

The Link

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Address correspondence to **The Link**

**International Baptist
Theological Seminary
Nad Habrovkou 3
Jenerálka
164 00 Prague 6
Czech Republic**

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LINK Editor:
Vanessa L Lake MTh

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IBTS GRADUATES 28 STUDENTS

The 59th IBTS Academic year closed with a splendid graduation ceremony on Friday, 30 May at the beautiful Prague campus.

Twelve students graduated Master of Theology or Magister in Theology and were awarded their diplomas by the Revd Dr Ian M Randall (IBTS Senior Research Fellow) and were dressed in their academic hoods by the Rector, the Revd Dr Keith G Jones, and the Pro-Rector, the Revd docent Dr Parush R Parushev. Two students graduated with the Certificate in English Language for

Theology and fifteen students graduated from the Certificate in Applied Theology course. Other students were Valedicted as they moved on to the dissertation writing stage of their Masters, Magister and Doctoral degrees.

Amongst a capacity congregation present for the ceremony was the Lithuanian Ambassador together with representatives of the theology faculties of the Charles University and of other English language educational institutions in Prague. Also, many of the students' families and friends visited



2008 Master and Magister in Theology graduates with Rector Keith G Jones, Academic Dean Parush R Parushev and Graduation Speaker Ian M Randall



Certificate in Applied Theology (CAT) graduates with Rector Keith G Jones, Academic Dean Parush R Parushev, and CAT Course Leader Ian M Randall

IBTS to participate in this celebratory event.

In his address to the graduates, Dr Randall took Erasmus of Rotterdam as his theme. Today, Erasmus is known in educational circles as the title of the European Union programme enabling students to study at more than one recognised institution in the nations of the European Union. However, Dr Randall reminded the chapel full of students, graduates, families and guests that Erasmus had been a great scholar and the leader of the humanist movement in European Universities from which Luther, Zwingli and others developed their reforming zeal in the 16th Century. He pointed out that Erasmus was an especial beacon to students graduating from IBTS because of some of his ideas which are at the heart of anabaptist and baptistic life and theology. He drew particular attention to Erasmus' concern for the recovery of the roots of faith in a careful reading of the Biblical record, his desire for application in communities of learning and his affirmation of the place of women as learned scholars,

as Dr Randall noted that of the twenty-eight students present for graduation, fifteen were women. Countries represented amongst the graduating students were – Armenia, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Russia, Serbia, South Afri-

ca, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The Graduating students were presented by the Pro-Rector and Academic Dean, Dr Parush R Parushev. The Rector, the Revd Keith G Jones, congratulated each of the graduating students after Dr Randall had presented the diplomas.



MTh graduate Gennadiy Gavrilov with IBTS Biblical Studies Course Leader Peter F Penner

DIAMOND JUBILEE CELEBRATION !

After three and a half years of dust, sweat and scaffolding, 19-20 April 1997 was a celebratory weekend for IBTS in Prague, as the relocation of the seminary from Rüschlikon, Switzerland to the Czech Republic was complete. Dumpsters were hauled away and moving trucks sent back to their suppliers as preparations were set underway for this historic event.



Old electric golf cart used for on-campus moving

The dedication ceremony saw over 200 volunteers, alumni, staff and friends of IBTS from 25 nations demonstrating support and love for the seminary which had been first founded in 1949. Together they affirmed IBTS in its continual mission to train women and men in service for Christ’s Kingdom at the new site in the golden city of Prague at the heart of Europe.

Sixty years after being founded in Rüschlikon, the seminary boasts a lively environment for students and visitors who value Christian communal development and theological education. IBTS lecturers remain robust in their mission to train students as over the years new degrees, courses and programmes have been implemented successfully and alumni are found regularly returning to Prague for conferences, lecture series or simply to say *dobry den*.

Throughout the years, publications of the LINK have highlighted a number students who utilize their IBTS education and experience in their daily lives and ministries as pastors, seminary directors or teachers and Baptist union leaders. Each of these students have been able to pass through the

educational doors of IBTS only because of the support of committed Christians around the world who believe God is doing a great work in Central Eastern Europe and affirm the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague as one small step in this greater Kingdom vision.

The Academic Year 2008 - 2009 sees IBTS Celebrate 60 years of service to the world Baptist family. This celebration will commence with a Diamond Jubilee Garden Party on Tuesday, 22 July 2009, during the Baptist World Alliance Annual Gathering held in Prague where Baptist from around the world will be present. We look forward to this being a joyful event for all!

Would you consider being a part of this celebration by offering a ‘birthday gift’ to IBTS to see us through another 60 years in Prague and beyond? Below is listed a few specific items which the seminary would value as one time gifts or ongoing financial support.

- Endowing a Lectureship at IBTS - Kc 2 million per year fully funds a post
- Seminary van - Kc 700,000 – Kc 900,000
- Seminary car - Kc 500,000 – Kc 800,000
- Solar panels to produce hot water – Kc 2 million
- Photo voltaic panels for electricity production for campus outdoor lights Kc 500,000
- Re-landscaping and upgrading grounds – gifts of Kc 50,000
- Endowing a student Scholarship - Kc 1 million
- Electric car for campus use - Kc 400,000
- Video and computer projection units for four classrooms - Kc 10,000 per room
- New lighting for the dining room - Kc 300,000
- IT resources for the library - in Kc 10,000 units
- Special 60 year gifts of books to the Library - in Kc 1,000 units



Current seminary VW van, 1996

Successful PhD examinations at IBTS

On the 29 April and 3 May 2008, two IBTS doctoral viva examinations took place in the Dvořák Suite on the Prague campus.

The first student, **Mark Moore** is the Director of the Institute for Christian Resources at Ozark Christian College, Missouri, as well as a professor for the college in New Testament studies. Mark wrote his dissertation on what he calls the “kenotic politics” of Jesus, i.e., the politics of self-emptying. His examiners were Professors Craig Evans and I Howard Marshall. Prior to his doctoral exam, Mark had already written several books themed around the Life of Christ. The IBTS community in Prague, got to know Mark and his wife Barbara quite well, as Mark chose to spend a few months living on campus as he did research for his thesis.

Scott Edgar is the second student this Spring to defend his doctoral thesis at IBTS. Scott, a pastor and a former missionary, is an experienced teacher and educational administrator, as well as an expert in types of educational methods used in the former Soviet Union. As a Christian education specialist, Scott has taught widely in the former Soviet Union countries and has served as Dean at the Kiev Theological Seminary, Ukraine and at Columbia International University, South Carolina. Scott was researching higher education trends in the

Ukraine and the title of his thesis is “Pastoral Training among Baptists in Ukraine: Conversation between indigenous voices and theoretical perspectives”. His work was examined by Professors Linda Cannell and our Senior Research Fellow, the Revd J Andrew Kirk.

With the successful completion of their research work and defense, Mark and Scott are the third and fourth of a growing list students who have successfully completed their Doctor of Philosophy studies at IBTS, Prague.



PhD graduate Scott Edgar (third from left) with Academic Dean Parush R Parushev and examiners Professors Linda Cannell and the Revd J Andrew Kirk.

Czech Rectors meet at IBTS

IBTS was visited by the **Czech Prime Minister Miroslav Topolánek**, and the new Education Minister, Ondrej Liska, on 6 December 2007, St. Nicholas Day.

The occasion was the holding of the 93rd Plenary Session of the Czech Conference of Rectors at IBTS at the invitation of IBTS Rector, the Revd Dr Keith G Jones.

The Prime Minister addressed the Rectors on current issues in the area of higher education and Government fun-



IBTS Kvestor Petra Veselá, Rector Keith G Jones, Czech Education Minister Ondrej Liska, Czech Prime Minister Miroslav Topolánek and Czech Rector Chairman Jan Hron

ding. The new Education Minister, appointed by President Vaclav Klaus the previous Tuesday, promised the Rectors a period of stability in the Education Ministry. The Prime Minister and Education Minister, who is a member of the Green Party, were presented with IBTS Environment Calendars for 2008 and a new IBTS environmentally-friendly cloth bag.

Rectors from the State and private universities from throughout the Czech Republic gathered at IBTS to learn about the work of IBTS and to discuss issues of mutual concern and the involvement of the Czech universities in the European University Association. Amongst those present was Professor Vaclav Hampl, Rector of the historic Charles University in Prague. IBTS has cooperation agreements with three Faculties of Charles University, the Philosophical, Protestant and Hussite Faculties.

Secretary-General of the Czech Rectors conference, Dr Marie Fojtikova from Brno, expressed satisfaction with all the arrangements for the event made by Rector Jones and the IBTS team, saying that IBTS had been perfect location for the Plenary meeting.

TWO SPECIAL PEOPLE



Ian and Janice Randall

Ian and Janice Randall are special people for the International Baptist Theological Seminary (IBTS). Their involvement in the seminary started several years ago, when the new phase of the Seminary’s life began in Prague.

Ian and Janice met in the late 1960s when they were studying at Aberdeen University in Scotland. Since the 1970s they have worked in various places in southern England. For a number of years Janice taught English to foreign students in central London and Ian taught at Spurgeon’s College in London.

Their first contact with IBTS took place 10 years ago when in 1998 they came to IBTS for a conference and soon after that they responded to an invitation to live and serve here. They speak of being very happy to have been able to help in different ways since then. Over the last two years they have been living in Prague again on campus. Ian is a Senior Research Fellow of the

seminary and the course leader in Baptist and Anabaptist Studies and Janice has had the role of Head of the IBTS English Department. Janice remarked: **“It is very interesting to meet different people from different countries at IBTS and to see how God works there”**. The Czech Republic is a special

country for their family because their two daughters have lived here for quite a few years.

It is now time for Ian and Janice to move back to the United Kingdom to live. This does not mean that they will forget about IBTS. Ian will continue to work here part-time. They wish to carry on serving the Lord in any way they can. And although they are leaving Czech Republic they have children and grandchildren here and that will also mean that they remain connected to IBTS and to Prague.

The students and staff at IBTS and are all grateful to have known Ian and Janice over their time at the seminary. This couple has special gifts to communicate, to encourage and support others. They have been like parents or grandparents to most of the students and are greatly appreciated for all that they have done.
- Yevgeniya Kanunnikova, Kazakhstan. Journalist and IBTS student.



Ian Randall supervising Research student Colin Godwin

What Do Goats Have to Do with Theology?

At the start of each academic year the IBTS community welcomes a new group of students who arrive anxious about everything they have to learn in the IBTS classroom.



IBTS ecological lawn-mower

However, one of the most challenging aspects of their education seems to be theological practices related to life beyond the classroom: the seminary’s concern for the environment. This love and care for creation has become more evident now that IBTS has acquired four ‘ecological lawnmowers’: Fossil, Fuel, Abigail and Alice. These lawnmowers, create the questions not only the students, but also guests sometimes are puzzled: ‘Why would a seminary need goats?’

The answer is that we do not ‘need’ them, in the most straightforward and practical sense of the word. These goats will not cover all our lawn mowing needs and even tend to wander and eat greenery we wish they would not. But we do need them - especially those of us coming from urban contexts – as a reminder that we all are part of the wonder of God’s creation, and that there is work involved in stewarding it. Why is it a struggle to adopt and embody practices of creation care? After all each of us would affirm belief

in God as the Creator and Sustainer of the created world. Yet when it comes to bearing testimony to it, such belief is hardly visible by our lifestyle. Thus we are reminded again that theology starts not with neat statements, but with life actually lived.

How do we help our students and guests heed the mandate to care for creation and face the challenge to transform unsuitable habits of stewards towards creation? It could be expected of IBTS as an educational institution to start in the classroom. However, following our community’s vision of redeeming life as it is, we focus on the holistic embodiment of creation care as the primary vehicle of environmental education. Therefore even before studies begin, students become involved in IBTS community life which conveys concern for creation through various means.

One way is daily community worship with Scripture reading, prayer and songs used on a regular basis alongside special events in the Christian liturgical year which focus on creation and stewardship. Another method to help IBTS reflect on

environmental issues is the implementation of an Environmental Policy which is overseen by the IBTS Environmental Management and Protection Team (EMPTy) which drawn from the academic and administrative staff and students. EMPTy promotes the “greening” of the campus by encouraging a comprehensive recycling programme and advocating environmentally friendly decisions regarding IBTS buildings, grounds and supply purchase. This team involves the community in various activities such as campus cleaning, tree planting, photo contests and action points each Wednesday at a community refreshment time.

November is Environment Month at IBTS and every spring there is a campus-wide environmental audit. IBTS is also in an ecumenical partnership with a team from the Orthodox Academy at Vilémov whom we consult on renewable sources of energy.

All of this, causes us to re-evaluate our own convictions in relation to creation and allows us to meaningfully engage in lectures and courses



Students attending special lectures about the wildlife in and around IBTS.



Goat kids born on the IBTS hill in March to assist IBTS in becoming an eco-seminary.

on the theology of environment, particularly the IBTS M-level students who take the module in Church and Environment.

What are the reasons why the Church has pushed creation to the

periphery of its concerns, even though the biblical story begins and ends with new and renewed images of creation? What can we learn from believing communities such as the one led by Hans Hut and others of the radical reformation who took

‘the gospel of all creatures’ seriously? What does it mean to affirm the goodness of creation? How is creation related to creativity? What about the experience of suffering which seems to be creation’s constant companion? As the key for working out the suffering of creation is Jesus the Christ, what can be said about the newness brought by His resurrection, so that again our beginning chapters of Genesis converge into the vision of the Revelation?

Thus, connections with other areas of theological explorations and our daily life become more and more evident. Our hope is that in this way, companions of the IBTS community will be able to relate creation care to their church’s task of being a witness in the context in which they live—whether it will involve goats or not!



IBTS community members planting shrubs along the driveway on campus.

The Place of Environmental Theology: A guide for seminaries, colleges and universities. Edited by John Weaver and Margot Hodson and published jointly by the Whitley Trust, UK and IBTS, Prague.

This publication has arisen out of a conference jointly hosted by the European Christian Environment Network (ECEN) and IBTS held in Prague in August 2006. The Conference brought together participants from various parts of Europe to explore the theology of creation care and how seminaries, theological colleges and faculties, and Christian training courses across Europe could be encouraged to build a concern for the environment into every aspect of the life of Christian communities – in learning and living as the people of Christ.

This publication can be ordered from our IBTS Bookshop. To place an order you can contact Denise@ibts.eu.

GOATS IN PRAGUE AND GOATS ABROAD



IBTS students cleaning the campus to raise funds for Bangladesh.

Students and staff from IBTS donated 189 hours of extra student work cleaning up the IBTS campus during Environment Month 2007 to purchase through Christian aid "Present Aid" 5 herds of goats for Bangladesh.

Under IBTS Campus Steward, Dejan Adam, the community cleaned ditches, tidied up roadways, trimmed bushes, cleaned out cupboards and generally smartened up the campus as part of the annual environment month

on the campus. They donated 189 hours of their work time to purchase the goats through the British aid and development charity "Christian aid" (of which the Baptist Union of Great Britain is a member).

The IBTS Rector, the Revd Dr Keith G Jones commented that the community was delighted to welcome the IBTS goats to the campus, and was encouraging the student community to look beyond their walls do something for other people. IBTS is conscious of the plight of people in Bangladesh and this Christian aid scheme seemed ideal to follow through on their desire to help others... and new found delight for goats.

STUDENT & ALUMNI NEWS

Matthew and Lucy Robinson (MTh 2003) welcomed the birth of a baby girl to their family. Elizabeth Juliet (Lily) was born on 9 November 2007.



Matthew and Lucy Robinson with Lily

Vitalii & Irina Ciornii (CAT 2001) are also pleased to announce the birth of their son Max Anthony Ciornii born the evening of 3 December 2007.

Stephanie and Mattias Neve (present Research student) announce the birth of their daughter Aurelie born on New Year's Eve 2007.

Another Magister of Theology alumnus **Kris Sielicki** (Mgr 2007) and wife had a little girl Hanna born to them on 30 January 2008.

IBTS MTh student in Biblical Studies **Alexander Tsyroulnikov's** wife Olesya gave birth to their first baby. Alexandra was born on 11 March 2008.

The Very Rev'd Canon Dr **Zech Scheariah** & family (B.D Rüsclikon – 1987) sends warm greetings to all IBTS family.

István Borzási (MTh 2005) started a new pastoral ministry in the Hungarian Baptist Church of Pericei in February 2008. Pericei is a village between Zalău and Oradea in Romania.

Heinz Langenbach (Rüsclikon B.D. 1968) went into official retirement in May 2008. He and his wife Margit will go to Tanzania, Africa to engage in church-based AID care.



Tina Grozdanova with daughter Izabela

On Sunday, 13 January 2008 **Marko & Tina Grozdanov** (Mgr alumni 2007) welcomed baby girl Izabela Grozdanova.

We extend our condolences to **Dr Phyllis Rogerson Pleasants**, Richmond, Virginia (seminary lecturer at Rüsclikon and Prague) on the death of her husband, Conrad Neuton Pleasants, who passed away on 21 March 2008.

In its drive to become an ecoseminary, IBTS prints each copy of the LINK on 100% recycled paper.

