

SEPTEMBER 2017 NEWSLETTER



Good News in the Baltics by Rev. Mark Vander Hart

I went for my 11th teaching trip to Baltic Reformed Theological Seminary (BRTS) in Latvia this summer. After teaching a survey course on the Pentateuch, I began a course on Biblical Greek to the two pastoral students, and I taught Biblical Hebrew to another student.

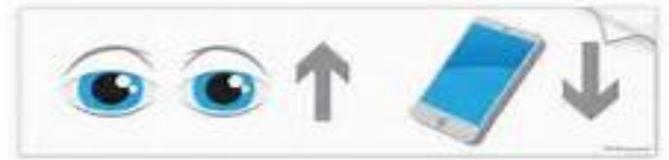
I also gave three talks at the Reformed Churches' Family Camp, focusing on several Reformation emphases: "Reading the Scriptures with Luther and Calvin" (Sola Scriptura), Romans 4:5 (Sola Gratia), and Romans 1:16-17 (Sola Fide). On Sunday, June 25, I preached on Philippians 3:17-21 at camp. After camp, language instruction and tutoring resumed at BRTS.

While in Riga, Latvia, I also preached in the two established Reformed churches and attended the new Reformed church plant. This group has been doing very well under its church planting pastor, Martins Martinson. Two formerly Baptist church leaders as well as Mr. and Mrs. Robert Smith (PCA) help this new church.

On July 2 I traveled to Lithuania to attend the Synod Collegium of the Lithuanian Reformed Church. I gave greetings, a meditation, and a sermon to the Synod. The Synod discussed how to address the government regarding the legal struggle with the "other group" claiming ownership of church properties, but there was also discussion about updating the website and providing curriculum for church youth.

I was greatly encouraged by this teaching trip to the Baltics. Interest in the work of the seminary remains high. The Reformed plant in Riga goes well. The Reformed Church in Lithuania is trying to move forward. I thank God for this opportunity

to help the Reformed community in the Baltics but also to witness God's hand at work there.



Eyes Up, Phone Down by Will Hesterberg

Perhaps you've seen signs like this as you've been driving down a road. They remind us that motorists cannot focus on two things at once.

Jesus said something similar in John 4 to his disciples when they paused near a village in Samaria. It was around noon, and they were hungry, thirsty, and tired from their journey. Jesus sat down by a well while his disciples went into town to buy food. While they were away, Jesus engaged a woman in conversation, leading her to see that her deepest need was for "living water," namely himself. Just then, the disciples returned, but they were so focused on physical food that they totally missed the significance of the woman's new-found faith in Jesus.

"Lift up your eyes," Jesus urged his disciples, "and see that the fields are white for harvest." Jesus wanted them to shift their focus to the spiritual realities of God's kingdom. He wanted them to see that the people they encountered were much like a field already ripe for harvest.

Jesus believed that if His disciples could see the immediacy, the urgency, and the abundance of the harvest for the spiritual kingdom, they would be motivated to focus on other people, such as this Samaritan woman at the well, and their needs rather than their own stomachs needing food. They would, like Jesus, seek to minister to others and forget about themselves.

That tells me that whatever I look at most influences everything I do. It develops my thinking, determines my desires, directs my focus, drives my actions, and decides where I will apply my

resources and efforts. If I'm looking at myself, my needs, my wants, I will see everything in the light of myself. If I'm looking at the world as only material stuff, then I will see everything in the light of the price tag the world puts on stuff, and I will want stuff. And after so much time of looking at the world and as the world sees things, my eyes will tend to focus that way and not see accurately.

Physically when our eyes don't "see" properly, we need to get an exam. Perhaps we need to get corrective lens or corrective surgery. And periodically we need to have a follow-up eye exam. In the spiritual realm, when we become believers, we not only receive a new heart and mind, but also new eyes. Periodically we need spiritual eye exams, too. We need the corrective lens of Scripture each day. With so many distractions, we need a reminder to refocus. Hebrews 12:2 urges us to focus "our eyes on Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith."

So what are you looking at and how is that leading and shaping your life right now? Is it perhaps time for another eye exam? Is it time to look again at Jesus and look at what Jesus is looking at, His Father's kingdom and glory? Are you looking at people, at the world, at events in the world and around your world, and your resources, and seeing God's Kingdom, seeing missions, and seeing the fields ripe and ready for missions?

Good Things Happening in India by Pau Gualmang and Will Hesterberg

For six years now ITEM has been working with the Presbyterian Church of India, Reformed, (PCI, R) in the northeast Indian state of Manipur. We have been providing instructors to help train their pastors, elders, deacons, and evangelists so that this young, small, but growing, denomination could continue to expand. Soon after PCI, R was started in 1984, the Presbyterian Bible Institute was also begun and later became the Reformed Bible Institute (RBI). RBI serves to give training and to equip pastors and lay leaders in Reformed doctrine and church government.

In 2001 the leadership of PCI, R decided that this training should happen regularly each year for newly elected elders, deacons, and intern pastors. Since 2009, the vision has been to establish a campus. Now the campus rises on a picturesque 13 acres outside Churachandpur. Ground was broken in August 2015 to build the first building, which will house a center for equipping church leaders, training pastors and missionaries, and offer a retreat center for in-service ministers. Working with limited resources, the project moves toward the completion of the first-phase building this November and the start of regular training in 2018.

Opportunities to Pray for ITEM

1. Pray for Director Emeritus Virgil Tinklenberg still dealing with significant health issues.
2. Praise for Bill Wilton and Rob Toornstra, who taught Christ-centered Preaching in Andhra Pradesh, India, and Indonesia in August.
3. Pray for Michael Payne teaching Apologetics at BRTS in Latvia Sept. 11-15.
4. Pray for Jim Roszell's teaching Hermeneutics at KRBC in Ukraine Sept. 8-18.
5. Pray for Eugene Oldham's teaching Pneumatology in Croatia Sept. 13-19
6. Pray for John Van Schepen's teaching God and Man in Kenya Sept. 29- Oct. 5.
7. Pray for John Lewis's teaching Philipians in Bangalore/Chennai, India, Sept. 14-25.



Groundbreaking in 2015

Foundation in 2017

In the U.S. send to ITEM, PO Box 31456, St Louis, MO 63131 or through PayPal at www.ITEM.org. Email: lwhesterberg@gmail.com. Contributions to ITEM in Canada may be sent to ITEM, c/o Action International Ministries, 3015 A, 21st Street NE, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2E 7T1. **New Phone # 618-939-5069.**