

Hello everyone,



Last week I found a few very old magazines in a suitcase. Apparently, I brought them from the US when our family of six returned to Ukraine after I graduated from Denver Seminary 25 years ago. While looking through the pages of these magazines, I thought of our culture and how it has undergone many dramatic changes during my time. One of the most distinctive features of our time is the accelerating pace of cultural change.

It is noteworthy that REALIS during its first 15 years focused on giving theological training to Evangelical leaders in intercultural communication, or the ability to understand and communicate between different cultures. We at REALIS assumed that effective pastors and missionaries needed to know Biblical culture, their own Christian culture, and various cultures of the unchurched people. This approach proved effective, as more than a hundred of our graduates received their master's degrees and now serve in many countries as leaders for various missions, colleges, churches, and denominations.

**Digital theology**

Today’s intercultural communication meets a new challenge. Digital technology has made radical changes in today’s culture and communication which are dramatically significant for Christian ministry. In order to evangelize effectively in the future, we must understand these changes and learn how to communicate in the brave new world of digital technologies. For this reason, REALIS has focused for the last six months on implementing our new program in Digital Theology.



Beginning in October of this year, we will start a year-long certificate program that will lead to a Master’s program. We are working closely with leading professors in this field from Durham University in the UK. As an introduction to this program, REALIS organized a Digital theology three-days long Symposium in May 2019, which was attended by almost 70 people from various places of Ukraine.



**Forgiveness project**

REALIS is collaborating with 9 research institutes, located in four continents, that will study the topic of forgiveness throughout the next three years. This project will develop materials on forgiveness, including promoting forgiveness, personal peace, and social healing, especially in countries which have experienced long-standing conflicts. REALIS’ research will focus on communities located near the war zone in East Ukraine. As part of this project, REALIS will bring humanitarian aid and



counseling ministry to people affected by the war with Russia. The official starting date of this international project is July 1st of this year. Please pray for this important work and especially for its REALIS coordinator, Olga Goncharenko. She worked at REALIS in 2001-2005 and has rejoined our team.

## Special memories

Many of our friends and partners know that in the late 1990s we worked closely with Jim Golden, a lawyer and evangelist, who lived with his family in Kyiv for several years. In 1996 Jim and I founded the Center for Leadership Development (CLD) in order to train young people (in their 20's) in servant leadership. The center was open for both believers and non-believers. At the end of the two years of training, most of the non-believing students accepted Christ. This center continued to exist until the early 2000s, when Jim returned to the US and I continued my work with REALIS. Our friendship with Jim and his family continues even now; encouraging and supporting each other, sometimes through the most difficult times (five years ago his dear wife Phyllis died in a car accident). About 20 years after leaving Ukraine, he returned to Kyiv this past June with his new wife Dana and daughter Delaney. One of the special activities we got to experience together was a reunion with some of our CLD graduates - an unforgettable evening of sharing stories and praising God for His guidance and work through these true servant leaders.



There was another event that brought back special memories. In June, I went to a conference in Sweden via Riga. For many years I'd heard about Riga Bible Institute (now Latvian Biblical Centre), led by Victor and Nina Petrenko. I enjoyed their wonderful hospitality and was really impressed by their work in making the Christian message alive and relevant in Latvia. However, I did not expect to learn that Victor was part of the same underground church in Riga, which was a sister church of my congregation in Vorzel (near Kyiv) where I served in 1980's as a youth pastor. We had a really special time, remembering old stories, friends, and God's unchanging faithfulness.

## Prayer requests (as well as requests for financial help)

- Please pray for the new members of the REALIS team: Joseph Terracina and Andrey Meleshko (theology instructors/researchers) as well as Olga Goncharenko (counseling and sociology specialist/researcher).
- Please pray for Joseph Terracina as he is currently raising support in the USA.
- Please pray for the enrollment process of our new Digital Theology program.
- Please pray for a good start in the international research project on forgiveness and for REALIS' participation in it, specifically, for the safety of our team while doing work in the "gray zone" of Eastern Ukraine.



- Please pray for our counselors, who serve many people affected by war
- Please pray for the ongoing construction of REALIS Educational Center.
- We need 100 donors, who can donate \$650 toward finishing our new building. Would you consider being one of them? Would you please pray for the other ninety-nine?
- Would you consider supporting Joseph Terracina's work for REALIS? Even \$25 per month would really help.

Thank you for your interest in REALIS' work in Ukraine.

Information on how to support REALIS ministry can be found here: <https://www.realis.org/news>

Sergiy and Irina Tymchenko