



JANUARY 2017 NEWSLETTER



November in Romania

by
Jacob Bluebaugh
ITEM Instructor

Since the 1989 Revolution against Nicolae Ceausescu, Romania has struggled for secure footing. Riddled with continued governmental corruption, Romania remains one of the poorest countries in the EU. The Joshua Project reports that 98% of the population claims to be Christian. In reality, less than 5% of the population can be identified as evangelical with the remaining 93% being Eastern Orthodox. (Interestingly, the numerous Orthodox Churches in Campina are prominently featured in the tourist publications.) Consequently, evangelism is hard fought in a region dominated by the Orthodox Church, which opposes evangelicals and labels them as a sect to avoid.

On Friday, November 11, 2016, I embarked on a journey to Campina, Romania, on behalf of ITEM in order to teach a weeklong class on Biblical Leadership to a group of pastors, elders, and laymen at Maranatha Baptist Church. I was warmly received in their homes and churches and experienced tremendous Christian hospitality from all I came in contact with.

During the course, the men were led in a comprehensive study of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 2 to develop a biblical foundation for proper church leadership. The brothers asked excellent questions about issues they face in their churches. Together for only a short time, we experienced a genuine bond of Christian brotherhood. The class ended with many warm embraces and prayers for God's blessing on their continued church work.

Pray for our Romanian brothers as they face pressure from the Orthodox Church and combat a waning interest in Christianity.

Opportunities to Pray for ITEM

1. Praise for the seminary library books arriving safely in Croatia.
2. Pray for Fritz Harms teaching Reformation Church History in Latvia, for Steve Lucas teaching Romans in Romania, and John Lewis teaching Missions and Evangelism in Ukraine.
3. Pray for Will Hesterberg and Mike McLaughlin teaching Genesis and Romans in the possible new field of Kenya in early February.
4. Pray for the doors to remain open in India.
5. Praise God for the many churches and individuals who invested so generously in ITEM in December.

ITEM's mission is to train national Christian leaders in their own context. National Christian leaders remain the focus of our work. Regularly you meet our instructors, like Jacob Bluebaugh, through their reports. And you meet national Christian leaders through our "Meet..." column.

"Meet... Andis Miezītis"

ITEM Student in
Latvia



I came to know Jesus my second year of law school. From the very early years of my childhood I grew up with a general belief in God thanks to my granny. However, things changed when I reached my teenage years and rebellion kicked in much more visibly than before. But praise God that He brought me to life through faith in the Lord Jesus. Gradually as I sat under faithful preaching and teaching of the Word, God revealed how Jesus had taken all my sin and its punishment as He died in

my place so I can be forgiven, cleansed and accepted by God. Through his resurrection I can have a certain hope of an eternal, imperishable inheritance.

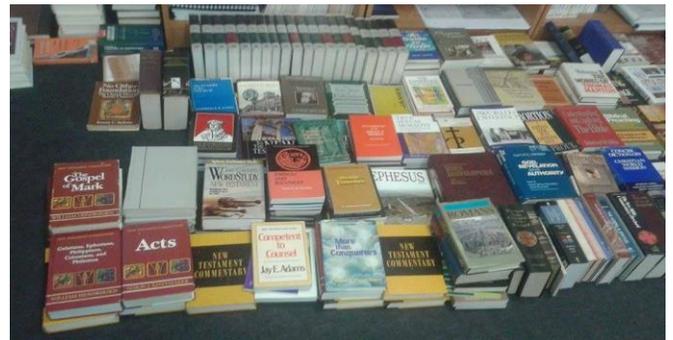
During my student years I was involved in the youth ministry in my local church (Baptist). I sensed God guiding me to consider full time ministry. At first it was more of an inner urge. I realized that I also needed confirmation from the leaders of my local church. After I received that confirmation, the next pressing question was where to train for the task that the Lord had called me to do. Together with my wife, I did a two-year full-time training program in St. Helen's Bishopgate Church in London. That program focused on equipping individuals with the skills to understand and teach the Bible in various settings, so we could be confident that God speaks and works by his Spirit through His Word as the Bible is taught faithfully.

After a few years of ministry with my wife in the local church, more formal theological training seemed a logical next step. The reason for choosing training with BRTS (Baltic Reformed Theological Seminary) is twofold. Firstly, it would allow me to continue serving in our newly-founded Reformed Pardaugava Church (plant) by preaching, teaching, and training the small group Bible study leaders. Secondly, I believe the studies will expand my understanding of the vastness of God's saving work throughout human history, strengthen my conviction of sound doctrine, and give me the necessary knowledge and skills to keep building on the solid foundation. Through that mix of relationships and responsibilities in the church and BRTS, God is shaping my character to be more like Jesus.

**Praise the Lord! And Pass a Book
by Will Hesterberg, Director of
Development**

An ITEM project that has spanned two years has reached its goal! In December of 2104, Will Hesterberg, Director of Development, and Rev. Thomas Smith, ITEM's field missionary in Croatia, visited with Dr. Jasmin Milic, founder of The Mikhail Starin Protestant Theological School, to explore whether ITEM could help train pastors for

the young Protestant Reformed Christian Church of Croatia. During that visit Dr. Milic shared a need of the new seminary - a real library to help the men being trained through ITEM. Will shared this need with ITEM's Executive Committee and with Dr. Joseph Hall, former ITEM Board Chairman and a former library director at several reformed seminaries. Dr. Hall enthusiastically "ran with the ball." He identified the books needed for a reformed seminary library, contacted friends who might contribute books or funds to purchase and ship books, and then gathered the arriving books. As funds came, he purchased other books. Dr. Hall accumulated over 1200 books. Meanwhile Tom Smith also solicited funds and contributed some of his books for the growing library. Finding an economical means of shipping the books to Croatia became the next formidable task. Rev. Smith and Dr. Hall identified several alternatives. The first shipment of 355 books arrived in May, 2016. This past summer Rev. Win Groseclose, pastor of St. John's Burry Church (Rev. Smith's former church) in Pennsylvania graciously began helping with the preparations for shipping. Then Dale Aunsbauch, a long-time St. Louis supporter of ITEM, entered the scene as his company is involved in international shipping. He contributed time, effort, and more funds for the shipping. Finally this fall the remainder of the books was shipped. Now, navigating the labyrinthine bureaucracy of Croatia, where bureaucracy is a national sport, became the focus. After much praying and filling out forms, and paying of fees and customs, the books arrived safely at the library the day after Christmas. So, "Praise the Lord" and pass a book to a Croatian pastor in training.



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. send to ITEM, PO Box 31456, St Louis, MO 63131 or through paypal at www.ITEM.Org. Ph: 618-939-4836 Email: lwhesterberg@gmail.com