



(RITE - CANADA)

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RITE Friends Help During Kiev Uprising

Greetings to all of our friends of RITE. Education and training is key if we expect to have responsible Christian leaders in our churches at home and abroad. But we need Christian leaders working outside our churches as well. Our Lord used people associated with RITE to help in the recent conflict witnessed in Ukraine. Our seminary and its families came into direct contact with the uprising.

Ukraine is an industrialized nation lying between Russia and Europe rich in internal resources. Russia would like to bring Ukraine back under its control for a number of reasons. But politics isn't this article's purpose. Until the fighting stopped last month, Alyona, aged 14, the youngest daughter of Sergei and Natasha, was sequestered in Kiev at the Olympic Village where she trains in gymnastics. All roads to and from Kiev were blocked and so were train and bus service. No one could enter or leave the city.

If you watched any of the bloodshed on our news, picture a young lady and former student, Olga, carrying blankets and supplies to the injured protesters. (Olga is the daughter of RITE student Anatoli Tsifrinets). Many of those blankets and other items were sent from our Canadian board member, Thea VanDixhoorn. Thea has organized ladies' groups from several churches which send very

large boxes of necessities for our students, their home churches and orphanages. Now, Olga is not allowed to go back to her village because they are sympathetic to the past president and because she was among those who helped overthrow him.

RITE seminary is in the far eastern part of Ukraine which has a very large Russian population. Many of the people there want to go back under Russian control. In fact, Donetsk is the hometown of the ousted president, Victor Yanukovich. This makes our seminary's geographical position even more critical as the region faces the greatest potential threat. But we still plan to travel there each month to teach once the unrest has settled. I was in Donetsk in January and had a chance to try and speak to some of the counter-demonstrators hired by the government, but they would not speak to me.

As our students influence their churches and communities with the gospel and the Reformed faith, they will help lead Ukraine in a Christian direction-- exactly what the nation needs. Your continued prayers and financial support will us allow to continue educating and growing to be even more influential in Ukraine's future.

Again, many thanks!

Dr Merle A. Messer, President RITE USA

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First Time Teaching in the Ukraine

I have been extremely blessed to teach at the RITE seminary in Donetsk, Ukraine for two weeks in the beginning of October. I went with my friend Dr. Van Lees, pastor of Covenant of Grace Church. We were late leaving Lambert Airport in St. Louis, delayed an hour leaving Chicago, so we had to sprint like Usain Bolt to make the connection at Munich. It was one of those little flights where you take a bus to the hanger area and climb up the steps in the rain. I looked dismally out of the little window as they loaded the checked luggage beneath – ours were nowhere to be seen because our connection was too tight.

Getting into Donetsk Van and I had to survive the first 24 hours with only our carryon luggage and return to the airport the next day to pick up our checked bags (first world problems right?). The apartment for the teachers is smack dab in the center of Donetsk, by Lenin Square, where his statue overlooks the area. We would come back here every afternoon to send emails and Skype

We had our classes in the new facility in Makeevka, a neighboring city to the east. We would make the 10 mile drive every morning and evening. It is a nice looking facility with two classrooms, kitchen and bathrooms downstairs and dorms upstairs for the students. It is fenced off, walled and gated for security. They had workers finishing off the exterior cladding while we were there.

With a new intake of 16 first year students the class time was divided into two. Van and I would rotate morning and afternoon with the beginning and advanced students. I was teaching a Biblical Theology of the New Testament to both groups, while Van taught Early Church history to the first year students and the book Revelation to the upperclassmen and masters students

A Biblical Theology of the New Testament is an explanation of Biblical themes present in the OT which the NT authors expand on as they write to the churches. Biblical Theology is the content of an unfolding revelation contained in the Scriptures. A Biblical Theology of the NT is to see the OT use and quotations and to garner an understanding of the NT writer's perceptions of the OT. This aids the students by seeing an interconnectedness with the overall biblical storyline of creation-fall-redemption-consummation and also to build a stronger hermeneutic for NT interpretation. For the younger students this was a great introduction of Bible overview and thematic connections that will help them in their other studies. For the seniors and Masters students – who are all very strong in Systematics – it was important for them to see how this discipline fits with their other training – the other side of the coin and similar metaphors come to mind.

Whilst there I was invited to preach at Rhema Church where a large group of the first years attend. I went with

Theodore, (Fedya) one of the Masters students, who translated for me. We had a great time. I preached from Mark 8:27-38 emphasizing themes of Lordship, Servanthood and Discipleship, a message that Dr. Beyer had imprinted into me during my time at Covenant Theological Seminary from Mark's gospel. In talking to the senior pastor after (a survivor of ministering through communism), he asked me if I knew Dr. Hans Bayer because I sounded like him! He knew him from his teaching in a seminary in Kiev. I told the pastor Dr. Bayer was my New Testament prof at CTS and since he was also my thesis advisor. We had spent a lot of time together. He was very blessed. It was a very unique connection.

I took the liberty one afternoon of staying at the facility after the classes, toward the end of the second week, after we had gotten to know one another more. I did this to allow for a kind of impromptu “gospel and culture” seminar! I asked them about what it was like in post-communism, and how their faith cut into their own version of post-enlightenment post-Christian Europe. They told me of the disillusionment and apathy that has gripped the young people. I learned of the heavy drug and alcohol abuse amongst the young men in the city – how even a majority of the male students in the program have some kind of rehab journey of their own. Sad and magnificent all at once. We had great interaction and they asked me about American and English life and I encouraged them about turning their thoughts to ministry and serving the Lord.

Donetsk is a wonderful city and a great place for the gospel. I learned about the economy of the city, being based on industrial mining combined with the rose gardens that course through the city. It is known by Ukrainians as a city of beauty and strength, one of the best cultural segues any It was a privilege for me to travel and teach, to be with Dr. Lees, and to minister to the students. I look forward to a rich connection with the Seminary and I am grateful for Van's invitation to return with him next fall.



Jonathan Bennett is a graduate of Covenant Theological Seminary and is an associate pastor at New Covenant Church in St. Charles, Missouri

Please Join RITE in Praying for Freedom and Political Stability in Ukraine

I was in Donetsk the first two weeks of February while the protests were going on in Kiev. Donetsk is about 400 miles south of Kiev so it is not a political center. Therefore, it was peaceful and things went on about the same as usual in the teaching session. I was teaching our advanced students part two of a class on Revelation and a class on Medieval Church history.

My teaching partners, Jim Carmichael and Kirk Swanson, taught the newer students. Jim taught a class on Old Testament Wisdom literature and Kirk taught an introduction to Reformed theology. Besides the regular teaching session and the great interaction with our students, one of the new Reformed churches in the Donetsk area held a Reformed theology conference. My two Teaching partners and I spoke at this event. It had a very nice attendance of approximately 100 people. Several local pastors attended and we had the opportunity to visit with them to speak about our seminary.

On the Sunday after the conference, I preached at a church where several of our new students are members. I had a great opportunity to visit with the pastor. He shared with me how his father was the pastor of this church during Communist rule. At

that time it was an underground church. He said the police would come to their home every three or four months, drag his father out of the house, and beat him severely. After his father retired, he took over the pastorate of the church. The church meets in a building that was once a government building. As I and the pastor were walking into the large room they use for worship, he told me that the platform from which I would be preaching was used as a judge's seat in the Soviet Union. It is always inspiring to interact with God's people on the other side of the world who have lived through persecution and hardship and yet maintained, by the grace of God, a trust in our Lord.

Ukraine has been in the news because of the political situation and recent Russian invasion of Crimea. This is certainly a great prayer need. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, there has been a great liberty to teach and preach the gospel in Ukraine.

We ask that you please keep Ukraine and the political upheaval there in prayer: that there would be freedom and political stability, that Russia would not continue to invade the country, and that God would protect his people in Ukraine.

Report from Dr. Van Lees

An Interview With Student Theodore (Fedya) Minakov

Fedya received Christ as his Lord and Savior nine years ago. He had been involved with a gang of punks (his description) who liked to meet to drink beer and smoke cigarettes and marijuana. They would meet in one of the local passageways under Donetsk streets to play their guitars and pander local citizens until they got enough money for beer and a bite to eat.

Travelling to one such meeting, Fedya asked God to change his life. "I cannot stop what I am doing by myself," he prayed. But nothing happened. A few weeks following his prayer, two Protestant missionaries spoke to the gang. Then after another few weeks had passed, another Christian spoke to him at a construction site where he was working as a welder. The gospel was held out to Fedya. He was told about Christ's life and the miracles He is working even today, such as bringing new life to sinners. A nearby church soon invited him to come to their worship service. A man whose apartment was close to his then came over for tea and cookies. They had a long conversation following which Fedya received Christ.

Fedya has been involved in RITE courses since 2008. He learned about the seminary from Valery, then a student at RITE, and now a pastor in Donetsk. While a student at RITE, Fedya learned that the Donetsk Christian University was going to stop offering their Bachelor of Theology degree. In his desire to become a seminary professor, Fedya decided to leave RITE for a season in order to earn that degree while it was being

offered at DCU. He received his ThB in three years' time and is now back at RITE seeking our degrees and studying the Reformed faith which he hopes to teach one day. He says our seminary teaches the best synthesis of the doctrine found in the Bible, and Jesus Christ's gospel, both of which are very important to him. Fedya desires to continue his studies in America or Europe following his time at RITE. He is praying for the funds and a Ukrainian visa which will allow him to continue his education.

Three years ago, Fedya married Luba, a woman in their church he had known for years. They have a daughter, Sophia, 19 months old, and a son, Daniel, 11, from Luba's former marriage.

Fedya is also very capable in the English language. He has substituted for Natasha and Yana occasionally in the classroom when the need has arisen. He has

also accompanied RITE professors in their visits to churches in the Donetsk region to help translate.



Fedya with daughter, Sophia, and RITE professors Richard Blauw and Bob Beasley in one of the many Donetsk parks

Special Prayer Request Bulletin from the Reformed Seminary in Donetsk, Ukraine

We have had special prayer requests from those who are in the Reformed Seminary in Ukraine and those who are fervently working on this side of the world to keep it going in these turbulent times.

Professors that were going to go in April, May and June have wisely cancelled their trips.



Natasha asked that we please pray for the coming classes which will be taught by Eugene, a graduating student and by Sasha, the dean of students. They will also D.V. be studying some of R.C. Sproul's lectures which have been translated into Russian as well as those from Richard Pratt. We are also looking into using cloud technology for real time classes. Natasha asked for prayer 'for peace in our land, for peace in our minds'. She says they are doing well, and physically they feel safe at present but mentally and emotionally they are drained.



Pastor Eugene, our student asked us to 'please pray for the churches here, especially in the Donetsk region. That the people will seek spiritual wisdom and think more about God's kingdom than the situation here. Please pray that the people will not forget that they are God's representatives and that they will share the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ with others. Pray that evil will be suppressed. He also asked for prayer as he is going to teach one of the beginner classes for the very first time.



Also, our president of RITE U.S. **Dr. Merle Messer** asked us to pray for him especially. If ever he has needed wisdom, it is now. To make the wisest decisions, not based on feeling but what is best is a great responsibility. Pray that Dr. Messer will be able to assess the situation correctly and be able to describe it to the board accurately and together make decisions for our staff and students at the seminary.

We pray that the Christians will feel God's nearness in these trying times.



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, mitten, 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 neighbors 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

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 \$100 a month, you can fund a student's monthly stipend.

Level 2

For \$120 a month, you can fund a student's monthly stipend and cover their transportation, food and lodging for a month.

Level 3

For \$200 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 below

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:

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Please make cheques payable to RITE CANADA.

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100% of all contributions go directly to support the seminary in Donetsk, Ukraine .