



SLAVIC GOSPEL ASSOCIATION

InSight

September 2011 SERVING CHURCHES – REACHING RUSSIA



Irpen Biblical Seminary has become one of the most influential conservative Bible schools in the CIS

Irpen Biblical Seminary

A 20-Year Legacy Steadfastly Honoring Christ and the Word of God

... to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My Word (Isaiah 66:2).

By Dr. Bob Provost
IBS Board of Trustees
SGA President

The history of Irpen Biblical Seminary begins with the vision the Lord gave to Dr. Yakov Dukhonchenko, one of the great heroes of the faith of the Soviet Union. He joyfully endured severe persecution for the sake of the Lord and His precious church. At age 20, shortly after marriage to his beloved Luba, he was sentenced to 10 years in prison for preaching the Gospel. Following prison, Yakov (Jacob) resumed what became a

lifetime of fruitful ministry, eventually as vice president of the Baptist Union for the entire Soviet Union, and then president of the Ukrainian Baptist Union. In 1990, he was granted an honorary Doctor of Divinity Degree by The Master's Seminary.

New freedom brings major challenges and the need for a new seminary.

While visiting Kiev in 1989, I learned from Pastor Dukhonchenko that the Berlin Wall was being taken down. Surprisingly, he was terribly distraught about it, fearing that

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freedom would bring a flood of false teachers to destroy their naïve, trusting churches. His concerns were well founded. Before long, foreigners bearing false doctrines arrived with their unbiblical books and began setting up theological schools. As the only alternatives, they were beginning to attract young men from the UECB churches.

I committed to helping Pastor Dukhonchenko maintain a doctrinal fence around their faithful churches that had suffered so much under the communists. He asked me to help him start a seminary. Over time, the Lord provided the leadership, faculty, students, building, and funds to cover operating expenses. Yakov selected Alexei Brinza, the regional pastor from Zaporozhe, to serve as Irpen's founding president. He knew the Bible from cover to cover, had also joyfully endured great persecution, and was known by all as a humble, loving man of God (Isaiah 66:2). He was the kind of pastor whom Pastor Dukhonchenko wanted to produce at the new seminary. With his beloved Valentina at his side, Dr. Brinza served with great distinction at Irpen from 1991 until May, 2008, when he stepped down to become pastor to the students. Four months later, the Lord called Alexei home.



Dr. Alexei Brinza, Irpen's founding president

A careful curriculum was developed and the Lord sent an outstanding faculty.



The first classes were held directly after the first 57 students were selected in February 1991. They were taught by professors

from The Master's Seminary in Los Angeles, including Dr. Richard Mayhue, Dr. George Zemek, and James Stitzinger. For the first two years, the principal teachers were Pastor Alexei Brinza, Pastor Dukhonchenko, and SGA's Dr. Roman Dechtiarenko.

In 1993, Grace Community Church sent three American TMS graduates to serve as resident professors. They have served faithfully with distinction until the present — Greg and Hu Chon White, Brian and Heidi Kinzel, and Dr. Bruce and Aimee Alvord. TMS graduate John Carbonneau served on the faculty from 2001 – 2007. In recognition of his outstanding service to Christ, The Master's Seminary granted the honorary Doctor of Divinity to Alexei Brinza in 2002.

The Lord provided a wonderful new facility for the growing seminary.

In 2001, a former kindergarten building was purchased, renovated and transformed into a suitable building for the seminary. The Lord raised up more than 1,300 faithful SGA partners: individuals, seven churches, and five Christian foundations to help meet the costs.



SGA partners and many others helped provide Irpen's new facility.

Churches in the USA and Canada sent teams to complete a substantial amount of the work. Much of the building material was supplied by SGA/Canada. In September 2006, the beautiful new facility was dedicated in a moving ceremony led by President Brinza.

The Lord is Doing Great and Mighty Things

To date, more than 1,200 faithful servants of Christ have been trained and equipped to powerfully impact Ukraine and the other CIS nations. They minister in the churches of Ukraine, develop other training ministries, and are being sent as missionaries throughout the Commonwealth of Independent States.

A converted Jewish graduate led in the development of All Nations Bible Institute in Kazakhstan, and is now developing a training initiative in Israel. There are 15 graduates now serving as directors of regional Bible training ministries, 22 graduates are now Irpen teachers, and an amazing 104 graduates serve as teachers in various Bible training ministries throughout the CIS. Christian Education and Public Ministry graduates are teaching Christian Ethics in the public schools of Ukraine. Perhaps most significant — at least 95% of the alumni are serving in key responsibilities in conservative Bible-preaching churches. The Lord is using them to change Ukraine for the glory of Christ, and to also have a great impact for Him in the other CIS nations.

Since May 2008, Dr. Igor Yaremchuk of Zaporozhe has served as Irpen's president. He is a theologian with the heart of an evangelist and is frequently called upon to preach at evangelistic crusades throughout the world. Assisting him as administrative vice president is Benjamin Brinza, son of Dr. Alexei Brinza.



Current Irpen president
Dr. Igor Yaremchuk

Since 1994, the Lord has worked through more than 1,500 faithful SGA partners to sustain the operation of this excellent ministry. In the early years, the key sponsors were Grace



More than 1,200 students have been equipped for ministry through Irpen.

Community Church of Los Angeles, the owner of a small transportation company in South Carolina, and the owner of a small software company in Michigan. More recently, the principal sponsors have been

a Christian foundation that is deeply committed to sound biblical education, and several local churches and individuals.

It is with great joy and praise to God that we celebrate all that He has done in 20 years through Irpen Biblical Seminary. We look ahead in anticipation of

that Day when we will see the full results of the work done there. Please keep Irpen in your prayers. It is one of the top conservative evangelical seminaries of our time. May the Lord continue



to bless this strategic ministry with faithfulness to His Word until He comes. May all who have prayed and supported this wonderful seminary be greatly encouraged. If you are one of the sponsors, you may rest assured that your offerings have been prudently and wisely used in the training of faithful servants of Christ. We are grateful to God and to you for all that has been accomplished.

Letter from the Irpen Biblical Seminary President

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Greetings from your Ukrainian family. We are thankful to God for the grace and mercy He has shown to us during 20 years of ministry in Ukraine. We have grown from 40 to 300 students and 1,215 students have graduated from the seminary. Ninety-five percent of our graduates are in fulltime ministry. Praise to the Lord!

Every year, we are always amazed at God's protection, help, and goodness to our seminary. We are so grateful for your prayers, love, and faithful support. Because of you, we were able to accomplish many acts of ministry.

The Ukrainian flag is half blue and half yellow. The blue represents heaven and the yellow represents harvest. We view our job as exactly the same — to help people move from yellow to blue — that they would become the children of heaven, the children of God.

Thank you very much for everything that you have done for Irpen Biblical Seminary, and always remember that your efforts are not in vain. God is using YOU in our lives and in the ministry here in Ukraine for His Kingdom. You are always in our thoughts and prayers.

With love in Christ,
Dr. Igor M. Yaremchuk
President



Words of Praise and Thanksgiving to God for Irpen's Ministry



Pastor Vyacheslav Nesteruk
President
Ukrainian Union of
Evangelical Christians-
Baptists

Irpen Biblical Seminary is one of the key seminaries in the Ukrainian UECB. We thank the Lord for the significant input of this school

in preparing ministers for our churches over the last 20 years. The school is actively involved in preparing ministers for the churches both in Ukraine and abroad. Dozens of our key church leaders have graduated from Irpen. These men are marked by excellent academic training and wholehearted commitment in everyday ministry. The seminary emphasizes the deep study of God's

Word. Biblical preaching and faithfulness to the Scripture are the main priorities in the vision of the seminary. This is the foundation for preparing students for ministry and for their success in ministry. We are convinced that Irpen Biblical Seminary is forming a profoundly, biblically solid new generation of church ministers in Ukraine.



Dr. Roman Dechtiarenko
SGA Professor of Bible

In the early 1980s, I began teaching groups of men in what was then the Soviet Union. This began at the Baptist Union Office in Kiev. The passion and desire for biblical training and understanding of the Scriptures was a constant item

of much prayer. We began with groups of men at the church, and then at the place where SGA now has its Regional Ministry Center. Finally, the beautiful current facilities were provided as a place where there would be a visible manifestation of the training taking place. Irpen Biblical Seminary is the result of that faithful remnant of Christian believers [often unrecognized and under-appreciated] whose prayers were answered. After 20 years, the seminary continues to glorify God, overcome the enemy, hasten the spread of the

Gospel of Jesus Christ, and build His Church.

Now the testimony of the past 20 years has given much fruit, and laborers for His glory as a result of the many prayers of His servants.

David had the right viewpoint when he wrote, *O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, In a dry and weary land where there is no water* (Psalm 63:1).

SGA Missionaries with Christ

Earlier this summer, Kasia Osiecki, wife of SGA missionary Chris Osiecki, went to be with the Lord after battling chronic lymphocytic leukemia for nearly 11 years. Kasia had recently gone through another round of chemotherapy, and then developed pneumonia and other complications. The Osieckis have been serving Christ faithfully in Poland for many years, first with Send International from July 1992 to March 2004, and since then with SGA/UK.



Chris and Kasia Osiecki and their family

Please remember to intercede in prayer regularly for Chris, along with their children — Teresa, John, Michael, and Christine — who range in age from 11 to 17 years of age. Pray also for Kasia's father and mother, who are with them in Poland, and have been helping Chris and the family through this difficult time.

Within days of Kasia's home-going, we also received word that retired SGA missionary Mary Light went to be with the Lord after an extended illness. She was 91 years old. Mary served SGA faithfully as a missionary/registered nurse in Alaska, as well as in Quito, Ecuador. She also worked for a time at Hawaii Hospital for missionaries who needed home leave, and was also involved in helping several families adopt babies.



Mary served Christ faithfully through SGA for decades.

We are thankful to the Lord for the lives of both Mary Light and Kasia Osiecki, and for their steadfast testimony and example of living Christ's love. While we grieve with their families, we also rejoice to know that both Kasia and Mary are with the Lord they loved and served so faithfully. Indeed, we take comfort in knowing that to be absent from the body is . . . *to be at home with the Lord* (2 Corinthians 5:8). What a tremendous, comforting promise!

Why, O Lord?

A Tragedy Provides Many Gospel Opportunities

Demna Mikava
SGA-Sponsored Missionary Pastor
Ryazan, Russia



Demna Mikava and family

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

As the Scriptures testify, there are times when God's ways and purposes are hard to fathom. And as they testify — along with thousands of years of testimonies by His people — even the most painful, grievous circumstances turn out for God's greater glory and for His wonderful purposes.

Pastor Demna Mikava recently shared one such account from Russia's Ryazan region, where he serves as an SGA-sponsored missionary pastor. Late last year, the 16-year-old son of a believing family in Novocherkassk unexpectedly went to be with the Lord. Young Pavel had just returned home from a youth conference, having only recently repented and given his heart to the Lord. He wanted to follow the Lord in baptism, and had been joyfully helping his father in the youth club ministry. But all that changed when Pavel collapsed and died of a heart attack.

The family was devastated, as was Demna, a close friend of the family. At the funeral, Demna tried to find words of comfort, but then the grieving father spoke . . .

He calmly turned to me with tears in his eyes and said, "God has taken Pavel to Himself and I cannot rebuke God for it." I had difficulty understanding why God had

allowed this, as Pavel could have done a lot for Him here on earth. But the students in the senior classes at Pavel's school came together at the funeral service. We listened to a very good message from God's Word. We gave out many copies of the New Testament. Even the school director gave her consent for us to have a meeting with all the teachers to tell them about Christ and give them Bibles. When we came back home from Novocherkassk, I preached in the church on Sunday, and told the people about Pavel, and that he'd had time to make a choice. Four persons came forward in repentance, including a mother and her daughter. I now understand why God took Pavel home, in exactly that way!

The Lord continues to bless Demna's ministry in Ryazan. Over the Christmas holiday, many unbelievers came to the church, and even two teachers from the school in Novocherkassk came to see how evangelical Baptists celebrate Christmas. The testimony of Pavel and his fellow believers continues to have untold impact for the sake of the Gospel and the glory of Christ.



Demna also holds day camp ministry for children during the winter months, and also ministers at local orphanages. The church recently distributed 60 gifts to children who do not have parents, and has ongoing ministry with those who have substance abuse issues. Please pray for Demna and his church, and for those who have



Children's outreach is key in Demna's ministry.

been touched so deeply by Pavel's brief life. May many be drawn to the Lord in saving faith as they reflect on this young boy's love for his Savior.

Innercircle Perspective



Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know (Jeremiah 33:3).

The Lord has indeed been gloriously answering the faithful prayers and blessing the generous support of SGA partners at the excellent Irpen Biblical Seminary in Kiev, Ukraine.

But tremendous training ministry blessings have not been limited to IBS. Day after day over these past 21 years, the Lord has been doing great and mighty things in the training of pastors, missionary pastors, and other church ministry leaders. Initially, several thousand faithful men and women were equipped through the Russian version of the Moody Bible Institute's *Bible Correspondence Program*.

Then one after another, the Lord raised up four more outstanding seminaries: Odessa Theological Seminary in Ukraine, Minsk Theological Seminary in Belarus, Novosibirsk Biblical-Theological Seminary in Russia, and Southeastern Europe Theological Seminary in Albania. In addition, He has raised up four excellent Bible institutes including All Nations Bible Institute in Kazakhstan, Dushanbe Bible Institute in Tajikistan, the International Bible Institute of Ukraine, and the former Baku Bible Institute in Azerbaijan. And there are also three church-based training initiatives including the Strategic Bible Institute program, the *Antioch Initiative* training program, and the amazing, developing training initiative for Russian-speaking immigrants in Israel.

Overall, more than 6,000 servants of Christ have been trained for the Gospel ministry. We are praising the Lord and rejoicing, but it is just the beginning. For example, the aggressive goal of our partners in Russia is to reach one percent of their countrymen. While one percent might seem like a small number at first glance, it is not small when you consider the vastness of this great land we call Russia, where 90 percent of cities, towns and villages do not have even one evangelical church. This goal of their 1,200 Bible-preaching churches and 600 groups requires growing from 80,000 to 1,400,000 souls. Doing so will, of course, require substantially more Bible training.

Great things are happening at the Novosibirsk Biblical-Theological Seminary in Akademgorodok, Siberia, where I recently participated in a board of trustees meeting. The new board chairman was a member of the first graduating class seven years ago. He led an outstanding meeting.

Four other board members are graduates who have become pastors and are also serving as the regional UECB leaders in their respective oblasts (states). It

was thrilling to be present when the class of 2011 defended their theses. Some of the 2011 graduates of the part-time program are SGA-sponsored missionary pastors, and one of them is a 53-year-old former convict and recovered drug addict. He has been serving as a janitor at the seminary and has a tremendous ministry to alcoholics, drug addicts, and homeless people.



Dr. Robert W. Provost
SGA President

As I write, 1,000 MacArthur Study Bibles are in transit from our printing company in Belarus to Israel for distribution to Russian-speaking pastors, house group leaders, and leaders in training. SGA teachers recently completed two-week training sessions in Haifa, Ashkelon, and Beersheba. Please join us in prayer that the Lord will provide the remaining support needs and greatly bless these new initiatives in Israel.

On my last trip to Russia, I had a wonderfully encouraging meeting with two brothers in Christ who lead a highly effective outreach to men, women, and youth who are imprisoned throughout Russia. The recent signing of a five-year agreement with the Ministry of Corrections grants access for Gospel ministry to all the prisons of Russia. This is a huge breakthrough, as doors for the Gospel have been steadily closing throughout Russia since 2000. Join us in praising the Lord for this awesome answer to prayers.

Once again, dear partners in the Gospel, my heart is filled with gratitude to the Lord, and to you, for making all of these exciting ministries possible. May the Lord continue to bless you and all your loved ones as you faithfully serve Him.



How You Can Help



Make me know Your ways, O Lord; Teach me Your paths (Psalm 25:4).

Missionary pastors are eager to receive formal Bible and theological training although it is not easy for them to obtain. Many juggle ministry and jobs in addition to obtaining an education. Through your faithful support, dedicated missionary pastors or pastoral students will be able to receive the thoroughly biblical, doctrinally-sound education they desire and need. Additionally, your support assists these men and their congregations in outreach and ministry within their communities by:



- Equipping youth to serve in their local churches and evangelize within their communities.
- Distribution of Bibles and Christian literature.
- Provision of theological training for pastors and teachers in Christian education.
- Reaching children through Sunday school, summer camps, and ministry to orphans through the SGA-sponsored Orphans Reborn outreach.

Thank you for prayerfully considering how you can support these faithful men and their families in their ministries.

Thank you!
Please return the enclosed reply form with your gift.

With your help, more Russian-speaking people can be reached with the Gospel!

Here's, my gift to help reach more people across the lands of Russia with the Gospel, I'm enclosing \$ _____ (1000)

I would like to stay better connected! Please e-mail me with periodic ministry updates, key prayer requests and needs. (400) My e-mail address is: _____

Sign me up to be part of SGA's special e-mail Prayer Team. (400) My e-mail address is: _____

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