

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

Christmas 2005



Dear friends of NEBIM

Warm greetings at this season of candles, noise, and busyness, all competing with the story of the birth of Jesus! This is also the season for passing over another imaginary threshold, which encourages us to look back and to linger at least for a moment on the blessings we have been given in the year 2005. We are so thankful for all that has become possible through NEBIM. Here is a quick look at those you have already heard of:

February 25-26, Klaipeda Baptist Church: Lectures on Contemporary Renewal Movements and Ecumenism with the Revd Keith G Jones, Rector of the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague.

May 13-15, Klaipeda Baptist Church: Christianity and Other Worldviews, with Lina Andronoviene, Director of NEBIM.

August 5-6, Vilnius New Testament Baptist Church: Baptist Identity and Theology of the Dark Side, with Dr Nigel G Wright, Principal of the Spurgeon's College in London.

Below – a bit more extended accounts on the sessions that took place recently:

October 14-15, Klaipeda Baptist Church. *Worship: Vision and Practice.* It turned out to be a very fruitful seminar of working on various aspects of worship, moderated by a team of lecturers:

- theology present – even if at times unnoticed and unwanted! – in our ways of worship (led by Lina Andronoviene, Director of NEBIM)
- accuracy and richness of language. You may not know but Lithuanian is one of the most archaic of the existing Indo-European languages, thus being of great interest to linguists. However, as far as all non-linguists

are concerned, it only means that it is extremely complicated—even for Lithuanians, who often are not sure to which syllable in the word the stress belongs! As it is also very rich in synonyms and possibilities of constructions, attention was also paid to the issues of impoverishment which is often a result of the translation of songs, poems, etc. from other languages (led by Dr Nijole Latuziene, adjunct lecturer of NEBIM)

- dynamics of worship services: scrutinising the current patterns and thinking of new possibilities (led by Henrikas Zukauskas, NEBIM lecturer)
- workshops in groups concentrating on music, creative rendering of biblical texts, dynamics of the order of worship services, and poetry. As we have shared with you before, songs is one of our 'sore spots'; virtually all of them are translations from other languages. Workshop labour proved to be a time of inspiration: several original songs (music and/or lyrics) were created on the Lectionary texts set for one of October Sundays.
- we ended with a low-key worship service using the same Lectionary texts. This was an amazing experience of witnessing a seamless tapestry emerging out of the work of all workshop groups. Here is a photo from the service:



November 19, Kaunas Baptist Church: 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. The enthusiasm that has emerged from the seminar was a surprise for its organisers as well as for the participants

themselves. Some questions were clarified while others will require additional consultations with the relevant government offices.

December 16-17, Vilnius New Testament Baptist Church: NEBIM invited those involved, or wanting to be involved, in diaconal work, with Noomi Tonnang from East Aid (Sweden) as our guest lecturer.

For the long years of the Soviet rule, the churches in Lithuania had been robbed of most of the diaconal service and had to limit their outreach to certain ways of evangelism; thus practices of the works of mercy are somewhat atrophied. The seminar therefore started with a question: are those works of mercy valuable in and of themselves, and not as an overture to evangelism? A significant amount of time was



spent reflecting on, in the lecturer's terms, "diaconal attitude" (that is, gentleness and sensitivity of the congregation

in regard to social issues) out of which certain practices may emerge that are relevant and fitting to our context.

Thank you for your prayers

If you would like to pray for the ministry of NEBIM, here are the needs:

- for the students in Diploma Programme, who often struggle under heavy ministry load and other difficulties in their studies.

For their work in the coming year, may NEBIM seminars, homework, and practical ministry be a blessing for their congregations and for their own calling;



- for the participants of open seminars. Some of them are with us always and provide an important quiet support;
- for the so-called 'interim sessions' of NEBIM during which the school comes to congregations for more in-depth studies with the Diploma Programme students and also serves those who are not able to participate in NEBIM seminars otherwise;
- for NEBIM lecturers, friends, and other helpers, so that their input would efficiently help our congregations to serve faithfully and closely—and, stopping for a moment during NEBIM sessions, to reflect upon and evaluate our ministries in the Lithuanian context.

Grace and hope of the Prince of Peace,

NEBIM Team