



### **Study Church History to Remember God's Work**

*by Tom Smith, ITEM's incoming Executive Director*

Why study the Protestant Reformation? Because God says, "remember" 243 times in Scripture. We must not forget the important things of the past. God has much to teach his people through the study of church history, which is the family history of every Christian.

During the week of March 25-29, I taught Reformation History at Kiev Regional Bible College. Those Ukrainian Baptists need to know the origins of their church and where Arminian and Reformed theology comes from.

There were 28 students in my class; my estimate is eight of them were men over 30 years old. The rest appeared to be under 30, most of whom work with youth or do music in their churches. I covered all the important people and events, as well as the context of the Reformation period (1517-1648).

Teaching about Calvin generated many questions about election and doing evangelism. My reply was that predestination frees us to proclaim the gospel to others as the outcome is not dependent on us, but rather on God.

I taught them how John Calvin trained and sent out church planters and missionaries, some going as far as Brazil. We also discussed how groups like the Waldensians and Moravians were quite evangelistic and missions-minded while affirming predestination.

The Synod of Dort generated interesting conversations as well. Students came to me privately, thanking me for teaching and saying how this class stimulated their interest in the Reformation and a desire to learn more on their own. And not just to learn, but to remember.

### **Celebrate God's Abundant Blessings upon ITEM**

We just held our ITEM Spring Board meeting, and the news was great on several fronts.

We heard reports detailing some of the many ways God appears to be prospering ITEM.

For example, by the end of April, we had already sent out 12 instructors, and they trained 547 national leaders.

Another way God has blessed ITEM is that He has prompted many churches and individuals to increase their giving. We have received 23 percent more in gifts through the same time period last year. This should enable us to explore several new possible fields yet this year.

In India, new groups of leaders wanting to know more about the reformed faith have asked for training in several of our fields there. Kiev Regional Bible College (Kiev, Ukraine) has added a new track to train leaders seeking to minister to youth, and that has increased class attendance significantly.

Though Russia seems closed to ITEM right now, ITEM has helped train leaders at Tyumen Bible College (Tyumen, Russia) this year through the work of Artis Celmins from Riga, Latvia.

Our Christ-centered Preaching Conferences continue to grow. Through them, we train men already in the ministry. Our plan is to offer the conferences in some of our other mission fields.

God has also brought new leadership to ITEM. Rev. Tom Smith, who has served as an ITEM missionary in Croatia, was approved by the Board as our new Executive Director of Development. See his article and picture from Kiev in this issue.



Will Hesterberg, current Executive Director will become Chairman of the Board, replacing Rev. Mike McLaughlin, who becomes vice president.

Tom and Will will work on a smooth transition for the rest of this year and into 2020. God also added a new Board member, Rev. John Vermeer, pastor of Doon United Reformed Church in Doon, Iowa. Both Doon URC and John's previous church, Oak Glen URC in Lansing, Ill., are strong supporters of ITEM.

### How to Contribute

In the U.S. send contributions to ITEM, PO Box 31456, St Louis, MO 63131 or at [www.ITEM.org](http://www.ITEM.org) through PayPal. Email: [lwhesterberg@gmail.com](mailto:lwhesterberg@gmail.com).

Contributions to ITEM in Canada may be sent to ITEM, c/o Action International Ministries, 3015 A, 21<sup>st</sup> Street NE, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2E 7T1.

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## Long Walks with God in the Cool of the Day

I taught in Kiev Regional Bible College in May. I walked around Vyshneve (a city near Kiev) for three or four hours every day. As I walked, I thought about the people and the culture and how they need to hear the gospel.

People there are not very friendly. It's a stretch to say they even glance at you. They don't smile. I think that's because they still live with the memory of oppression.

There are several bridges over the massive railroad. I walked over the bridges and watched people at the train station. They looked like ants trying to jump on trains as quickly as possible, to make connections to get into Kiev.

I noticed several Orthodox churches. I don't agree with their theology, but I find them to be beautiful structures. I took a lot of pictures. When I first went to Vyshneve eight years ago, it looked dingy. The high rises looked very drab. Now entrepreneurs are building beautiful high rises. Change is afoot.

### Prayer Requests

1. Praise for Phil DeHart's teaching in Indonesia, and Steve Swets' and Marc Jagt's teaching in Kenya.
2. Praise for Jeff Richards teaching at Kiev Regional Bible College in Ukraine May 27 to 31.
3. Pray for God's people to support ITEM with their prayers and financial resources so that the Gospel can go forth in many countries.
4. Pray that our booth at the PCA General Assembly (June 25-28), will give us exposure and bring contacts for instructors and support from churches PCA churches.