

# REFORMED INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION - CANADA (RITE - CANADA)

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## Introduction

In this third issue of our newsletter, you will find:

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The Joint Ministry Agreement

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## The All Reformed Conference

How valuable is your faith in Jesus? What are you willing to give for this faith? Some Christians are pestered because they are the only Christians in their class. Others lose their job. Still others are imprisoned and awaiting the death penalty.

Often we do not stop and think that many Christians in the world suffer because of their faith in the Lord Jesus. This should motivate us to pray for these brothers and sisters.

Moreover, it should make us thankful for the freedom God gives to freely give a defense of the hope that is in us.

If you know your church history, you will know that persecution for the sake of Christ was more the norm than the exception. This raises the intriguing question: Is persecution good or bad

for the church? Tertullian is known for having said that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. Was he right? Does God use persecution as a means to bring more people to faith in Jesus Christ? Both history and the Bible will give ample examples that this is the case. For instance, in Acts 8 you read that God used the dispersion of the believers after the execution of Stephan for the spread of the gospel.

On November 8 & 9, 2011, there was once again “The All Reformed Conference” in Irpin (about 20 kilometers north-west of Kiev), Ukraine. These conferences are organized by the missionary team of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands working in Ukraine for all those who are interested in the ideas of the Reformation. And, as you can

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know from previous newsletters, there is growing interest in Reformed theology in Ukraine. The topic for this conference was the missional significance of the Belgic Confession. The keynote speaker was Dr. Wes Bredenhof who wrote his doctoral dissertation on this topic. He serves the Providence Canadian Reformed Church in Hamilton, Ontario.

The Belgic Confession also contains the theme of persecution. Guido de Bres wrote this confession in 1561. Six years later, he was sentenced to death. Bredenhof explained how in the history of the church martyrdom often led to great growth of the church. Moreover, he showed that the Reformers considered Europe to be a big mission field. False doctrine hung as a dark cloud above Europe where the biblical faith in the Lord

Jesus was almost overshadowed by superstitious religion.

In the small discussion groups, we applied this to our own situation in Ukraine. How do we position ourselves as Reformed churches over against the Eastern Orthodox Church?

The conference had fewer participants than previous ones. This time, there were about 50 participants who came from all over Ukraine. Some even came from Belarus. In addition to translated articles, all participants received a copy of the Belgic Confession in Russian. Many used this opportunity to take along extra copies to hand out in their congregations or to those they are witnessing to.

*Cor Harryvan of the Dutch missionary team working in Kiev*

## The Joint Ministry Agreement

RITE Canada was formed in order to help with the seminary in Donetsk, Ukraine. Canada has laws on charitable giving that are much different from the laws in the United States. In order for RITE Canada and RITE USA to work together effectively, a Joint Ministry Agreement has been drawn up that both organizations have signed. Under this proposed Joint Ministry Agreement a Management Committee was formed of representatives from both RITE Canada and RITE USA. To comply with Canadian law and be recognized by Canada Revenue Agency, RITE Canada needs to have as many representatives as is proportionate to RITE Canada's contributions to the joint ministry

activities. For example, if the budget for the joint ministry activities is \$90,000 and RITE Canada contributes \$30,000 of this amount (i.e. 30%), RITE Canada needs to have at least 1 of 3 representatives (i.e. 30%) on the Management Committee. At the present time, our chairman, Dr. Dick Moes, representing Canada, and Dr. Van Lees and Dr. Merle Messer, representing the USA, comprise this Management Committee.

Both RITE USA and RITE Canada will pool their resources under the Joint Ministry Agreement to jointly carry out the work in Ukraine. RITE USA has opened a new bank account in the United States. Both RITE Canada and RITE USA would contribute funds into this joint bank account, which will be

administered by Dr. Van Lees. The funds that are sent to Ukraine would be withdrawn from this account. Each year the Management Committee would set a budget setting out the proposed contributions from each organization and the proposed expenditures.

Natasha, our head translator and administrator of the seminary in Donetsk, will be the agent of the Joint Ministry in Ukraine. She will receive and distribute the funds in Ukraine at the direction of the

Management Committee. She will report back on a regular basis, detailing what money has been received from the Joint Ministry and how it has been spent, including copies of receipts, statements, etc. She will also provide a written progress report saying how the funds have been spent. This Joint Ministry Agreement also avoids Natasha having to report separately to RITE USA and RITE Canada since it is a collaborative process of RITE USA and RITE Canada working together.

## Teaching Report #1 from Richard Blauw

The ticket reservation said 5757 miles to Donetsk. It is a long plane ride, but we are thankful for traveling mercies. In 13 years I have seen much go wrong with lost luggage, missed connections, bad weather and unanticipated world events. The attack of September 11 happened when I was in Ukraine. This year was a relatively smooth trip.

The gifts were much appreciated by the students. We distributed hats, toothbrushes, dental floss, pocket flashlights and fingernail clippers to the students. We also bought a wireless router for \$50 for the apartment. In order to send an email we would have to go to McDonalds or stand in the middle of Lenin Square to get WiFi access. With a wireless router in the apartment the visiting professors should be able to contact their families without taking their laptops outside. This should be useful especially in the winter months.



I taught a class of nine students in a survey of the Heidelberg Catechism. What was interesting about this class was that six of them were from the Poltava region. We have had students from the Donetsk region and from the Luganse region which borders Russia and is the easternmost region in Ukraine, but these are the first students from Poltava. It appears that the reputation of the seminary is spreading. The Lord is blessing the work.

The second class I taught was an advanced class of 11 men on using the catechism in preaching. They had to give a detailed sermon outline and then preach a second sermon in class. Some of the sermons lacked organization, but some were quite good and faithfully expounded the scriptures. I was impressed by how much these students had learned since I saw them last year. Rev. Al Bezuyen also made that same observation about the students in his class.

Listening to the students preach in Russian and then having to translate that into English was a little more difficult for Natasha who is an excellent translator. She noted that it was easier for her to work from English to Russian rather than Russian to English. Alexander (Sasha), one of our graduates has been hired to teach a course and assist Natasha and Yana in marking papers since we cannot read Russian. He also works with the new students in introducing them to the seminary curriculum. On the weekends he serves as a pastor in a village about 60 miles from Donetsk.

It was great to see old friends and renew old

acquaintances. Both Sundays I had an opportunity to preach in two different congregations. Once, I was in the central outdoor market when I heard someone calling out my name. It was a translator we had worked with a couple of years ago. Although it is over 5700 miles away, Donetsk was beginning to feel like a second home.

The seminary faces many challenges in the months ahead. Inflation is rampant in Ukraine, and with the recession here in the States donations are down so it is an ongoing struggle to keep the doors open. But the Lord has been good and we look to Him. Please do continue to remember the work

in Ukraine in your prayers.

Again, I would like to thank the council and congregation for their support of my efforts and for their support of the seminary which strives to maintain a consistent Reformed witness in training pastors to faithfully preach God's Word of salvation by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. It is humbling to think that the witness of First South Holland Christian Reformed Church, though the power of the Spirit, is touching lives half way around the world in eastern Ukraine. Slava Bogu. (Glory to God)

*Richard Blauw is a retired pastor from First CRC in South Holland, Mich. He has been going to Donetsk since 1999.*

## Teaching Report #2 from Van Lees

In October, I made my twenty-seventh teaching trip to Donetsk. Even though I've taught there many times, it is always a special experience being with our students. This time I taught a class on the doctrine of man to the Bachelor of Divinity I and II students. This class covered the creation of man in God's image, the constituent elements of man, and imputation of Adam's sin and total depravity. The material on the constituent elements of man was a completely new subject for our students. They had never heard the arguments for dichotomy and so it was a good time of growth for most in the class. I taught a class on the atonement to the Bachelor of Divinity IIs. In this class, I addressed Christ's active and passive obedience, various aspects of his work on the cross, and the

design of the atonement. We examined almost every classic proof text used in Arminian theology for a universal atonement and gave solid Reformed responses to those points. Several of our students who have struggled with the issue of a particular redemption told



me they found this especially helpful. We also have several new students starting our program who are from



central Ukraine. This is an area from which we have never had students come in the past. Therefore, we are beginning to reach out to a new region. The new students are eager to learn and grow in their understanding of theology. Most of them have never encountered any kind of systematic teaching. This has been our regular experience with new students and, over the years, it is gratifying to watch them grow both in their theological knowledge and ministry abilities.

We have a new challenge we have to address in our school. For the last five years, we have rented classroom and dormitory space in a nice building. However, the ministry which owns this

building is now raising our rent to four times what we have been paying. This is neither possible nor prudent for us so we are looking for a new place to meet and house our students. We have seen several buildings which we could possibly purchase. Housing costs are depressed in Ukraine so we can get something for a relatively inexpensive price. We ask you to pray concerning this pressing need and consider giving toward this project.

*Dr. Van Lees is the treasurer of RITE-USA and has been the pastor of Covenant of Grace Church in St. Peters, Missouri for 27 years. He has been traveling to Ukraine since 1998.*

## Teaching Report #3 from Jim Carmichael

In October, Van and I traveled to Donetsk for another teaching time. I taught the first of two classes on Biblical theology. In case you aren't familiar with this division of theology, Biblical theology gives us a grand view of redemptive history from eternity past to eternity future. This class covered hermeneutics, the Kingdom of God and the covenants. The difficult part for me is that so much that needs to be covered must be left to the student's curiosity. For me, this class was the most interesting offered in seminary, and thus it is my favorite to teach.



I think the students enjoyed the insights given into how each of these topics contributes to the whole picture of what Scripture says about God the King

and His work. There were several times when preconceived ideas held by the students were challenged, and at other times, I knew their questions would find answers in the second class in February, or in coming classes while in school. I was able to preach for one of our former student's congregation. Following the service, one of the students (Theodore) accompanied me back to our apartment. Before Theodore said goodbye, I took him to McDonalds for a burger. While there, I heard someone speaking English. He (Alex) noticed my Bible and asked if he could join us. I learned that he had been deported from California, and was here because he was born in Ukraine. He didn't give a reason for his being in the McDonalds other than he was illegally in the US. It takes quite a bit for California to extradite anyone. Before long, we were engaged in a conversation about Jesus. It was also evident that Alex was almost drunk, but able to comprehend what I said. The other important aspect of that conversation was no one had ever shown Theodore how to engage a person and share the Gospel. That was probably the most important part of our meal. Theodore will probably take what he learned and use it in the future. He seemed in awe of what God did, perhaps how simple it all was.

*Jim Carmichael is a retired PCA pastor. He and his wife live in Cumming, Georgia near their grandchildren. He has been going to Donetsk since 2003.*

## Teaching Report #4 from Bob Beasley

The trip to Donetsk in November to teach at RITE seminary was my seventh in the last four years. My good friend, Bob Drake, pastor of Covenant Reformed PCA in Asheville joined me to teach biblical theology. I lectured on the theme of idolatry, both ancient and modern. As Natasha drove us from the airport, we learned that RITE had just obtained a new classroom venue. Because of the recent steep rental increase at Light of Resurrection facility in Makeyevka, we rented new space at the Donetsk Christian University.

Once again, we found the students to be sharply attuned to the studies. I'm constantly amazed at our translators' abilities to get our words across to them precisely. We can tell that's happening because of the questions and feedback we receive as the class progresses. Natasha and Yana are almost impossible to stump! O, we can trip them up on colloquialisms, but they are very adept at theological terms. Natasha translated my "theurgy" and "henotheism" without a hitch.

The new facilities at Donetsk Christian University are very good. They also provide dormitories and meals for the students, yet are probably temporary as we continue to search for a permanent home for the seminary. A building in downtown Makeyevka was recently found that may provide that permanent home. It is only partially complete, so many questions need to be answered before we proceed. The building is only 5 kilometers further from Donetsk than our former classrooms, and would provide many positive features, including ease of access for the students and potential lower ongoing expenses for RITE.

*Bob Beasley is originally from Nashville, Tennessee, but lived 45 years in San Diego California. He worked in the commercial real estate industry. He started COMPS InfoSystems in 1981 to publish confirmed market data on commercial real estate. He grew the company nationwide and sold in 2000. He then moved to Asheville, NC where he is a ruling elder emeritus at Trinity PCA. He graduated from Westminster Theological Seminary in California in 1997. He has published 5 Christian books, including "101 Portraits of Jesus in the Hebrew Scriptures." He is married to Amy since 1993. He has three daughters from a previous marriage and six grandchildren.*



*Bob Drake teaching while Natasha translates*

## Support A Student

It is 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.

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

## The Mission Circle

September 2010 rolled around and 15 children, from Donetsk, Ukraine who had been abandoned by their parents when very young, once again had a great upheaval in their lives when they had to leave the orphanage, the only home they ever knew. They were told they had to go to a 'trade school', never to live in the familiar surroundings of the orphanage again. Their first day was scary. No familiar faces, no one to come alongside of them and give them encouragement. All alone. They were shown their 'new' dorms. There were beds in the dorms but there were no blankets. At supper time there was no food. They went back to the orphanage and begged bread. It is scary to become 16 in the Ukraine. No family, no encouragement, no goals, no hope.

A sad but true story. Anya Bilyo 31, a native Ukrainian and a graduate student from our seminary in Donetsk, has given her all in order to help these young people. Her goal in life is to start a new 'Adaptation Centre for Children' who come out of the orphanages. Many girls are picked up when they leave the orphanage and are promised the world while, in fact, they are put in the trade of prostitution. Anya wants to save them from this downward spiral. Whenever she can, she will take

some of these young people to church sharing the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ at every opportunity.

From this story, a new project was born. The ladies of the Mission Circle in London URC saw the great need for blankets and bedding and so we started the "One Square at a Time" Project. We sent out flyers and told people in our community that we wanted to send blankets to poor students and orphans in the Ukraine. If they would like to help and make either 12" or 6" knitted or crocheted squares, we would put them together and send them away. The response has been overwhelming. This project started late last year and we have had literally thousands and thousands of crocheted or knitted squares dropped off to some of the depots around the city. We have been able to send dozens of blankets to Anya and our students who share them with family, friends and neighbours. It is truly amazing how the Lord enables us to help in ways we never dreamed of. Two other congregations in Canada are now also working for the 5 million people in the Donetsk region where our Reformed Seminary is located. If anyone is interested in starting a project like this to help our students, you may call or write to Mrs. Thea Van Dixhoorn 519-633-2746 or [vandixhoorn@rogers.com](mailto:vandixhoorn@rogers.com)





*The ladies of the Mission Circle in London URC saw the great need for blankets and bedding and so we started the "One Square at a Time" Project.*

## Ways in which you can help

Set up a 'Mission Circle.' Participate in sending warm clothes to the students and their families and extended families. This alleviates some of the material concerns and worries and frees up some finances for perhaps meat on the table or fruit for the children. You can make hats, mittens, scarves, afghans, slippers, pneumonia prevention vests for the children, sweaters, etc.

### **Coppers for Donetsk**

Please help the students of the Reformed International Theological Seminary (R.I.T.E.) in Donetsk, Ukraine by saving your pennies or small change.

### **Coppers for Donetsk Program**

Start the 'Coppers for Donetsk' project in your church, your society, your social group, your community. Pennies add up.

The Coppers for Donetsk Program is working well and we are thankful to God for that. If you need some extra cans for your neighbours and friends and local businesses, please do not hesitate to ask for them. We will be happy to oblige. We hope to have 1000 cans out by the end of the year 2011. This would create a wonderful help for the seminary. We have received cans with \$5.00 in them and also as much as \$80.00! We receive them weekly from all over and from all kinds of businesses and people from all walks of life.

For more information of how to start this project please email [theavandixhoorn@rogers.com](mailto:theavandixhoorn@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 .