



### Believers in Uganda Using Everything for God's Glory

*By Tom Smith, ITEM Executive Director*

“Highlands” brings to mind images of bagpipes, tartans and Clydesdales. In the eastern highlands and mountains of Uganda you will not find any of these things. But you will find a beautiful landscape of variegated green hills and valleys with banana trees, unpaved roads, goats and donkeys. Nestled in the hills of eastern Uganda near Mt. Elgon National Park is the campus of Trinity Bible Institute.

In the last week of May, I visited TBI to co-teach Introduction to Reformed Theology with Rev. Milton Lipa of the Presbyterian Church of Uganda. We had 45 students in the class. Some of the students were pastors, some were elders and some were young people with an interest in missions or evangelism. They came from Uganda, Rwanda, Sudan and Kenya.

In most foreign teaching assignments, I have used a translator. English is the official language of Uganda, so no translator was required. Still, I had a hard time understanding their heavily accented English, and the students found me difficult to understand. They told me I spoke with a strange accent. So I spoke slower and made sure to articulate every word with care.

I had to speak louder, too; often the electricity went out, leaving us with no microphone. To put it mildly, the electrical grid in eastern Uganda is sketchy at times. One power surge fried part of the sound system. Fortunately we had diesel-powered generators to use as backups. The Ugandan students and TBI staff took it all in stride.

Coming from a well-developed western nation, I saw quickly how blessed (or spoiled) I am. Despite the little material things the TBI students and staff had or did not have, they have a joy and zeal for the Lord. They worshipped the Lord with enthusiastic energy. They went home on the weekends to work in church plants, or they went to the nearby town of Kapchorwa to do evangelistic outreach, which involved playing music, gathering a crowd and preaching a gospel message.

They used everything they had for God's glory. It is my hope that ITEM will work out a partnership with TBI. I can't help but think of the words of Jesus, “Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand more.” (Luke 12:48b). May we be wise stewards and invest the Lord's resources to advance his kingdom for his glory.

### Check us out on Social Media

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## 20 Years of Preparing Leaders for God's Work

By Alister Torrens, ITEM Missionary / ERSU Academic Dean

On May 29 the Evangelical Reformed Seminary of Ukraine (ERSU) celebrated its “20th” anniversary (really 21st since COVID delayed the celebration). Since 2000, ERSU has been training pastors and other church leaders for Ukraine and surrounding countries.

ERSU is the official seminary of two Ukrainian denominations – the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ukraine (EPCU) and the Ukrainian Evangelical Reformed Church (UERC).

While during our first 10 years of existence almost all of our faculty members and guest lecturers hailed from Western countries, in the past 10 years we have increasingly been able to find well-qualified local men to teach.

In 2019, we appointed our first Ukrainian voting faculty member, and our latest good news is that we expect to appoint two more local men to faculty by the end of this year. All of our lecturers subscribe to the Reformed Confessions, but we welcome applicants from any evangelical denomination, as long as they desire to serve the church in some capacity. Indeed about 60 percent of our 33 students are from other

denominations (or countries).

During our ceremony on May 29 the academic lecture was given by Dr. Willem VanGemenen, professor emeritus of Old Testament and Semitic Studies at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

ERSU's graduates to date include at least 18 men serving as pastors, five as seminary lecturers, two as chaplains, two as Bible translators, one as a biblical counselor and one as a missionary.

For those of us on faculty, the main reason for joy on May 29 was not so much in marking a round anniversary as celebrating the graduation of four of our best students—Sergei, Ben, Rok and Vasili—and sending them on into new stages of ministry in God's Kingdom.

Unfortunately, Sergei and Ben, who were due to fly from Minsk for graduation, could not attend in person as planned due to the cancellation of all air travel from Belarus after the recent “plane-jacking.” They joined the others via live online broadcast.

As academic dean (and incoming president in September) I had the privilege of charging these men from God's Word to “keep on keeping on,” despite all challenges, until the end, for the honor of Christ. In many ways, these men's graduation is the real fruit of ERSU's existence, insofar as God has allowed us to contribute to their preparation.

## Prayer Requests

1. For Dr. Mark Vander Hart teaching classes on Hebrew and the Pentateuch at Baltic Reformed Theological Seminary and for his safe return in July.
2. Praise God that Artis Celmins, BRTS director, was able to buy a house outside the city center, where his family, especially his youngest daughter, who has a respiratory disease, can be safe.
3. Rev. Joseph Boddu and his family are recovering after being sick for three weeks with the COVID19 Delta variant. Pray for the COVID19 pandemic in India to be eased.
4. Praise God for a good class on discipleship taught online by Will Hesterberg and Gerson Cruz to students in Bolivia and surrounding nations. Because of COVID19 lockdowns and virus resurgence, more classes online are being planned beginning in July.
5. The Presbyterian Church of Belize is implementing a five-year strategic plan. which includes training four new pastors and four new lay pastors. Pray God continues to raise up much needed leaders in Belize.

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