



(RITE - CANADA)

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Does God Truly Lead His People?

Dear Friends:

I know that everyone involved with the RITE Seminary in Donetsk can answer "Yes" to that question. God truly does lead His people. When Russia invaded Crimea, RITE immediately started to make plans on how we would continue to operate in Donetsk. We had several ideas that we could have quickly put in place as conditions changed. Well, our board never had an opportunity to decide which plan to use, as most of our staff and students were suddenly driven from their homes and forced to relocate in the west.

The war in the east of the country has been tragic, but by God's grace, we resumed classes in March in a new venue just southeast of Kiev. A few of our students could not get their paperwork done in time to leave the Luhans'k and Donetsk regions to come to Kiev, but they are re-applying and we hope to see them in our April classes. The important thing is that RITE is back in operation and many students have returned. In fact, this fall we hope to accept new students from this central

region. Our relocation has been complex and beyond our human ability to achieve, but our Lord has perfectly orchestrated the vast number of details. He is using RITE to further His plans for Ukraine, and that has been so encouraging. God has truly led His people, and we are confident that He will continue to lead us.

Our hearts break for those who have been forced to leave their homes in the east and have been required to find new places to stay and new work to do. We will continue to help them in every way possible, such as we have continued to pay salaries and stipends all during this past year. The testimonies of those we have continued to help are very gratifying. Of course, we thank everyone of you for your prayers and for your financial support. Please let us know if you need more information.

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Left:
The Students
gather for a
photo op in the
classroom

Right:
The resort east
of Kiev with it's
many pine trees

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Classes Resume in Kiev, Ukraine

In March, 2015 we resumed our seminary classes in Kiev, Ukraine. The recent political turmoil and Russian invasion in eastern Ukraine has caused almost all our students to flee the east and live as refugees in various parts of western Ukraine. Because of this, we had to suspend classes until now. As is our practice, we paid for our students to travel to Kiev although some are living there. They were all thrilled to be back in class and learning once again. Bob Beasley and I were there together as teaching partners. Natasha Seleznova, our administrator and main translator, was able to secure a very nice meeting place for us. It is a resort just outside of Kiev. It has dorm rooms, classrooms, and they supplied meals for our students. Besides being practical, it is a very pretty setting with pine trees and the river close behind the facilities.

It was very inspiring to see the attitude and perspective of our Ukrainian students. They almost are all displaced from their homes. They had to leave behind most of whatever meager possessions they had, and there is very little work for them in western Ukraine because there are so many refugees from the east. For example, one of our students, Natasha, who has two sets of twins, (boys who are 14 and girls who are 6), told the story of a harrowing experience as she left Donetsk. She and her family were at the train station about to leave Donetsk and mortar shells began to fall in the area. She thought they were going to be killed at any moment. She got on a train car, but it took over an hour for an engine to be attached to it. While they were waiting, there were bombs dropping around them. We heard other similar stories. However, in spite of these experiences and the difficulty of living as refugees, they are joyful, laughing, and trusting God in the midst of these problems. Of course, we tried to be an encouragement to them in any way we could. However, my sense was that they were an encouragement to us as we saw their expression of faith and trust in God.

I taught two classes in church history. With our Bachelor of Divinity students I, I taught early Medieval Church history, starting with Augustine and going up to around A. D. 900. We examined the events in Western and Eastern Christianity and the rise of Islam. With our Bachelor of Divinity students II and Master's degree students, I taught later Medieval Church history. We looked at the issues leading up to the schism between Western and Eastern Christianity, the development of the universities in the West, and the scholastic theology of the late Middle Ages. Even though these were the topics, there were lots of questions about Christian ethics and the Christian's relationship to the state. These questions were naturally generated from their current political struggles. We had some good biblical discussion on those issues. Bob taught Hebrews to the lower class, and a class on the Christian's Relationship to God's Law in the upper division.

In Acts 8, when persecution began against the Church, the Christians in Jerusalem were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Acts 8:4 states, "Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word." The situation of our students in Ukraine is similar to this. They are all involved in churches in various areas in western Ukraine. They are not only presenting theology they have learned in our seminary, but they are also recruiting new students for our school. Therefore, the political turmoil in eastern Ukraine has resulted in the spread of Reformed theology in other parts of Ukraine.

We are pleased that we are resuming classes and the teaching ministry in the country. We are also grateful for the continued prayer and financial support of our friends who have made this ministry possible and who have helped our students during this difficult time for them.



Van Serenading the Students with His Brilliant Alto Sax Jazz Renditions



The Ukraine WWII Memorial Towers Above Kiev

Three Students Describe Leaving Donetsk

Fedor: In April or May of last year, a series of general meetings began to take place in Donetsk's Lenin Square. Large crowds from the Russian and Ukrainian sides gathered, separated by police. Everyone carried flags and posters expressing their views. I was there with a group supporting peace, to pray for peace. The first gathering was peaceful, but the second gathering was more emotional. The Russian sympathizers began to throw eggs and flour, and then switched to stones. It became dangerous. We tried to ask the Russian supporters to allow us to pray for them, but they became angry and shoved us away. Then it became very dangerous and some people were killed.

I saw many military trucks and cars in Donetsk about this same time. They had no license plates and were so obviously from Russia. I personally saw separatists selling armaments like grenades and other weapons. I saw lots of rifles. Soon, the separatists captured Donetsk Christian University and kicked everyone there out. Things got even worse.

I was with many Christians who prayed every day down by the river. The Russian sympathizers grabbed a Greek Orthodox pastor and took him away. They beat him so severely that he required hospitalization. Then the conflict really exploded. The separatists tried to capture the airport and were met by Ukrainian forces who killed many. There was so much blood. I thought it would all end quickly, but it has not.

That same day, my wife, Luba, was near the airport and saw many missiles and heard loud explosions. She was 7 months pregnant at the time. So we knew we had to leave Donetsk. We moved to Mykolaiv, a city near Odessa, to begin living with relatives. We had only one small room, so my oldest son, David, had to live elsewhere. We are now together in a three room apartment with my grandmother. I found part-time work as an accountant for a food distributor, so that has been helpful.

Eugene: My wife, Yana, and I left Donetsk 8 months ago and moved to Dnepropetrovsk (Dnieper), about 8 hours by train south of Kiev. Many refugees from Donetsk have moved there. It had become very difficult in Donetsk. Christians were under attack and suffered other pressures there. The Russian army, I witnessed them personally, had come in and we were afraid. As a young man, I was fearful of being abducted and forced to work for the Russians or the insurgents. Of course, I didn't want that. So we decided to run. It was dangerous for everyone and particularly young men.

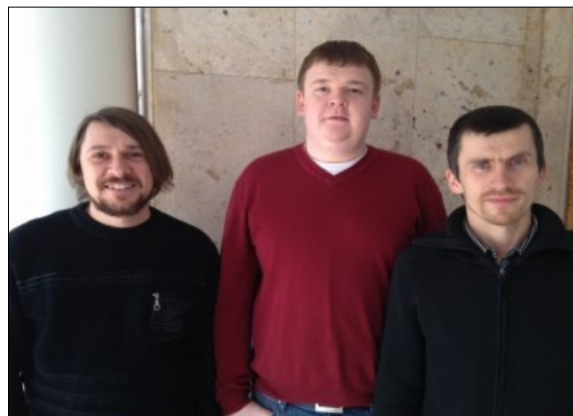
A few months ago I got a call that charged me of being against the Orthodox Church and that I was raising money for the Ukrainian army. Of course it was a lie. The voice sounded familiar, but I didn't recognize it. He threatened to kill me. He was very harsh. "I will find you and I will kill you. I know where you live," he said. He told me my street ad-

dress and everything! He threatened my family! I called my mother and father who were still in Donetsk and begged them to join us in the west. They eventually did. My sister still lives there, however.

Yana and I have been active in several ministries in Dnieper. We are helping two days a week in an orphanage, and help other families with small children. I am also serving in a large church there, assisting the pastor, teaching Bible studies, and working with the youth group. I see my life serving God and only pray that He will use me, wherever He wants me.

Sasha: I am married with two boys, 9 and 7. We lived in Donetsk even after the war had begun. We didn't think about leaving the city until bombs began to explode near our home. So we moved in with my mother, whose house was still in the war zone but further away. But after a while the war came close to us again. We knew we had to move. We had a large tent which we took into a forest some miles away to the west. But soon, cold weather arrived and we knew we couldn't stay there. So I called friends and after one short stop, we moved into Poltava, which is just a few hours south of Kiev. Our friends in Poltava are also students at RITE seminary. They found a house for us there.

We have had many problems but friends in Poltava and Canada have helped us with clothes and money. In this situation I have seen many Christians helping Ukrainian Christians, and it has confirmed my faith. I never before saw so many people who were willing to help us. My mother is still in Donetsk. We have invited her to come live with us but she won't leave, particularly when the war quieted down. I want to thank the Christians in other countries who are helping us and praying for us. They have been a great encouragement.



(left to right)

Fedor,
Eugene
and
Sasha

Please Remember to Pray

The ways of God are, of course, past finding out. We cannot know His plans for Eastern Ukraine. But we do know that God answers prayer, and so we covet your constant prayers for Ukrainian stability, the safety and prosperity of our students and staff, and for those still in Donetsk to be able to come to future classes in Kiev. We ask God that we be allowed to continue RITE's ministry unabated for many years to come, wherever He leads us.

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

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,

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 .