



On the Trip to Latvia, the Teacher Became a Student

Sacha Walicord, a professor at Dordt University and pastor at Grace Reformed Presbyterian Church in Orange City, Iowa, set out on a November mission trip to Riga, Latvia with an attitude short of enthusiasm. He came back a changed man. Here he explains what happened.

Before I left, I was thinking, how can I come back as soon as possible? I didn't want to go because I had just come back from a trip to Germany. I told my wife, I don't want to leave again. When I came back, I thought, I'm so glad I did it.

The thing that gripped me the most was the unity among the believers. Not only for what they're doing in Latvia, but also for the work they're doing reaching out to Russia, Lithuania and Ukraine. These guys don't sit still. They're very active in bringing the gospel to their neighbors.

Their passion was obvious from the moment the seminary president picked me up at the airport. First of all, which seminary president picks you up? He dropped me off at my hotel and told me to take my time, take a shower, relax, etc. He waited in the car and then took me to dinner. Who does that?

The pastors are so eager and so humble and they get paid so little and they're so grateful. Then you think about America, where even pastors haggle about income and 401K and book budgets and mileage.

These guys live in an expensive city and earn a fraction of what we make. They don't complain. They're just eager to spread the gospel.

It was so encouraging. And convicting.

I was reminded of the book of Acts. These people don't have much, but they don't claim anything. All they want to do is serve Christ and spread his kingdom.

This whole experience was a sermon to me. The whole time I was asking myself, why am I teaching the students here? They should be teaching me. These guys know what they're doing. They know their Bibles. They love their congregations. I felt almost a little bit ashamed that I taught them. It was upside-down compared to what we're used to.

They thanked me so much for coming. I had to tell them, Thank you more. I'm not the same man I was when I arrived there.

This trip taught me, again, that God is at work. He's still building His Kingdom.

I'm preaching through Philippians right now in my own church. Paul says he can't stop thanking God for the Philippians and for their fellowship in the gospel. The term for fellowship in the gospel, "koinonia," means mutual encouragement, mutual love, and mutual uplifting. That's what I experienced on my trip to the Baltic Reformed Theological Seminary. When I think of the Latvians, I cannot help but be joyful.



In Kenya, ITEM Works to Teach Poor, Uneducated

By Tom Smith, ITEM Executive Director

Recently, Daniel Muindi, Director of All Nations College, reported on his school and ITEM's impact in Thika, Kenya and beyond. This is some of what he had to say:

With the help of ITEM, All Nations College in Kenya trains pastors and ministry leaders from different and diverse denominations. Most of these pastors enrolled for training have congregations in small towns and villages where economic life is extremely challenging. Many pastors who desire to attend classes can't even raise \$50 for class registration. Many survive on one meal a day.

We have three training bases away from our central campus in Thika where ITEM educators stay when they come. These training bases train students who cannot come to Thika due to distance or cost or both. In one of the training centers we pay for translators who help translate ITEM course manuals into native languages.

We lowered tuition to \$20 per student. More than 70 students are currently enrolled in the three centers, with 51 qualified to graduate this year. We have a few who are denominational heads (bishops) who have pastors and elders in their churches who never had any theological training and have found ITEM to be an answer to their training needs. Elders here are sometimes theologically illiterate, but they help in evangelism, church administration and governance.

We are grateful ITEM is able to penetrate even into the most remote villages and communities. Kenya is an open door for church and mission work. ITEM educators are effective and well prepared. We have had pastors coming for training from Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo. This is an indicator that God is using ITEM and All Nations College to reach out to all nations for God's glory.

Prayer Requests

1. Dr. Joseph Hall, former chairman and board member, has cancer and some related health problems.
2. John Lewis will teach Christian Ethics at Kiev Regional Bible College in Ukraine in January.
3. Fritz Harms will teach World Religions at Baltic Reformed Theological Seminary in Riga, Latvia.
4. Mark Jenkins will teach Biblical Hermeneutics in Cochabamba, Bolivia at Seminario Reformado Latinoamericano.
5. To serve current and future fields, ITEM needs to recruit instructors who speak Spanish.

How to Contribute

In the U.S. send contributions to ITEM, PO Box 31456, St Louis, MO 63131 or at www.ITEM.org through PayPal.

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