

**(RITE - CANADA)**

A Seminary In Exile

Dear Friends,

A new term is being used in Ukraine: "Seminary in Exile." The Reformed International Seminary of Donetsk has been known as a seminary that served churches, pastors and teachers in the eastern regions of Ukraine. As most of you know, that suddenly changed this past year. A Ukrainian pastor in Kiev, Ukraine's capital, has been referring to our seminary as a Seminary in Exile. That title fits us quite well.

Due to the invasion and its massive destruction of property and untold numbers of lost lives, Ukrainians living in eastern Ukraine were forced to leave their homes. Now, even Ukrainians cannot return to or leave that area unless they have special papers allowing them to do so. No American or Canadian can enter the war zone either. To continue teaching our students, we resumed classes just outside of Kiev earlier this year.

Our student body has changed considerably. Instead of almost exclusively educating students from eastern Ukraine, we now have them from many diverse areas of the country. I will be teaching there the first two weeks of October and I plan on investigating just how these new students heard of us. We have fifteen new students which I believe is the most new students we have accepted at one time since we opened our doors. They come from areas like Odessa, which is a resort area and port city, to small villages scattered over a very large area of Ukraine. I am sorry that even though I can pronounce some of the cities, I cannot spell them accurately.

Many of our students, even though they have escaped the terrible fighting, are continuing quite well. Many of them had to leave everything behind, including their homes or apartments and could only take what they could carry. They had to take public transportation, so clothes and small articles were about all they could take with them. Classes are continuing the same as before even though our students, translators, and administrator have lost much of what they had now that they are living in exile.

Of course, we had to abandon our classroom and dormitory space in the east, so we are now renting a facility. Our costs are going up considerably which means that we are in need of additional financial help from our friends. We must now pay rent, plus the living costs of our students are much greater than they had been. We have not increased our stipends or salaries yet, but we will be forced to do so soon. Now, when I say forced, I do not mean we don't want to do it, but we must do what is needed. Yet we cannot do so without having the money in hand.

If anyone reading this can help financially, it will be greatly appreciated. If you can help raise some funds by speaking to friends or to your church, that would also be very helpful. RITE does not employ anyone to raise support, but we all contribute as we can. Please keep in mind that 100% of all funds donated go directly to the support of our seminary in Ukraine. If any of us can help you in any way, please feel free to contact us at any time. Many thanks in advance.

In His service,
Dr. Merle A. Messer
President, RITE USA

IN THIS ISSUE:

Page 1	A Seminary In Exile
Page 2	A Mission Trip Report
Page 2	An Interview with Valdimir
Page 3	Teaching Report by Dr. VanLees
Page 4	Ways In Which You Can Help

A Mission Trip Report

After two years, what a joy it was to be back with our students on Ukrainian soil in September, this time accompanied by Richard Blauw and Mitchell Persaud, two seasoned professors. This year, my task was to teach the newer students the first section of the Doctrine of God and the advanced students a detailed view on the Doctrine of Justification with a focused Reformed response to what is today referred to as “the New Perspective on Paul.”

For those who have not seen the new location, it is a beautiful place out in the countryside and surrounded by woodland. The professor’s apartment is on the “Left Bank” (sorry, that gave me no end of entertainment!) and has good access to central Kiev by way of their subway system. Natasha has outdone herself in finding our accommodations while we are yet a “Seminary in Exile” as the Reformed church in Kiev refers to us. It is my hope that as we continue to develop our presence in that region and that the influence of the Reformed church in Kiev and its surrounding regions will blossom.

One of the great joys for me was in the discovery of unintended consequences (at least unintended from our

limited, human perspective — God’s governance of our lives through his providence never ceases to amaze me!). When we operated out of Donetsk, our influence extended primarily within eastern Ukraine with a limited influence in some of the central regions like Poltava.

With the war and subsequent flight of our students, something beautiful happened in the midst of that great tragedy. Our students fled to places all over Ukraine—landing wherever they could find lodging. Yet, when our students arrived in these new places, they started telling others about our seminary and the word spread. Today, our seminary draws students not only from the eastern regions of Ukraine, but from all over. We have students there from as far as Odessa and Lviv. May this stand as a constant reminder to us that God has his hands upon the labors he has privileged us with. It is humbling to see his hand at work like this and in many ways, this reminded me of the early church being scattered from Jerusalem due to persecution and telling all about the good news of Jesus Christ.

Pastor Win Groseclose



(Far Left) Professors Persaud, Groseclose, and Blauw with Anton

(Left) Students and Professors gather for a shady picnic

An Interview with Valdimir: From Gang Member to Seminary Student



My name is Vladimir. I came to know the Lord in 2000. I come from a large family of two sisters and three brothers. I am the oldest. My journey to the Lord all began when the mines in the Donbass region were closed in 1993. My salary working in the mines was 20,000 grievnas per year. At that time, I was contacted by some men who were apparently in some sort of gang. We had a

conversation in their car for about two hours, after which they gave me 150,000 grievnas, which was seven-and-a-half times my annual pay in the mines. So I asked them to take me into the gang, and they accepted me. This is how I lived until the year 2000.

Then it looked like it would be only a short time before I was either going to be killed or face a jail sentence. It was at that time that I repented and came to the Lord. I left the gang, which by that time had been reduced to only two members.

The first Christian words I heard were reassuring. They told me that all would be made right by God. So I joined them in their church in Makeevka. But the first several years were very difficult. I didn’t have a passport for four years, and without a passport it is impossible to be employed. Additionally, I had lots of debt that I couldn’t repay. But my Christian friends kept telling me that all would be made

right. God will solve everything. And somehow, God did change everything. He spoke to me and encouraged me that He would solve all my problems of my previous life. I don't know how He did it, but I soon got a new passport and all my former debts just went away miraculously.

After three years, God gave me a wonderful woman to be my wife. I was skeptical when He seemed to say, "This is the woman for you," because she already had two children. I thought it would be very difficult to be a father. But I obeyed the Lord and got married to Asana and I am so happy that I did. My wife and I now have a wonderful six year old son of our own, and parenting has been a joy. I came to the seminary in Makeevka at the invitation of my pastor there. But when the war came, we had to leave the area and come west to settle in Dnepropetrovsk, on the Dnieper river south and east of Kiev.

One day in the city, I went to buy bread and ran into a man

who was a pastor. We spoke for a while and he invited me to come to his church. Soon, we began to serve together, with me serving as his assistant. We began a ministry helping other families coming from the war zone. We also help Ukrainian soldiers fighting in the war effort. I believe, at least for the present time, my ministry will be to learn as much as I can here at RITE Seminary and help my pastor as much as possible with the ministry of the church. Of course, we all hope to go back to the Donbass region, to our home churches, but meanwhile, we will serve the Lord where He has planted us.

I want to thank all those who have helped RITE financially. To be able to still receive our stipends, even when the seminary was not operating for a year, was life saving for us. We are very thankful for all the people in the US and Canada who helped and are helping us.

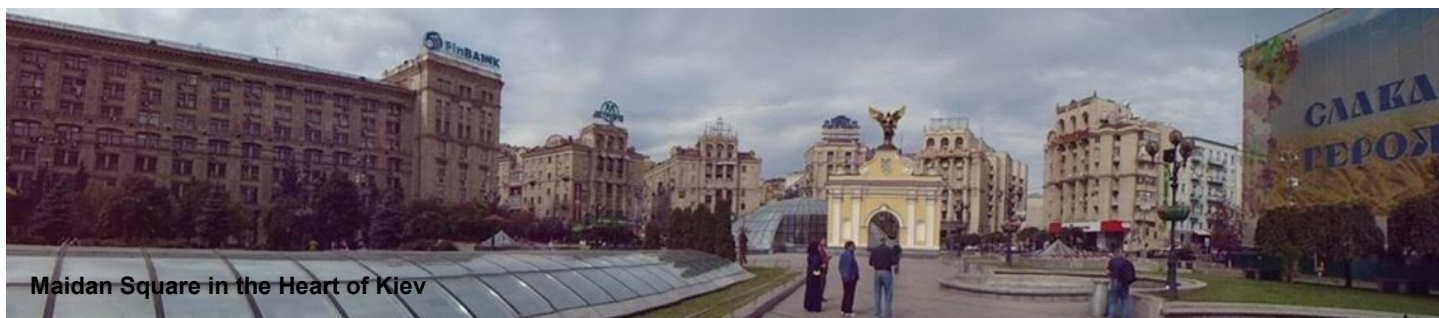
This interview was conducted by Bob Beasley in Kiev in May 2015 with translation by student Fedor Minakov.

Teaching Report by Dr. Van Lees

In June, I was back in Ukraine for my thirty-fifth teaching trip there. As always it was great to be with our students again. Even with all the political chaos in eastern Ukraine, they are joyful and eager to learn. My teaching partner, Kirk Swanson and I taught a class together on apologetics. I went through the more philosophical aspects of the defense of the faith and Kirk did an exposition of various fulfilled prophecies in the Old Testament. We have observed through the years that our students usually need extra help in learning to structure sermons and preach expositionally. Therefore, in this class we assigned a different prophecy to each student and ask them to prepare an exposition of it. The men prepared sermons and the women put women's Bible studies together. Part of our teaching time was devoted to how to outline and structure these sermons and Bible lessons. In the second week, each student presented their short sermon or study to the class. We were very pleased to see how the students have been growing in their preaching and teaching skills. On our last teaching day, we threw a nice picnic for all our students. The place where we are meeting now has some pavilions barbeque pits in a nice park-like area behind it. Sergei and Natasha, purchased meat and Natasha arranged with the cooks to prepare vegetable and salad dishes. Some of the men did the cooking and we had a nice fellowship time together the last afternoon we were



there. In Acts 8, when persecution began against the early church, many of the Christian in Jerusalem were scattered throughout the region. Acts 8:4 states: "Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word." This has occurred with our students. They had to flee from the war-torn areas in the east but they are getting opportunities to preach and teach in their new churches in western Ukraine. This September we have fourteen new students from some of these churches. These are areas where we haven't reached before so God is providentially using the political situation to further Reformed theology in Ukraine. However, we continue to ask for prayer for peace and stability in eastern Ukraine.



Maidan Square in the Heart of Kiev

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 that has relocated to Kiev. 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
PO Box 3244
Leduc, AB
T9E 6M1

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.