

Non-residential Bible School of the Baptist Union of Lithuania (NEBIM)

Harvest/Thanksgiving 2005

NEWS UPDATE

Dear Friends,

At this season of gathering in the harvest, as we rejoice in so many of God's precious gifts, we want to give thanks for all good things made possible through NEBIM. We give thanks for you, our friends, for your various ways of care without which it would be difficult to imagine NEBIM going. We want to share our gratefulness for the school with you. Here are some glimpses into the first nine months of the year 2005:

February 25-26, Klaipeda Baptist Church: Lectures on Contemporary Renewal Movements and Ecumenism. Our main lecturer for this course was the Revd Keith G Jones, Rector of the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague. The starting point of the course was an agreement that ecumenism should always be considered in relation to, and the context of, the witness of the community of faith to the Good News of Jesus' lordship. Thus the renewal of the church is an outcome of the practice of that witness. In this perspective, ecumenical meetings for discussing various theological points reflect only a narrow aspect of ecumenism, noted the Revd Jones. In the ecumenical endeavour, what he termed 'orthopraxy,' 'orthohexy,' and 'orthopyros' were just as important to consider as orthodoxy. The session was a constructive time of reflection on our relationships with other denominations and discussion of some fruitful outcomes of interdenominational cooperation as well as problematic issues that we encounter.



The Rector of IBTS the Revd Keith G Jones lecturing at the seminar on Contemporary Renewal Movements and Ecumenism

May 13-15, Klaipeda Baptist Church: Christianity and Other Worldviews. Lina Andronoviene, Director of NEBIM, was the lecturer for this course. The lectures assumed the inescapable religiosity of any worldview and suggested that the framework of the scrutiny of convictions (i.e., the primary drives of our motivations) provided a helpful way for understanding a worldview and analysing its constituents. In the words of one of the Diploma Programme students, "I found it very helpful, especially reflecting on those worldviews that often are not included in the World Religions textbooks, such as secularism or existentialism."



Students enjoying the time of discussion. On the right Solvita Siksne, our full time missionary in Western Lithuania

August 5-6, Vilnius New Testament Baptist Church: Baptist Identity; Theology of the Dark Side, with Dr Nigel G Wright, Principal of the Spurgeon's College in London. This time, two themes were touched. We revisited the issue of Baptist identity and also heard Dr Wright reflecting on the theology of the powers of darkness and the attention we should (or should not) pay to them. (You might be interested in Nigel's book on the subject: *A Theology of the Dark Side: Putting the Power of Evil in Its Place*).

Some impressions of the students from that session:

Yet another NEBIM session. If you are not a constant participant, or have not been in at least one of them, perhaps you will not understand how much joy and hopes fit in the words "yet another." This means that our school is still alive and well, that God is still blessing and giving opportunity to gather together and to see both new faces as well as those who during the last several years have become so dear; to search and find together, to know and to understand. It's difficult not to thank God for such a grace!

The seminar for the first time is taking place in the capital, so there is something new: we are going to sleep not in the church, as usual, but will be put into the homes of our Vilnius brothers and sisters. A brief regret that we will not be able to stay together after the lectures and continue conversations late into the night, is soon replaced by the delight of a new acquaintance and warm fellowship at a home.

*Saturday seems incredibly short: only a couple of lectures, discussion of the homework for the students, tasty and filling lunch, and again it's time to say 'good bye' till the next time, when again we will be able to say to ourselves, with excitement, "It's time for **yet another** seminar." See you all there!*



Participants of the August session, Vilnius, 6 August

Just in several days' time, we will be gathering again for the course on **Worship: Vision and Practice** (October 14-15, Klaipeda Baptist Church). Alongside an attentive look at the theology present – even if at times unnoticed and unwanted! – in our ways of worship, we will be having workshops in groups concentrating on different aspects of worship, such as music, creative rendering of biblical texts, lyrics and poetry in general, or dynamics of the order of worship services. Art in worship is one of our 'sore spots'; unfortunately, virtually all of our songs are translations from other languages, which might make the foreigners attending our worship services happy as they would find it easy to fit in, but it is rather unhelpful for our witness in the Lithuanian context. Our hope is that some songs and other creative initiatives will emerge as a result of this session and that it will encourage further growth of authentic ways to be the people of God for the people of Lithuania.

Other events: Beside these events which are a part of the Diploma Programme, NEBIM is organising several other seminars and workshops this autumn. November, we will hold a consultation for church treasurers and accountants who often have to struggle through the jungle of the Lithuanian laws that tend to leave small bodies such as our Union in an undefined and unsure space in terms of taxes and office documentation.

December 16-17, NEBIM will invite those involved, or wanting to be involved, in *diakonia* and social work. The guest lecturer for this event will be Noomi Tonnang from East Aid (Sweden).

Our students: one of our greatest joys is to see how many of our students are involved in the first-hand mission work in various fields back in their home churches. We are trying to encourage and resource them with all we can in their ministries.

Our dear friends, we are grateful to all of you who let us know you are keeping us in your prayers. If you do pray for NEBIM, please especially remember those students who are under very heavy load, juggling the obligations of a demanding job and their ministry in the churches. Please also remember the delicate role that NEBIM plays as the school of such a small Union, where even small moves can have great repercussions, positive or negative, and therefore all actions need to be taken with care and wisdom. It is our hope that by the grace of the One who has called us we will be able to carry on the continuous conversion towards faithful following of Christ in the Lithuanian context.

Lithuanian Baptist News, October 2005