological Seminary. May the



Listening to the message about looking for the good in times of adversity

Support A Student

In addition to supporting new Reformed church plants in Donetsk and surrounding region, it is also possible to support a student attending the Reformed International Theological Seminary in Donetsk. The cost per student is very reasonable by Canadian standards, yet it makes an enormous impact in the spiritual lives of these students and their churches in Ukraine. The total cost of operating the seminary in Donetsk includes renting the professors' apartment, renting seminary classroom space, translator's salaries, utilities, student stipends, desk, chairs, library and

other miscellaneous expenses. At the present time we have between 80-100 good solid theological library books written in Russian for our students to use.

You can *Support a Student* on several different levels:

Level 1 For \$85 a month, you can fund a student's monthly stipend.

Level 2 For \$100 a month, you can fund a student's monthly stipend and cover their transportation, food and lodging for a month.

Level 3 For \$170 a month, you can fund the entire cost of operating the seminary for a month per student.

Level 4 Any contribution to help with the monthly cost of operating the seminary would be greatly appreciated. You can make either a one-time gift, an occasional gift or regular support for one or more students.

It should be noted that the student stipends are on the low side and may be increased by \$10.00 a month. We will keep you informed about this in forthcoming newsletters.

If you would like to participate in the *Support A Student* program, please send your Name, Address and E-mail address to the information listed on the bottom of the last page of this newsletter.



James, Dick, Natasha, Yana and the student body.

The Mission Circle

It was November 2006 when Greta of the URC of London, Ontario said that it would be good to do something worthwhile for God's service as ladies of the church in and at the same time have fellowship with one another. Hence, the Mission Circle was born and our main project? To help our Christian Brothers and Sisters in the Seminary in Donetsk.

The Lord has blessed us greatly with all the enthusiasm and the generous hearts and hands that are now busy working to help the students and their families and extended families in the International Reformed Seminary in Donetsk in the Ukraine.

Five years have passed since we started the Mission Circle at our church. What an exciting five years it has been. The Lord has blessed this work immensely and we give Him all the praise due to His Holy Name. We have made thousands of dollars with the 'Coppers for

Donetsk' program; thousands with the yard sales; silent auctions; piano concerts and with sales of items that our people have made.

We meet every third Monday afternoon of the month and our meetings have grown with often having guests who are interested in what we are doing. We always hear something of what is going on in the seminary in Donetsk, Ukraine. We are doing this work with love and compassion for the children and adults of the Ukraine who we know do not have the means to just go out and buy warm clothing. We all work at our own pace. We all have different views of what is most beneficial to make. We all have our favourite things we like making. But one thing is the same whatever we make, and however we make it... Every single item that has been sent so far has been appreciated and received with great pleasure. Everything

we make finds a home. Every sweater will find a body. Every warm scarf will find a cold neck. In the providence of God we have learned of the needs of the Christians half way around the world. He has given us a desire in our hearts to help them. He has given us the ability to make beautiful gifts of clothing. He has given us the material and yarn which keeps coming month after month. We are in service to the King of Kings. We are working for other children of God. What a blessing, what a privilege. May we never forget to do what we do for God's honour and glory.

We have, to date, sent 168 large boxes with scarves, mitts, hats, lap afghans, blankets, coats, sweaters for old and young.

If you would like to set up a mission circle for Donetsk in your own church community, please contact Thea Van Dixhoorn at vandixhoorn@rogers.com.

If you would like to donate to RITE-CANADA or participate in the *Support A Student* program, please send your Name, Address, E-mail address, and let us know what level of support to this address:

RITE Canada
C/O Kuhn & Company
300 - 31935 South Fraser Way
Abbotsford, BC
V2T 5N7
Attn: Ian Moes

Please make checks payable to RITE CANADA.

RITE CANADA is registered charitable organization pursuant to the provisions of the Income Tax Act (Canada) under registration number 85102 4000 R0001.

100% of all contributions go directly to support the seminary in Donetsk, Ukraine or to the support of Reformed church plants