



(RITE - CANADA)

VOLUME 5, NO 2

JUNE 2015

A World of Contrasting Change

Dear Friends:

My goodness, as I survey the circumstances of our students, administrator and translators in Ukraine how things have changed. Each one of these people have a story to tell and they are all different and newsworthy. (Natasha will tell hers in this issue.) They have experienced, and are experiencing, major upheavals in their lives, and I mean major upheavals.

Yes, some things are the same. Our men are traveling to Ukraine and teaching outside of Kiev rather than in Donetsk. Classes are being held the same as before and the students have the same, or greater, level of interest in what is being taught. For us from the U.S. and Canada things are pretty much the same, just a different location. It is interesting how our Lord works in and

through things. I hope that everyone connected with RITE on this side of the ocean can see real faith at work in so many people. They have worried about where they were going to sleep at night and have been genuinely concerned about their next meal. At times I may think I have problems, but I really don't when I think about those connected in any way with our seminary in Ukraine.

A quick personal note, things have also changed for us. As I write this I am putting the final touches on things in Mississippi. My wife, Donna, and I are both retiring on June 30 and we will leave immediately for Las Cruces, New Mexico to be with our granddaughter who turned one year old this month and to help with our second granddaughter who will be born July 15. My email and phone will remain the same.

A Visiting Professor From South Africa



An Interview with Eric van Alten

The students in May classes were delighted to receive instruction from a new "visiting" professor: Eric van Alten. Eric, who is now president of the MTW/Dutch Reformed Seminary in Kiev., was on hand at the invitation of Canadian pastor and RITE Canada chairman Dick Moes. Bob Beasley sat down with Eric to

find out a little about him, how he came to be permanently in Kiev, and specifically, how he came to teach at RITE.

I was born in South Africa in the Cape Town area. My wife is also from South Africa, from the north of the country. I studied theology in South Africa (at the Free Reformed Church of South Africa). After that I studied theology in the Netherlands where I received a Th.M. at the Reformed Theological University in Kampen. Our Dutch connection comes from our parents, all four of them were born in the Netherlands. They came to South Africa, some earlier than others, met each other there, and got married. So that's our Dutch connection. I was a pastor in Pretoria, S. Africa for about eight years, and then the Dutch churches asked me if I would like to

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work in Ukraine as a teacher in the Presbyterian Church in America Mission to the Word/Dutch Reformed seminary in Kiev. Of course, it was a big step. Ukraine was completely unknown to us. My sister-in-law thought it was somewhere in Africa. My brother thought we were going to Afghanistan. So it was a completely unknown area of the world. But it was because of the Dutch connection that we ended up here in Ukraine.

I have a wonderful wife, Tineke, and we have four kids, three boys and a girl, ranging from eleven to three years old. Of course, for them it has been a big step to adapt. The kids go to an English speaking American school in Kiev. They picked up the English language quite well. They are speaking English fluently now, even correcting us when we speak English. The adjustment has been hardest for my wife. I have my work and the kids go to school from seven in the morning until they get back to the house at four o'clock. So my wife had to find her niche; where could she assist, where could she help, and where she could use her gifts. But I feel now after two years that we feel at home. Every month we progress in this whole process of getting used to the culture, to the language, to the different ways.

The Reformed Seminary in Kiev is a joint effort of The Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) and the Dutch Reformed Church. I've just been appointed the new president. We are a team of four. Clay Quarterman (of the PCA) took on the responsibility of president fifteen years ago and has done it for that length of time. He has done a marvelous job. The position mainly entails responsibility for the running of the seminary. While we do that as a team together, I have the main responsibility. Also I will keep connected with the donors in the States and in the Netherlands or wherever they are, in Ukraine or abroad. That's the main responsibility of the president.

Next Saturday, on the 30th of May, we hope to celebrate

the fifteenth anniversary of the seminary. So since 2000 we've been up and running. The Lord has blessed us through these fifteen years and we hope to slowly transfer the operation of the seminary to our Ukrainian brothers so that they can run it for however long the Lord wants it to continue. For many years we have wanted to build our own building. We bought a small office a few years ago, which of course, helps. It gives us space for our administrative staff and for our library. But at this office there's no space for boarding the students. So what we do is every two months we go out of the city to a sanatorium and have our class sessions there. But if we want to transfer it all to the Ukrainians you have to have some kind of image, some kind of focus on the area in which you plan to operate. In that sense, I think a building is very important. Also, using a sanatorium is not an inexpensive investment. About a third of our budget goes to the cost of renting a sanatorium. If we want to transfer the seminary to Ukrainians, it would help in the transfer process if we could take that cost away.

I got involved in RITE through my predecessor, Jos Colijn, now back in the Netherlands, who had contact with pastor Dick Moes in the past. And so, at a certain stage, Dick emailed me and said that he had heard that I had taken Jos' place. Dick had some questions about English theological books that had been translated into Russian. From there the contact grew, and Dick said, Well, let's get to know each other and see how we can work together. So, there was an immediate connection. Especially since RITE was forced to leave the Donetsk area and come to Kiev, which brought us even closer together. Dick asked if I would be willing to teach. RITE Seminary is now familiar to me. The class setting and the students are comparable to our own seminary. It has been a real privilege to help.

The students are very close to ours and I will pray for them as well.

Natasha Seleznova Describes Leaving Donetsk



RITE's beloved administrator and main translator and her husband Sergei, left the Donetsk region in July 2014 and headed for Kiev to join their daughters. We sat down with Natasha in May to hear their story.

People began leaving Donetsk in April and May of 2014. They had already seen how other families were leaving. They were waiting, hoping that the Ukrainians would take control over Donetsk again, but it didn't happen. There was

heavy fighting going on, especially at the airport. From our top floor apartment we could actually see the fires and smoke rising from the airport. You could also hear all the shooting and fighting at night and early in the morning.

Some buildings in the area had been destroyed. So we first sent our daughters to Kiev in the very beginning of June. Yasya stayed with her friends in Kiev and Alona was staying in the Olympic Village practicing gymnastics. Finally, we decided it was time to leave in the middle of July. We could not stay there. If something happens to us, our daughters are in Kiev, so we just needed to go. The longer we stayed the more difficult it would have been to leave.

We didn't want to leave. We had no desire to leave. We didn't know for how long we would be gone. We didn't know what to take with us, or what to leave behind. So we put some summer clothes for us and more clothes for the girls into the back, got in the car and left. By that time, all the banks in Donetsk were closed. No ATM's were working. So we practically didn't have any cash. We did have our bank cards, so we decided that we would first go to Mariupol, which was the closest Ukrainian city to us, and

there we will deal with those issues like finances and all of that, and then we'll move further on. So, we left. There were certain fears because terrorists already were noted for taking cars from people and giving a hard time to men. They were kidnapping men and making them work. So we decided that I would do the driving. Usually it was the driver who got checked at the checkpoints. So we were praying as we went through a couple of terrorist checkpoints. Praise God that nothing happened to us. They checked our documents. They checked our luggage to see what we were bringing, what we were carrying. Then we went through two or three more Ukrainian checkpoints and we were out of Donetsk.

So it is almost a year since we have left Donetsk. Sergei has been going back once in a while throughout this period to help his elderly parents who have stayed there. He checks on our apartment, and checks on the seminary building in Makeevka. But I have not been back there. So, it

is difficult, especially emotionally. But praise God we are in a safe place now and the seminary is back and operating again. This is a big help, because for a while we were in a state of apathy almost. We didn't know what to do. Sergei could not operate his business. I was involved in some administrative work for the seminary because we were wiring money for the students and employees. But still, it wasn't that much. And with all the thoughts and emotions it was very difficult.

Note: We might add that Sergei spent over a week in Donetsk while we were teaching in May. It seems that our building's roof had developed a leak and he went there to fix it. It took almost the entire time just to find a ladder long enough to reach the roof! Of course, the stores are all closed. But with his brother's help, the ladder was found and the roof has been repaired and the leak fixed. Thanks, Sergei, for your most gracious help.

An Interview with Valery



My name is Valery, and I'm married and I'm fifty years old. I would like to share a little bit of my life, and how I came to know Christ. In 2001, I was addicted to drugs. I had been on drugs for twenty years. A friend came to me and shared the

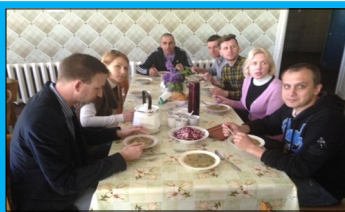
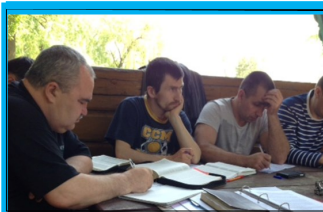
Gospel with me. At that moment, that breath of life was all I had. I didn't have any health or anything. My friend told me, "What do you have to lose? You have nothing to lose! Just give everything you have to Jesus Christ."

Of course, I didn't understand my friend's words. I didn't believe in the living God. But I just followed his advice. I prayed a prayer of repentance from all of my heart, because I really wanted to live. After three days since my repentance, I began to see God in my life. God set me free from the drug addiction from that day on. And, from that day on, God cleaned up my mouth from cursing.

At the time, I had deep wounds in my body that I had had for years. After I said the prayer and repented before the Lord, those wounds were healed in a period of one week. That was a great testimony for me, because I am sure that it was the Lord's work. If someone would tell me this had happened to them, I would never believe it. And so, from

this moment my life began to be filled with God. I have been with the Lord for fourteen years now. I got to know about the seminary from my pastor, and since I really like to study, so without any doubts, I applied to the seminary. I thought, though, that when the war came to the Donbas region I would not be able to study any longer in the seminary. We left Donetsk in 2014 and passed through lots of cities, Mariupol, Mykolaiv, then we went to Odessa and others places. Today, we live in Sergeivka, a small town in the Odessa region.

When I found out that the education at RITE seminary had started again, I was so filled with joy. Today I live with the hope that I will go back to my home church where I am a leader of the home Bible groups. But even now, where we are in Sergeivka, I lead a group of people in a Bible study. I want to share the knowledge I have learned in seminary with these people. Wherever I go I see that Christians believe in a small God. They think that they can lose their salvation. When I see that the truth of the Gospel has been diminished in believer's hearts, I want to share the truth. So wherever I go, I know that God has me right where He wants me to be.



Pictures Left to Right

1. Students studying in an outdoor classroom
2. At lunch in the dining hall
3. Bob Beasley and the newer students

A Giant Purse and Handbag Sale

What a fun project we had this spring to make money for the Seminary! We had a Gigantic Purse and Handbag Sale in St. Thomas, On.

Early in February the idea was born and people started collecting purses for us. All in good condition of course and we received every type of purse, every size and every colour.

One couple brought back 136 purses from Cape Coral, Florida. The ladies there heard about the project and were keen to participate. Amongst them were designer purses (Coach, Prada, etc. which ended up on a separate table for a silent auction. We certainly learned a lot of what is genuine and what is not. (Pict. Thea with 136 purses from Florida)

Purses just kept coming in. From Vienna, VA. and from all over Ontario we collected over 525 purses. Three billboards went up in and around the city, and 30 full colour large posters were hung up in public places. All these were donated.

We had a fun work day where a team came in to clean, sort, price and organize them all. As we cleaned each one, we found all kinds of treasures in the purses. Money, combs, a new roll of peppermints, lipstick, and other small things.

Our whole team got up before 6 am on Saturday, May 30th so that we could have the 525 purses hung up or displayed on tables before 8:00 am in the morning. We were told by the weather man that rain would come at 2:00 pm. Our sale was to end at 1:00 pm. It was a hot sunny morning and we had 13 people helping. We sold over 250 purses. One lady chose a purse to put her dog in and it became a perfect fit so she bought it. I guess he liked it because he was soon drooling contentedly.

That morning we sold for \$2416.50!

It took a quick hour to clean up and some of us were just driving home when the storm hit. Torrential rains poured from the sky and high winds came on so suddenly that had we been caught in it we would not have survived. We were so thankful to God that he made the storm wait until we were done! He heard our prayers.

The Gigantic Purse and Handbag sale actually has 5 stages.

This was the first part of the project.

The second stage was one week later when we took the left over purses to another sale in Mount Brydges, Ontario where we sold for over \$1,800.00!

The third stage was a few weeks later when we sold left overs again at a yard sale where we made another \$375.00.

The fourth stage will be selling certain bags on ebay, (so you can watch out for that.)

The fifth and final part will be when we send what is left over to Ukraine.

The students have already said that they would be willing to distribute them and each purse will contain a small booklet with the gospel message in Russian, as well as some personal items which have all been donated or made.

We had a wonderful, mostly stress free day. What a blessing that we were able to help the seminary in such a fun way. The best news is that Dr. Messer has just informed us that we will probably be able to get some new students, come September.

Thea Van Dixhoorn



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
1100 - 40 Ave N
Lethbridge, AB
T1H 6B7

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.