

## Seven People In A One Room Apartment

Today I see Olga on Skype. She is smiling when she sees us. She says she is amazed that God has sustained her with a cheerful attitude during these chaotic times. I see all the seven people who are in her one room apartment which includes a small kitchen. I ask her where they all sleep. She shows me. Two sleep on the sofa which is in the kitchen, - Mom, (Natasha) and Eugene. The small table is moved aside, and the stools are stacked on top in order to have room for a blow up mattress on the floor. Anatoliy (our student) sleeps on the floor. Wall to wall, there is just no more space

In the living room/bedroom/office/ or shall we say 'the everything room', the sofa is pulled out and three more are sleeping - Olga's aunt and daughter and her aunt's mother. There is just enough room for one more mattress on the floor and that is where Olga sleeps.

No privacy, no comments of "I need my space", - no room for anything extra.

Everyone needs to get up at the same time in the morning. The niece needs to go to school and Olga has to go to work at the International School in Kiev and they need the kitchen to make food. They eat in shifts. Olga's mom and aunt spend the day cooking with some of the food that Anatoliy receives because he preaches in different places. Anatoliy has had one small pension cheque since March.

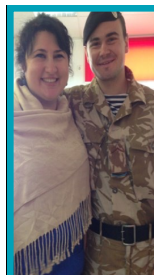
Day in, day out, they are rubbing shoulders with each other, trying to step out of each other's way.

**Winter is coming** and the 6 guests do not have appropriate clothing for the harsh cold. There is still no chance of going home. **How long Lord?**

Eugene, Olga's favourite and only brother, is a volunteer in the Donbass battalion. A day before he had to fight, a business man gave him a bullet proof vest, because he didn't have one... The next day all he could do was thank and praise the Lord for his goodness and his mercy with having provided him with this vest. Eugene received a bullet right at his chest but the vest stopped it, leaving a big red mark near his heart.

Olga had emailed me yesterday that they had received 2 boxes from a lady named 'Annie Kok' from Strathroy, Ont. They were so very, very thankful. They are looking for some things for Olga's mom for the winter. When they had left their homes, they took only what they could. Unfortunately, the clothes were too big and the shoes were too small. We told her that more boxes were on the way so hopefully she would have more success with the next box.

This story can be repeated over and over again. All our students have been disrupted from their homes. Most of



**Our student Anatoliy's only son Eugene, was shot last week. In the providence of God, the day before he received a bullet proof vest from a business man, which saved his life. The bullet was wedged in the vest, right at the heart. We are all so thankful!**

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them are longing to go back but can't. They miss the seminary, they miss the fellow students, they miss the studies, they miss the visiting professors from overseas. They wonder if their homes are still standing and whether their belongings are still there.

Sergei, Natasha and their two girls, Yasya and Ayona, have had to move from Donetsk to Kiev. The rents jumped sky high when the refugees starting coming in to that city so they have ended up in an old apartment. Sergei's business in Donetsk is closed. He is trying to start something in Kiev but it will take time. Ayona cannot continue her extensive training in the Olympics School in Kiev. It too closed down. Hopes for Ayona achieving her goals, which she was so close to, are really gone. Yasya will complete the university but it is not what they thought it would be. The changes are monumental and difficult to deal with. As soon as neighbours see that you have moved out for a period of time, the chances of getting broken in are very high. Everything that our students have worked

hard for is in danger of being destroyed.

Pastor Eugene and his family long to go back to their home. Their home is in Makeevka where the seminary is. It is very close to Donetsk. We are thankful to God that the seminary is safe. Right now we have a Christian refugee living in the building, which is good. At least it doesn't look abandoned.

Our students and their families have to deal with hardships, disappointments, lost businesses, family separations, loss of work, scattered congregations and disrupted studies. Some have parents who did not want to leave Donetsk. Some areas have not had food on the shelves for months and the home pantry has been exhausted. Water is scarce. And...Winter is coming.

Still, their comfort comes from the Lord. They are grateful for the prayers of the Christians overseas. They feel the love pouring from the saints around the world.

## Some Areas Have Not Had Food On the Shelves For Months

It is hard to give updates on what RITE is doing in Donetsk because circumstances are constantly changing. Here is what we know for sure: We are paying all of our students their stipends and salaried persons their regular salaries. Not to do so would be unthinkable! RITE has not even discussed stopping any of these expenses. Of course we are also continuing to pay off the mortgage on our building plus whatever other expenses that come up.

Dr. Merle Messer is continuously in touch with our beloved Natasha, trying to see what we can do in this situation and looking at different options as to a temporary place for classes. Natasha is doing all the finances and bookwork from Kiev. She is wiring all the students their stipends. She is their encourager and listening ear. Right now it is a lifeline for them. Natasha said "One of our new students who has two sets of twins, called me with such gratitude and tears in her eyes. She said almost the same thing that all our students have said since they have lost all means of support. In such a difficult time, this stipend is so important, and we thank the professors and supporters for their help."

The students miss each other. We have no idea at this time when we will resume classes but we are ready! We trust that the Lord will continue to lead.

Our second most asked question is "What can we do to help?" We are sending every donation in as we get it for the seminary and the students. It is a huge encouragement for our brothers and sisters in Christ. They know that we haven't forgotten them.

What will happen? Only God knows.

Let us continue to support our students and their families, the staff of the seminary with our prayers and especially for Natasha and Sergei and their family who have taken on the task of running the seminary in spite of all the obstacles they need to overcome.

If the Lord gives you a desire to help financially, we urge you to do so. Charitable receipts will be issued for donations over \$20.00.

## The Uncertainty Continues as Does RITE's Support for Students

I once read a story where a person was asked his normal posture while praying. The reply did not answer the question, but was still interesting. The man said the most fervent prayer he ever uttered was standing on his head. He had fallen head-first into a shallow well and was stuck upside down. Well, if any of us did the same thing we would no doubt pray very hard too! Probably even an atheist would pray under those circumstances. I assume that our seminary students in Ukraine have prayed with more fervency in the past few months than ever before.

There have been many times that I have sat down to try give everyone an update on what RITE is doing in Donetsk, but have not done so because circumstances are so constantly changing.

Here is what we know for sure: We are paying all of our students their stipends and salaried person their regular salaries. Not to do so would be unthinkable! RITE has not even discussed stopping any of these expenses. We are also paying the rent on the professors' apartment in

Donetsk because rentals are hard to find, plus we are getting this one at a reduced rate. We are also continuing to pay off the mortgage on our building.

Our last English speaking person in Donetsk left Tuesday, August 19. Pastor Eugene of Light of Resurrection church, one of our graduate students, stayed with his church until he and his family could no longer cope. They had been spending quite a bit of time in the bomb shelter in the basement of their apartment building as artillery shells were exploding and gunfire could be heard. His wife, Olga, our seminary cook and their two small children left with him. Our cook for the professors, Yana's mother, Tanya, is still in Donetsk. Sasha, one of our graduates and Dean of Students may still be in the hotbed of fighting in Luhansk. Natasha is wiring the money to each person and for the monthly mortgage on our building. It is not the easiest way to do it and it is somewhat time consuming, but she is keeping up with it.

Sasha and Eugene are two students who teach for RITE and we have a few more students who may be able to teach some classes in the future. We will be counting on these men and hopefully a few more when classes resume. Now for the future: When the fighting stops and public

transportation is operational, we will resume classes. Having said that, here are a few things we will have to consider. If our building is not damaged, or not damaged too badly, we will use it as we have in the past. Having our own dormitory will eliminate problems of housing for our students. If the building is destroyed, we have an offer from a church west of Donetsk that is large enough to hold our classes. They also have a place for the professors to stay as well as some dormitory space. This church has planted 12 other churches in their city and the pastor wants those 12 pastors to attend our classes alongside our regular students. We will continue with our plans to do some real time teaching from the US and Canada using an Adobe Web-hosting service. That should help get classes up and running smoothly and will represent a step forward for RITE.

We are very proud of how everyone is conducting themselves in view of the terrible conflict. Our students in the western areas are housing students from the east and helping in many other ways. If I can answer any questions, or supply any additional information, please feel free to contact me at any time of the day or night. Merle Messer - merle.messer@yahoo.com 601-573-8973.

## An Interview with Natasha Borodavkina

When Natasha's pastor announced in church that there was an opportunity to attend RITE seminary, her husband immediately spoke up for her. "She'll go!" he said. Laughing at the memory, Natasha agreed that her husband knows her well and knew she would love seminary. Although she studied the Bible at church and on her own, she realized she needed a systematic approach. She hopes the training will make her more effective when sharing the gospel and teaching others, which is her primary objective. At the time of this interview in May, Natasha was teaching Sunday school to children in her home church in Makeevka. She also may use her seminary training in support of her husband's ministry of rehabilitation for those struggling with alcohol and drug addiction.

When Natasha became a Christian at the age of 29, she already had one set of twins (now she has two). She was unmarried, and was working as a sales assistant in a local store. A certain customer kept coming back to her counter, and one day he asked her, "Where would you go if you died today?" Her thoughts were that there is one trunk of the tree with many branches, and everyone is basically good, so you just try not to do bad things and it will all work out in the end. He listened, and then shared the gospel with her. It was a real turning point in her life. Natasha realized that Christ died for her personally. She then thought about attending a church, but was overcome by her own

sinfulness and couldn't imagine that any church would want her. In the meantime, the customer, (her husband-to-be), was working up the courage to ask her to attend his church. When he finally asked, and she went, she said it was like a breath of fresh oxygen. She felt like the preacher was speaking directly to her, describing her life. She committed her life to Christ, and hasn't looked back. Now, almost seven years later, Natasha is married with two sets of twins: two boys who are 13 years old and two girls 5 years old. She is thankful she can bring them up in a Christian home, rather than a non-Christian home like the one in which she was raised. She wants to develop a children's ministry teaching Reformed theology. In class at RITE, Natasha is serious and focused. But her eyes sparkle and she smiles when she talks about her love of teaching children.

NOTE: Since this interview in May, we have learned that Natasha and her family have left Makeevka and are staying with relatives in Kirovograd in central Ukraine. Our administrator, Natasha, adds that "Natasha called me with such gratitude and tears in her eyes. She said almost the same thing all our students have said that since the refugees have lost all means of support, 'In such a difficult time, this stipend is so important, and we thank the professors and supporters for their help.'"

**Please Remember to Pray!** The ways of God are, of course, past finding out. We have no way of knowing His plans for Eastern Ukraine. But we do know that God answers prayer, and so we covet your constant prayers for the region's stability, the safety of our students and employees, and for our ability to launch the planned long-distance learning program, if necessary. We ask God that we be allowed to continue RITE's ministry unabated for many years to come.

## 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. We are now collecting **nickels, dimes and all change**.

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](mailto: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:

**RITE Canada**  
C/O Rev. Hank Vanderwoerd  
1100 - 40 Ave N  
Lethbridge, AB  
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Please make cheques payable to RITE CANADA.

RITE CANADA is a 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 .