



NOVEMBER 2016 NEWSLETTER



Meet Miroslavs from Riga

My name is Miroslavs Tumanovskis, and I currently work for the Pardaugava Reformed church plant in Riga, Latvia as part of the leadership team. I am married to Maija and we have three sons – Rinalds (5), Renars (3) and Roberts (5months). I grew up in a non-Christian family, but my parents were related to church at certain stages in life. They made me aware of God’s existence, that God is the judge of all people, and that one day we will have to give an account to Him. During my school years I attended Riga Christian High School, where I learned more about the Bible, God, and Jesus. At age 16, I realized my guilt before God and met a Christian Lutheran pastor who told me the Gospel. It was like finding a long-searched-for medicine!

Some time after becoming a Christian, I realized a desire to speak God’s Word to other people. I remember that during sermons and Christian talks I would think, “I want to try to do this.” So I pursued opportunities to speak and lead Bible studies. Older, more mature Christians thought that I might be gifted for Bible teaching. Their opinion encouraged me to pursue ministry as my main occupation in life.

My current responsibilities involve work with students and my long term vision is that Pardaugava Reformed church proclaims the Gospel to university students. I desire to develop a ministry that is pro-claiming the Gospel clearly, faithfully, and engagingly to students. I realize as well that Christian student involvement is key, so one of my other long-term aims is to train Christian students

in godliness and faith so they can share the Gospel with peers.

I am really grateful to God for the studies that BRTS offers. This seminary offers quality academic theological education beyond comparison in the Baltic States. I hope the studies in BRTS will help me better understand the Bible, theology, and ministry, and become a more intelligent servant of God’s Word to develop student work in Pardaugava Reformed Church.



Unlimited

(part 2)

Mark 5:1-20

**by Will
Hesterberg**

In last month’s newsletter we looked at Jesus’ meeting a demon-possessed man east of the Galilee Sea. We discovered that **there was no place Jesus would not go and no person he would not reach out to**. We met a truly broken, messy man whom everyone feared and avoided, but not Jesus. That’s because, **there’s no power Jesus can’t overcome**. The demons understood that Jesus could destroy them, so they begged for mercy, asking Jesus to send them into a herd of pigs. They knew he was sovereign. Do we know that?

Do we believe that Jesus is greater than the devil or that He can overcome the difficulties of broken people damaged by the devil? Or do we hesitate telling people about Jesus because they have such great problems, and we’re not sure Jesus can reach and change them? Rosario Butterfield was a lesbian professor at Syracuse University. In her book, *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert*, she relates how her desire to write a book discrediting Christianity led her to write a newspaper article about the Promise Keepers

movement. When Ken Smith, a local PCA minister, responded with a gracious reply, she contacted him. She had dinner with the Smiths and became intrigued by them. Over many months as she continued her research, she read the Bible looking for contradictions. She began visiting Smith's church and discovered genuinely loving imperfect people. Over time she found the life-transforming power of Jesus and became a believer.

Do we know anyone who is a mess? Will we introduce them to Jesus and trust him to draw and change them? Will we reach out to people, not rule them out of the kingdom, or consider them beyond Jesus' life-giving and changing power? Next month, we will see **there is no person Jesus can't use in his kingdom work**, including us.

Opportunities to Pray for ITEM

1. Praise God that Debbie Richards is now home, but continue to pray for her long recovery.
2. Praise for Will Hesterberg's vision trip to Indonesia from September 28 through October 8.
3. Praise for Mark Stewart's teaching on Marriage and Family in Bangalore/Chennai, India in October.
4. Praise for Bill Wilton, Tom Smith and Maurice Sikes who led a Preaching Conference in Romania from October 29 to 31.
5. Pray for John Birkett teaching on Biblical Leadership & Church Government in Ukraine and Jacob Bluebaugh in Romania, both November 14-19.
6. Pray for generous prayer and financial support from churches with Thanksgiving offerings and those churches who are preparing their 2017 budgets.



**Learning a New
Way to Preach
in Romania
by Chris Vogel**

In late September I spent a week with a tremendous group of believers in Campina, Romania, teaching Homiletics at Maranatha College, hosted by Maranatha Baptist Church, pastored by Ion Vasile. The students, many of

whom were pastors and lay leaders in the area Baptist churches, were joined by a Brethren, a Pentecostal, and a Presbyterian pastor, all of whom were well equipped with a strong biblical foundation. Those seminary-trained appreciated the review and new insights into sermon prep. The lay leaders, some of whom regularly preach in smaller mission churches, were glad for a better insight into what goes into sermon preparation.

I taught *expository* preaching, i.e. preaching through a text and applying the truths of a specific passage. This is not a common method in Romanian churches, so the class challenged them to view the explication and application of God's Word in a new light. We used Brian Chapell's book, *Christ-Centered Preaching*. They readily recognized the need to see in the text their own sin and how the Gospel answers that need. What was a challenge for them...and for all who preach...was to see how the *fallen condition focus* in the passage would drive them to apply the text to their own hearts and those in their congregations.

On Sunday, October 2nd, I preached in the morning at Maranatha Baptist Church. They followed a typical Romanian Baptist format, beginning at 10am with singing and then prayer until 11am. Then more singing, some announcements and the sermon, which I delivered through a translator. In light of the class just taught and that soon they will host a preaching conference - Christ in the Old Testament, I preached on Judges 3, about Ehud, the left-handed savior, who points us to our Great Savior, Jesus Christ. Then they had their monthly celebration of the Lord's Supper. That afternoon I preached at a small village church planted 20 years ago. This was their thanksgiving service and other area Baptist churches joined them.

As in Ukraine last year, so here, the believers were warm, welcoming, and eager for the Gospel to fill their lives. What a joy and privilege to be a part of their story and see the good news of Christ's death and resurrection permeating their lives.

Contributions to ITEM in Canada may be sent to ITEM, % of Action International Ministries, 3015 A, 21st Street NE, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2E 7T1. In the U.S. to ITEM, PO Box 31456, St Louis, MO 63131 or through PayPal at www.ITEM.org.
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