



A Great Need in a Small Country by Dr. Fritz

Latvians discussing
the lecture

This was my third teaching time at the Baltic Reformed Theological Seminary in Riga, Latvia. I arrived on a Saturday, rested on Sunday and attended the afternoon worship service of the Reformed congregation led by Pastor Ungars. The seminary meets in this same Methodist church facility where the congregation gathers for the Sunday services. The simplicity of the congregational worship time blessed me. A musical ensemble accompanied the beautiful singing of the faithful and the pastor preached a solid sermon challenging the congregation to make sure their faith was centered on the Christ of the Bible and not on a Savior of our own definition.

I went to Riga to teach Church History from the Post Reformation to the present time. As you can imagine, that proved quite challenging but somehow we accomplished this task. I enjoyed connecting again with the two brothers who run the day-to-day operation of the seminary, Artis Celmins and Janis Perkons. Both men assisted in providing instant translation which helped me not to lose teaching time.

There were six students who took the class and an average attendance of five. This time around there were no ministerial students. The class was a Master's level course given to men and women of the two Reformed churches in Riga. The lectures are recorded and downloadable for those who are interested. Since this was my third time in Riga I felt a strong rapport with both the seminary leaders and the students.

It was rather humbling to know that these men and women had worked hard all day yet made it a priority to come to class and follow three hours of lectures five straight days. Their quiet composure and commitment inspired me.

Please keep the Reformed believers in the Baltic republics in your prayers. The reformed community here is quite young and small. Ask the Lord to give folks opportunities to connect with local people and forge friendships that will eventually bring more people to join the churches.



Looking for a Missions Conference

Is your church considering a Missions Conference this year? Could ITEM help with a speaker to open God's Word during the conference? Let us know.

Opportunities to Pray

1. Praise for John Lewis' teaching of "Christian Ethics" at KRBC January 25-29 and for Maurice Sikes who taught on "God and Man" in Romania in January.
2. Praise for the generous General Fund contributions (\$34,041) in December which brought the total General Fund to \$180,693, a 61% increase over 2014. The Lord has overflowed His blessings on ITEM.
3. In February Will Hesterberg will teach at two new locations in Andhra Pradesh, India (Vjayawada and Viskapatname) and Bob Smart will teach at RBI/PCI,R in Manipur.
4. Please pray that the Indian fields will remain open to our teachers in 2016, and that the teachers will encourage and enlighten the students with sound Biblical teaching.



**February -
a Great Time to
Evaluate
&
Re-allocate**

So how did your investments do in 2015? The Dow Jones Stock Index closed at 17,425.03, down almost 400 points from Dec. 31, 2014. There were wild swings throughout the year, from a high of 18,312.39 in May to 15,666.44 in August, dropping over 2,600 points in just three months. What a rollercoaster and not for the faint of heart.

So how did your spiritual investments do in 2015? Did you grow closer to the Lord? Did you grow in your knowledge of Him? In your faith? In your character? In your serving?

The new year is always a good time to look back, assess situations, make adjustments and change directions. Sometimes such analysis calls for changes in allocation of one's God-given resources. Perhaps you've realized that in 2016 you would like to invest more of your resources in areas that yield spiritual dividends instead of material gain.

At ITEM we are also assessing the year from several perspectives. Take the financial perspective. By God's grace and the generosity of His people, the general fund investments grew by 61%. While those numbers are important, they don't tell the whole story. The number of instructors more than doubled from 13 to 28; the number of investors grew from 135 to 161. This doesn't count all the individuals and churches who also gave to instructors directly to get them to the field. Here's even more mind-boggling growth. Twenty-eight instructors multiplied 22 times by teaching over 630 national Christian leaders. Suppose each of those 630 leaders shared what they learned with 22 others. That's over 14,000 in a year or two!

Jesus reminds us that those who invest in Christian ministry such as ITEM have their investments credited to their spiritual account. Matthew 6:20

gives great investment advice, "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal" (and where wild stock market swings do not take your funds). Jesus advised in Luke 16:9, "Use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings." Is it maybe time to re-allocate more God-given resources to the spiritual realm? Maybe to ITEM?



How Do You Move A Library?

In December 2014, Tom Smith and I, Will Hesterberg, visited Dr. Jasmin Milic at Osejek, Croatia, the site of Mikhail Staurin Institute where we will be sending instructors this April to help train pastors for the fledgling Protestant Reformed Christian Church (PRKC). As we asked how we could help, he immediately identified having a library of good reformed books as a priority. Tom and Dr. Joe Hall, former ITEM Board Chairman and longtime Covenant Seminary Librarian began collecting books. They did a great job; we now have over 1200 books ready to ship. But shipping books can be expensive. It's estimated that we may need about \$5,000 to ship the books. Would you like to help with a special gift to the "Croatian Books" designated fund at ITEM? Thank you.

Contributions to ITEM in Canada may be sent to ITEM, Action International Ministries, 3015 A, 21st Street NE, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2E 7T1 and in the U.S. to ITEM, PO Box 31456, St Louis, MO or through paypal at www.ITEM.Org.

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