

ISSN 3009-4259

BTF GLASNIK

BTS MAGAZINE

OCT.2023

- From Vision to History
- How it all Began
- Students About BTS
- BTS on Mission

IN MEMORIAM
Simo Ralević
Jeremy Marshall

BTF
BALKANSKI TEOLOŠKI FAKULTET
NIS-SRBIA

No.1

BTF GLASNIK

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF BALKAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editors Letter	2
How it all began	3
From vision to history	6
BTS on mission	7
Students about BTS	10
Professors about BTS	16
Study program	24
BTS board	26
In memoriam	29

Publisher:

Balcan Theological Seminary

For Publisher:

BTF Board

Editor:

Emanuel Ralević

Graphic design:

ArtBeats Design

Print:

SceroPrint Niš

CIP - Каталогizacija u publikaciji
Nародна библиотека Србије, Београд
27-1(497,11)
BTF Glasnik : časopis Balkanskog Teološkog fakulteta / urednik
Emanuel Ralević. - 2023, br. 1 (okt.) - - Niš : Balkanski Teološki
fakultet, 2023-(Niš : Sceroprint). - 28 cm
Tri puta godišnje.
ISSN 3009-4259 = BTF Glasnik
COBISS.SR-ID 127998473

EDITOR'S LETTER

A Christian education trains, or to say it more boldly, Reformed Biblical education trains students to understand the truth in the Bible, and it equips them to share their faith confidently with others. Learning how to defend their faith and effectively share the Gospel is what will allow students and pastors to change the world through Christ.

Therefore, the primary goal of such education is to teach students that God is the center of every life and academic endeavor.

As Christian educators we are being used by God to equip our students with the tools necessary to be the servants God has called them to be and help them wholeheartedly embrace that calling.

Dear readers, brothers, and sisters in Christ, having said the above, on behalf of BTS board I would like to introduce you to the first BTS magazine.



In this very first edition we will take you through the last ten years of BTS existence. We would like you to enjoy reading, be encouraged by seeing the blessing of our labor in God's name and be encouraged to study the Word of God yourself. You will read about how God moved us to start the Seminary, how He prepared us for this unique ministry. Oh, what a blessing it is to teach those who will teach others and spread the Good News. You will read testimonies from students and professors as well, and how BTS had an impact on them and their ministry.

The first edition of BTS magazine will retrospectively explain and show the last ten years but the future magazines will focus on more details of what is going on in the classroom and in the lives of each student. The aim is to spread the news in Serbia, Balkans and throughout the whole world so that people can read and learn how God is blessing its faithful servants in educating the educators!



Dr h.c. Emanuel Ralević
BTS Dean & General Secretary

HOW IT ALL BEGAN?

Personal testimony and development of BTS over the last ten years.

As Dean and General secretary of BTS and as someone who is in the ministry over 25 years I believe strongly that it all comes from the Lord by His sovereign calling of individuals into the ministry and that is why we at BTS value so much God's calling which studying the Word of God makes stronger and firmer, rooted deep in the reformed and Biblical theology.

I studied at European Mission Fellowship (EMF) Old Welwyn, close to London, back in 1996 and even when I was 19 my calling from the Lord was so clear to me. In those days it was very intense studying at EMF, two-year courses were packed into one. After receiving a strong theological foundation, I went back to my country, served at Niš Baptist church for some time and had to do 12 months of military service which in those days was obligatory. After my military service, both Jelena and I went to International Baptist Lay Academy in Budapest, Hungary, and I did another year of Theological studies. That was the first year of theological training for Jelena but as I was doing my military service, she did one year of English language and literature at the University of Nis. During our studies in Budapest bombing of Serbia started in 1999. Three fellow students of ours from Albania prayed with us for the war to stop. It did stop eventually, and we could go back to our country.

During our studies, director of IBLA saw both me and Jelena as special students who studied so well and we were the only ones among twenty students to be sure where God wanted us in the ministry. He recognized that in us, and he wanted to help us continue with our studies and send us to Florida Baptist Theological Seminary. We told our parents; 'we will come back to Serbia to see you and we will go to Florida to complete our studies and then we will return to a full-time ministry'. We went back to Serbia but the door to go to Florida was closed to us due to financial reasons (now I know that was in God's providence) but another door was open to go to Holland and enroll into the Master of Divinity program for three years at Tyndale Theological Seminary. It was through our dear friend and brother in Christ John Carden. My father Cedo was so happy, and even that he missed us a lot (as I was his assistant in preaching and working with the youth and Jelena working with children) he knew it was the will of God preparing us for the ministry. At TTS we met Dr Philp Gottschalk, good friend of John. Dr Philip was our mentor and professor for three years and we are so glad that we still cooperate and pray for each other.



In 2001 before we went to TTS, I prayed with Cedo about the need for Theological Institution, somehow God planted the exact same desire in both of our hearts, and it was all clear to us that South Serbia needs an institution, school or seminary that will educate young people for the pastoral and mission work. He shared that idea, especially with Simo, Dragiša, Branko and others in the Union. Everyone loved the idea! Simo revealed to us that he had the same idea for many years. God moved few of us in different ways, toward the same goal, to start the seminary. The idea that came from God into our hearts needed to develop and we needed to prepare ourselves for it. We went to study and came back after completing MDiv degree three years later. In Holland we were studying and working at the same time. In 2004 just before we graduated both Jelena and I were offered well paid jobs to stay in Holland. It was great temptation as we could stay and live in Holland and our life would be secured financially speaking. We knew that it is tempting and sounds nice but deep in our hearts the calling from the Lord to go back and serve the Lord in Serbia was so strong and rooted in our mighty God that we refused an offer immediately!

We came back in 2004, Jelena's father Žika died. What a shock that was for all of us. He was helping Cedo so much during our absence as one of the deacons. That was so difficult year, her father passed away, but we came back to serve the Lord. We were asking God why have you taken him in his 49th year of age, he could have served you along Cedo and us for so many years to come, but God's will had to be done.

The idea for Theological School was still burning in us, we served the Lord full time from 2004 and it was not until 2012 when Jeremy Marshall from London and Pastor Cornelius Onderdelinden from Holland came to visit us. They were both indeed sent from God to help us start. Our facility was in ruins, but we were preparing the curriculum without knowing how we can start at all.

I recall Jeremy said, 'why don't you name it Balkan Theological Seminary'. Soon after that, we received from Jeremy financial aid to renovate the entire facility and make it fit for the seminary. Later that year Jeremy invited us to London Theological Seminary to spend few days and get some experience. We met many great professors, we met amazing theologian, well known to some students who listened to him teach at BTS, Dr Gerry Williams. We talked to Robert Strivens, LTS principal in those days and met other lecturers as well. I remembered Robert from my time at EMF as he was in the same church where students went. I asked him 'do you know how are things at EMF?', he replied: 'as a matter of fact, a new director Martin Leech will be here soon'. We met with Martin as well and as we had coffee together in Robert's office, I was sharing a bit about Serbia and Robert asked Martin all of a sudden, "you don't have anyone in Serbia, right?" A year later both my wife and I were interviewed and accepted to join EMF. Praise God we were supported by EMF for several years. God's providence is amazing! Martin came to visit us and became one of the lecturers. Sometime later in 2014 Jeremy suggested to me that I should come to London Theological Seminary, spend a week or so to gain administrative and educational experience. I accepted the invitation, and I spent two weeks at LTS, under the mentorship of Dr Gerry Williams. I attended classes, I searched the library, I talked to a great registrar and seminary coordinator Nigel and I learned a lot from him. Every afternoon I spent few hours with Dr Williams discussing curriculum that would fit our needs in Serbia. I expected that Dr Williams will just provide me with the curriculum but that was not the case at all. He told me, 'you have to make it!' He gave me books, magazines, articles to read and helped me put the curriculum together. I also spent time with students and learned a lot from them. During meals we had nice fellowship. One day as we had lunch together, I sat next to one man who seemed much older from all of us and nobody knew him before. I realized that he is also visiting like myself, but he was on his holiday with his wife, and instead of enjoying London he enrolled at the course at LTS during that week. That was strange I thought to myself. I was going to talk to younger men, but he kept on asking me questions. As we were about to finish the lunch, with a loud voice he addressed all of us unexpectedly and asked; 'listen guys, I am traveling around the world teaching and if anyone here would like me to come to your churches to teach just let me know!' There were few moments of silence and I replied, 'would you come to Serbia to teach?'. I am thankful to God for our dear brother and professor Dr Michael Ericson from MA, USA who enjoys teaching at BTS every year.



A week later my wife Jelena came along to learn what I learned. She came with our young boys, and we had wonderful time with Dr Williams at the seminary and at his house. We also stayed with late Jeremy and his mother Susan. Being with great people God started to prepare us for great things to come.

In 2013, on the day of Reformation October 31st we founded the seminary. We had many guests from UK and Holland as well as Simo shared the news and involved Dutch brothers from Balkan Mission who support the seminary even to this day. Pastor Cornel, Balkan Mission chairman who visited us with Jeremy also attended the conference and spoke to us. He started his speech by asking us all the following question: 'Do you know what day is today?' It is a day of Reformation 31.10.2013. Since then, BTS celebrates a day of reformation as annual conference praising God for Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Solus Christus, Sola Scriptura and Soli Deo Gloria.

Before the founding conference we talked to our brothers, Jeremy and Cornel, about the financial need to organize the conference. We told them that we are not able to cover its costs. They told us not to worry and encouraged us that God will take care of it.

The conference day came, we bought the necessary refreshments, ordered lunch for over one hundred people, and we trusted the Lord in doing it all. During the first break, pastor Cornel took me and Cedo to my office. He handed us an envelope and said to us, 'I believe you will be needing this!' He did not ask us how much money the conference costs but by God's providence the envelope contained the exact amount of money we needed to cover all the costs, not a cent more, not a cent less. This was the first proof to us that God will take care for the Seminary that is according to His will, and it has been so over the last ten years. The first generation of students who started with their studies February 2014 graduated in 2019. Since then, we had another generation of students who are about to graduate. Meanwhile we started with one year Bible certificate program which gives students great introductory courses and prepares them for practical mission work. We have new students now; some are enrolled at BA and some at BC and I have to say that God is blessing BTS that is mission oriented equipping young people for ministry during one year and also four-year program that is very academic and at the same time practical. We see fruits of our labour, and it is God's work and will continue to be for many more generations and we pray that He can continue to use us so that His Word may be proclaimed in Serbia.

Let me take you back to 2013 when Cedo and I visited London. We stayed at Jeremy's mother's house, the night before our flight back to Serbia. We were asked to attend the prayer meeting and share few things about the work in Serbia. We did not have a clue about what God was preparing for us. As the prayer meeting ended, one man approached us and offered his expertise to help us with starting the seminary. He offered himself to come to teach and send other lecturers as well. We thank God for Dr Julian Zugg who recently became the president of Miami International Theological Seminary. We started to collaborate in 2014 and we have great connections with MINTS even to this day. BTS joined forces with MINTS, thus we became affiliated and accredited by MINTS. I visited MINTS, attended annual conference and inauguration of the new president in Miami in January 2023 and now our collaboration is even stronger. MA program that we are about to start will also be accredited by MINTS and students will soon be able to enroll.

Over the last ten years we developed great connections with various Theological institutions from USA, UK and Holland.

Thanks to our connections with LTS and COAH in 2022 we visited Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, and we were privileged to meet and speak to great leaders and professors like, Dr. Joel Beeke, Dr Adriaan Neele, Dr Gerald Bilkes and others and we are still looking into starting an embedded MA program with them. They are willing also to come and teach. We also spoke few times with great theologian and president of Union School of Theology Dr Michael Reeves and Dr Joel Morris. We met them in Seoul South Korea where our dear friend and pastor Sam Ko introduced them to us few years ago and in Poland this year during European Leadership Forum conference.

Our network is growing, and we believe that as we grow, our vision grows to have more students who will be educated and motivated to fulfill the great commission "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matt. 28:18-20

Having this command in our minds and hearts let us evangelize Serbia, let us teach those who will teach others, who will preach to others and proclaim the word of the living God.

May God bless Serbia and the Balkans!

Dr h.c. Emanuel Ralević
Dean & General Secretary
BTF - Niš, Serbia



FROM VISION TO HISTORY

In the period from 1980 to 2000, wonderful and truly very important things happened in the south of our country in the spread of the Gospel. Aware of the command and what the Lord Jesus said to his disciples in Matthew 28:19-20 a group of mission workers, led by brother Simo Ralević, makes the decision that in our newly founded mission groups, we will hold seminars every three months where we will discuss our confession of faith by topics.

I can say that these were useful seminars where believers gained very rich theological knowledge, which was very systematic, practical, and applicable in the ministry of spreading the Gospel in this area. The participants eagerly awaited the next gathering to participate in personal spiritual building once again.

Bible seminars for church members were held in Niš in cooperation with the Slavic Gospel Association from England, where we had excellent lecturers who conveyed Bible doctrines in a practical way. The topics of the seminars were salvation, evangelism, doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the church, etc. It lasted for three years, so the participants also received diplomas at the end. We realized and understood that learning is very important and that had an impact on witnessing - that is, obeying the great commission in spreading the Gospel in our area.

Let me mention a very good cooperation with brother John Carden, a missionary in our country, and brother Richard W., a missionary from Sofia - Bulgaria, who also joined us, and we started seminars for planting new churches. These seminars were very important for our leaders as well as the expansion of the mission in the southern part of our country. All that was happening among us influenced later development of the idea/vision for establishing theological education.

I will mention two more important facts which influenced the founding of our Seminary. Regular pastoral and theological conferences in Vrnjačka Banja that were held every other year and recently once a year. These conferences moved us into thinking seriously about founding a theological institution.

At the end of 1990 and 2000, an American missionary and professor Dr John Hinson from Athens visited us with the desire to help us in creating our program with a complete description of the courses for the four-year theological education. Due to family reasons he had to go back to USA and could not return to Serbia.



The vision became a reality in 2013, October 31st when the board of the Union of Christian Baptist Churches met in Niš and declared the Balkan Theological Seminary open. In January 2014, BTF began working regularly with the first generation of enrolled students.

Balkan Theological Seminary is mission-oriented seminary with the aim of training, equipping, and encouraging students in their clear calling to become pastors, missionaries, church planters and youth leaders.

Our programs include Bachelor of Arts in Theology that is three years long according to the new program, a Bible Certificate, one year program, and Master of Theology, two years program.

All our programs are designed to meet the needs of pastors and church mission work in the modern world. The programs are demanding, thorough, and invaluable for church roles with high responsibility, as they equip students to serve Christ and His church through Biblical and practical ministry.

Join us and support us, in prayers and financially with your love gifts.

Choose our Seminary! Visit us, encourage us and it will be a great incentive and motivation for us to continue this God given ministry for the welfare and progress of our churches and the times in which we live.

Dr. h. c. Čedo Ralević
Pastor & BTS President

BTS ON MISSION

Since the founding of the seminary the desire for the mission and church planting was burning in our hearts. One of the greatest reasons to start the seminary was to educate those called to the mission fields. For almost 10 years now our seminary is involved in the mission work. As part of BTS training through the courses "Church Planting" and "Mission & Evangelism" we require from all students to get involved in the church planting and mission work. We had several projects that directly helped students to travel and gain practice in eight different churches in Central and South Serbia. Students and their pastors appreciated the fact that we supported their travels within the framework of their local churches.

Some of the students are already full-time missionaries and are very much familiar with the mission work, in fact they are great examples for other students and for all of us. Even those students with experience appreciate courses they have to take as they listen and write essays and go through Biblical teaching of how the mission work begun, how to evangelize and how should a church be planted etc...Special emphasis are given to the Book of Acts.

Being the mission-oriented seminary, we realized that we have to explore our options and take the mission work of the seminary to a higher level, especially in helping those who are willing to get involved according to their calling from God.

Emanuel presented the idea to the board that God has planted in his heart. The idea was that BTS should have its office whose focus should be mission work, promoting and supporting the mission and church planting. The idea was shared with the seminary board, and we all prayed to see what will happen next.

It was evening December 2021, after praying for one year the new step was made. Emanuel received a call from brother Roelof Tallen, mission board member from Staphorst Holland. He asked him: 'What else can we do together?' I would like to help you but tell me what you need help with, something practical?' This was a direct answer from God to our prayers, no doubt it was God who moved brother Roelof to call.

Several days later, BTS mission office started its formation. Detailed project was presented to the brothers from Holland. January 2022 BTS officially founded the office within the seminary and named it 'BTS on Mission'. Emanuel as its founder, leads the office, on behalf of BTS.

The office has its board members, and they often meet and discuss the mission work in several places. The office also has board members from Holland, brothers Roelof Tallen and Jacco Mulder, and from USA our dear professor Dr Michael Erickson. BTS leadership act as advisory board.

The places where mission office is active are, Bela Palanka, Leskovac, Brijanje, Šainovac and Zaječar.

Here are some words from pastors and missionaries. In this first edition we will present some of the mission work that we would like you to pray for. God willing in the next magazine you will also read about other places.

Mission place: Bela Palanka Church: Baptist Church in Bela Palanka Missionary/pastor: Goran Kurtic



Greetings and every blessing of God I wish you in my name and in the name of the Christian Baptist Church Bela Palanka. We are grateful to the Lord Jesus Christ for your prayers and the support you send which help us in the preaching of the Gospel more often. Your help, to me personally as a missionary and church leader, is of great importance and help, and it is one of the ways the Lord cares that I may be able to reach the mission station. May the Lord bless all your efforts and work in spreading the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Please pray for Bela Palanka and for the needs of the church.

Thank God that several of our friends received the Lord Jesus Christ during this year and expressed their desire for water baptism, which we will soon have to organize with our Baptist church from Niš.

We pray for our families, individuals, the sick, for our place and new souls who will be saved and to whom we witness.

What we pray for, and what is very important for the church, is the elders, those who will serve, preach the word of God, take care of the flock and oversee it.

As an answer to our prayers, brother Marjan Gunjić joined us in this ministry.

We would like to thank brother Neven Mirković from Niš Baptist Church who works for Child Evangelism Fellowship and is involved in working with children in our church. We are looking for people with a calling from the Lord who will devote themselves to this ministry.

As for evangelism in our town, it is more about personal witnessing, one to one, or personal visits to certain families or friends. We find this much more effective in our setting. We believe that spiritual awakening should start from our home, so each of us prays primarily for our family and friends, and then for others with whom we are in contact.

The needs of our church are great, musical equipment, work with children, work on the replacement of the roof and church renovation, which began recently through BTS mission office.

Pray for us.

Thank you for your support and prayers.



**Mission place: Leskovac and Brijanje
Church: Leskovac Baptist Church
Missionary/pastor: Miodrag Zvezdanovic**

My name is Miodrag Zvezdanović and I am the pastor of Baptist church in Leskovac. I am married and have one daughter who is 14 years old. I graduated from BTS and am also one of the candidates for the master's program.

Our church has 30 members. We have regular gatherings on Sundays and Bible study on Wednesdays. We also have counseling sessions with members of our church and visits to the elderly.

Our church is very mission oriented, and we do a lot of church planting. We have a Roma group in the village of Donje Brijanje, where we preach and lead Bible study every week. This village is 25 km away from Leskovac and I visit the group with my wife and also with people from my church.

Since I don't have my own car, and in order to help the household budget, I work part-time as a taxi driver and that's how I go to church services in Donje Brijanje. Once a month I also go to neighboring Prokuplje, where I also preach in the Roma church of Pastor Marijan. He is about to graduate from BTS, while his wife enrolled in a one-year program.

Pray for us!



BTS and its mission office organized a joint conference with TGC (The Gospel Coalition) in October 2022. It was held in a nearby hotel. 220 people attended from Serbia, and the Balkan region (Croatia, Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia, Greece).

We had speakers from USA and UK. The theme was "Good News-Solus Christus". We spoke about the healthy church and its mission work. The conference was to celebrate Reformation Day as we do that each year, so we also spoke a lot about reformers and the importance of staying reformed and at the same time to be very mission minded. The main goal was to unite the region with the same mission minded idea. Everyone enjoyed and wanted us to have such a conference each year.

Please pray for us and the work we do.

We thank you so much for your support and prayers!

Mission office

BTS on Mission



STUDENTS ABOUT BTS

Pastor Daniel Rečković - Lebane & Bojnik Evangelical Churches

BTS provided me with all that I was lacking for the ministry. Above all, I needed encouragement and a good Biblical knowledge of what I believe in order to serve other people more effectively. Often, coming to BTS was like a rest in an oasis where I drew all the strength I needed to continue.

Today I serve as a pastor in the Evangelical Church in a small town of Bojnik. A few years ago, I was the founder of this church, and recently I decided to be fully dedicated only to the church in Bojnik, and we are slowly developing church ministry there, such as work with young people, with children etc. In the town nearby, Lebane, the church that I used to pastor for several years, my wife and I run the kindergarten "Radosna vest" (Good News) and that is a special honor to be able to serve children. Studying really meant a lot to me even though I had some previous Theological education.

This study at BTS raised me spiritually to a higher level, putting me in a position to constantly think, research and read. Many of my questions were answered through lectures and through personal conversations with professors and fellow students. I must mention that the fellowship we had at BTS meant a lot to me, it encouraged me and strengthened me to be able to walk firmly in my faith.



Neven Mirkovic -Niš Baptist Church / CEF Niš

At the very beginning of BTS, I was interested in the possibilities presented to me with the seminary being opened. I wanted to grow more spiritually in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. It seemed to me that education would help in spiritual growth and inner security. As time and years of study passed, I realized that education really helped. The experience of a deeper knowledge of the Holy Scriptures warmed my soul in anticipation of new knowledge and experiences that I expected with each year of my studies.

Until then, I had not thought about a mission or a deeper involvement in some kind of ministry. I was waiting for a call from the Lord or, at least to see how the seminary could help in the choices that awaited me in the future.

I wondered how the seminary could help in working with children.

Later during my education, I realized that the Lord is calling me to work with children and that is where He wants me to serve. I needed to be spiritually empowered and strengthened through education so that I could convey the good news of the Gospel to children and teenagers.

After graduating from BTS, I joined CEF as a minister to children in the local ministry of our region. I also serve at Niš Baptist Church, preach from time to time, and am involved in the mission work. When I look back, I am grateful to the Lord for the truths from the Holy Scriptures which were clearly explained during my education, and which are really helpful in the spiritual ministry in which I am involved today.



Pastor Stefan Ralević - BC Bačka Palanka

As soon as the Lord broke my stony heart and gave me a new fleshy one, things in my life began to change drastically. Soon all my friends around me could hear from my mouth what Jesus Christ had done in my life. It was unimaginable to people (even many Christians) that I am now talking about a new life of faith and following the Lord Jesus Christ, because before that I was deep in sin, the world, wandering.

I was not even aware that the Lord was preparing me for the ministry. I didn't want that, partly because I was somewhat aware of the value of the preaching ministry, watching the faithful preaching of my grandfather Sima Ralević. On the other hand, I did not believe that God would want to use such a sinner as I was before he saved me in such a high service. My pastor and grandfather, Simo, started encouraging me to share a short message of 5-10 minutes before his sermon. After that, he would encourage me but also criticize me in private, so that I could fix what was not good.

I started holding youth meetings, occasionally preaching in our and other churches. I soon saw that I had no answers to many questions and that I was not ready to preach on many topics because I lacked knowledge.

I entered the Balkan Faculty of Theology in Niš and was the youngest student of the first generation. I had the privilege of having my grandfather Simo give me my first lectures from Genesis. The very, almost family atmosphere, when we asked numerous questions around a large joined (round) table and at the same time got to know our fellow students and other professors, was incredible.

Month after month, year after year, it was as if someone removed the blindfold from our eyes or as if someone adjusted our diopter. Thus we understood and accepted the truths of God's Word, one by one, and rejoiced in the Lord. It was a special privilege at BTF that we grew up in a conservative Biblical theology and Reformed Protestant heritage.

Shortly after finishing my studies, God unequivocally called me to a new mission field at the end of 2019. It was not easy, nor without problems, but God had a plan. I came to the old Baptist church in the north of Serbia (Bačka Palanka), which was reduced to 5-6 active members and was not far from closing. Then I married Daniela, who is a great help and encouragement to me in my ministry. God has called me to work for Him and I trust that He can turn the situation around in our little church. I met many people in my city through the car wash I opened in the city center and through which I supported my family and ministry. God has multiplied our community in a relatively short time and now we count more than 20 active and regular members, plus youth and children.

I have several positions in our Slovak Baptist Association: I am the coordinator of the "Antioch" Missionary Organization, I am the editor-in-chief of the Baptist magazine Novi Rod, which has been published since the 60s of the last century, and I continued the publishing service of my grandfather "Duhovna Biblioteka". I would not have been able to do all these services, and especially I would not have been qualified for such a complex service as a pastor, if I did not have a sound foundation. In my life it was the preaching of my pastor and grandfather Sim Ralević. And on the other hand, the five years I spent at BTF were very important and precious to me. Studying at BTF helped me a lot to understand God's Word and to better convey and apply it further.

I recommend to every young or old man who wants to seriously approach the ministry to make life easier for himself and devote himself to the study of theology and when he finishes his formal education to continue the same during his ministry.

Glory to the Sovereign Triune God for all that He is and for all that He has done and is doing in our lives.



Jakov Jorgačević - Emaus Beograd

On September 12, 2014, I officially moved to Niš and spent seven years there. I studied at BTS and graduated in March 2019.

I studied at BTS because I liked the system by which the Seminary functioned, and I believed that I would gain a lot of knowledge and practical experience through my studies. Knowledge in the sense of theology and that after four years I will be able to say that I am theologically educated, and practice in the sense that I would gain a good perspective of how church and mission ministry looks like.

After four years of study, I could say that we had many good lectures and professors. We also had a lot of practical assignments that would help us later in the ministry.

Practice in the form of preaching in other churches or visiting people in the surrounding villages and towns and in the city of Niš itself. We also experienced work with children and youth, and work with the elderly.

Studying at BTS helped me to build myself as a person, as someone who lives with and for Christ. Studying and that period at BTS helped me to mature spiritually, to a certain extent, and to be ready for challenges after the Seminary, after life in Nis. That whole period was a great blessing to me, and the Lord used it all for my building.

After seven years in Nis, I returned to Belgrade and am now an intern at the Emmaus church. I am an apprentice to brother Slavko Eždenci. I am learning expository preaching, working with children, translating, I am involved in the life of the community, I see how the eldership works, and with the pastor and the elders I learn, grow, and prepare for further ministry. I am grateful to God for the opportunity to be here and to prepare for the ministry in this way.

I got married on October 8, 2022. The Lord blessed me with Martina, my wife. She is with me in the church and is involved in church worship team and is working with children.



Pastor Miodrag Zvezdanović - HBC Leskovac

Why is it important to study theology?

You have read the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. Whether you were a believer or not, you remained fascinated by what you read and learned. Surely, many questions that arose while you were reading The Bible remained unanswered. Why? Because the Bible is very complex book that requires an individual to have a lot of knowledge to understand it.

Firstly, it is good to know the original languages, in which the Bible was written, and which provide the great beauty of the texts that we lose through translation. That is why the original Biblical languages are taught at BTS.

Secondly, it is good to know the history and therefore the geography of the ancient world where the events described in the Holy Scriptures took place. That is why at BTS we study history and geography of the biblical world.

The Bible is not only a collection of historical and poetic books, but it contains teachings that are spread throughout the Holy Scriptures, and that is why at BTS we have the course, Systemic Theology, which deals with various Biblical doctrines and teachings.

If you wish to interpret the Bible and speak to others about the teachings of the Holy Scriptures, you will have to learn hermeneutics and homiletics at BTS.

During the years of study at BTS, I went through these courses. And the more I studied, the more I discovered the beauty of Scripture and the greatness of God. That's why I strongly recommend and advise anyone who wants to get to know the Bible and God himself better to enroll at BTS.





Pastor Saša Raimović - Evangelical Church Niš

I grew up in a Christian family. My father was a pastor and founder of the church. So, I practically grew up in the church and have been involved in the ministry since I was a child. I graduated from the electrical engineering high school, and so I was thinking about what to study next, what university to choose. I got married at the age of 18 and had my first child at the age of 19. I had to start working because I had already started a family. After some time, I started thinking about continuing with my studies again. A long time ago there were several choices, electronic faculty at the University of Niš, I wanted to be a programmer. The second choice was the faculty of philosophy, to study languages or psychology.

I heard about the Baptist Church in Niš from some friends, and decided to visit it (by the way, I am from a Pentecostal church). I met wonderful people there, and I fell in love with that church. I continued to visit the church every week. It just resonated with me that the Sunday services are held in the morning at the Baptist

After one morning service, while we were having fellowship and coffee, in a conversation with Pastors Emanuel and Čedo, I learned that they were about to start a Theological Seminary. And it was at that time that I was thinking about college. Then I knew, this is it! I want to study theology.

We started in 2013, and only then did I see how much I actually don't know and how much I still need to learn and study the Bible, even though I've been reading it since I learned to read. Each course I took opened both my eyes and my mind, but also my heart was filled up more and more. With each new course I would fall in love with the Bible over and over again! The more I learned about God, the more I loved Him!

Somehow, I always knew that God was calling me to the ministry, but at BTS I was absolutely sure of it! I loved all the courses, but homiletics and hermeneutics were my favorite ones and most stunning courses. Why stunning? I started preaching even before I enrolled at BTS, but only when I heard about homiletics, only then did I see how much I actually knew nothing about preaching! I still read and study the Bible today! I still see how much more I must learn. Those four years were the best time for me! BTS has always been like an oasis of peace for me! With excellent professors and very wise seminary leaders who are also pastors with great experience; it was my stepping stone to the current ministry I have.

Today I have four children, and together with my wife, I serve the Evangelical Church in Niš! I am the pastor of a church, and we have a very developed range of ministries with children and teenagers. We have several home groups in the surrounding villages. We also have a team of people who are with us and faithfully help us to build together Christ's kingdom on earth! I am also a lecturer at the Roma Bible School, where we try to build up young and older people as well and prepare them for the mission!

In conclusion, I sincerely recommend BTS to anyone who is considering serving God full time! Also, if anyone just want to study the Bible and get to know it even better, I highly recommend BTS! Can we serve God without a seminary diploma? We can, absolutely, but the question is, how?! I would like to quote my homiletic's professor. "Would you go to a doctor who didn't graduate from medical school?"



Pastor Marjan Stanković - Prokuplje Evangelical Church

The time and culture in which we live is subject to rapid changes where we are bombarded with various information every day. Due to such dynamics, it is very difficult and challenging for a leader to remain on the right path without a precise and clear knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. One of the reasons why I enrolled at BTS was precisely the desire that a clearer, better, and deeper understanding of the Holy Scriptures would help my faith to be based on solid and reformed biblical teaching.

I will cite the words of Professor Michael Erickson: 'there is something called blessed despair'. And that means - you think you know something and then you start studying theology and you see that you actually don't know as much as you thought you did, and that's why you want to learn even more. This challenged me and created in me the desire to dedicate myself even more intensively to studying and learning, because there were areas in my ministry that I knew needed to be improved.

Studying at BTS built me up, encouraged me and made me think again more deeply and responsibly about topics such as church planting, the importance of preaching, discipleship, evangelism.

The lectures were very clear, direct, honest, and applicable - many things I heard and learned at BTS, I regularly apply in my pastoral ministry.

Fellowship, new friendships, and conversations with professors really had a good influence on me. BTS is a place that I sincerely recommend to all Christians, especially leaders and pastors, because it is the only institution in this part of the country that provides high quality, reformed, biblical teaching.

I am in the pastoral ministry, I serve in two churches, in Prokuplje and Pirot, and with my team we visit several home groups in various villages around Prokuplje. In addition to the various activities that we have in the church, I would like to single out children's work that both me and my wife love. In addition to planting churches and raising future leaders, our vision is also to work with children. We have an extremely dedicated, passionate, and responsible team for this ministry. Together with my wife Slavica and two children Philip and Andrew, we are involved in various church activities where we serve with our God given talents and gifts.

PROFESSORS ABOUT BTS

The Word of God knows no boundaries

The Balkan Mission Foundation finds its roots in the Bible text, 1 John 3:17 "But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?" Previously, the foundation was called 'Macedonia' and was founded in 1985 to offer direct help to pastor Simo Ralevic. Praying to God, with His help and financial support from a Dutch organization, the foundation has been able to fulfil its work until today. In 2001, partly due to the fall of Yugoslavia, the name was changed to Balkan Mission.

In 1984, pastor K. Veldman sent a letter to Simo Ralevic. He had met him several times at the Leicester Conference in England. In the writing, he asked whether he had any difficulties and if so, whether he could help him. Simo Ralevic experienced the letter as a miracle of God and wrote back: 'This was a letter received from the LORD, for we are without the necessary clothes for the winter and without means to heat ourselves. The roof of our house is broken and lying open. Some time I was faced with a dilemma: either a new booklet to be printed for the spread of literature, or take care of personal needs. We were determined to 'Seek first the Kingdom of God....! And behold, your letter from Holland. He had performed great miracles at distress!'

Since 2013 the BTF in Nis has been supported by the Balkan Mission in the Netherlands. On the one hand the Balkan Missions provides financial support for the operational costs. On the other hand are lectures given by Dutch theological professors. A part of the classes are taught by Dutch teachers. The foundation's wish and prayer is as the text in Luke 10 : 2. Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.

In 2018 and 2019 professor M. Veldman started with the subject Introduction to the systematic Theology. As introduction he spoke about Matthew 28: 16-20. Why did the disciples have to go to Galilee? Christ had also started His work over there. But that is not the most important thing. It was the Galilee of the Gentiles, people who walked in darkness. Isaiah 9:1 'Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations: It was on the dividing line between Israel and gentiles. There the light will shine, and from there over the whole world. Right there Christ calls His disciples to begin their task as proclaimers of the word, at the dividing line of peoples and cultures. In a dark place; on the front line as front soldiers of the heavenly kingdom.

In 2019 professor W. van Vlastuin gave the lectures about The Trinity and since 2020 he is teaching the student about the Heidelberg Catechism once a year. The catechism has been in use since the early church and in the period of the Reformation hundreds of different catechisms were designed. The Heidelberg Catechism is one of the most well known catechisms. It should not be as a human writing against the divine Bible. A catechism wants to be nothing more than the explanation and a summarised message of the Bible by means of different themes. What does the Bible say about the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the law, the prayer, etc. The Heidelberg catechism is divided in three main parts, into misery, redemption and gratitude. Why are the sacraments not in the piece of gratitude and why is the law not in the piece of misery? 'In discussing of this last theme was about the discovery of abiding sin. With a reference to 1 Tim. 1:15. I asked if the greatest sinner in the society wanted to stand. They were all willing to stand. I thought that was a precious moment! The book 'The theology of the Heidelberg Catechism: a reformation synthesis by Bierma / Lyle D, has been translated in the Serbian language for the students and will be printed soon.

Professor de Vries lectured since 2020 lessons about The Old Testament. He gave five lectures on the prophets focusing on their calling and message. The Old Testament office of prophet is not comparable in every way comparable to that of a preacher, but there are several similarities. Also a preacher needs an inner calling, though in distinction to a prophet he is also called by a congregation and by a church assembly appointed. At the heart of the prophetic message was the call of repentance to God. The righteous was to be told that it shall be well with him but the wicked it shall be ill with him. The prophetic message was the message of the two ways. Salvation will be only in the God of Israel. Return to Him is necessary for everyone. Repentance was always accompanied by repentance for sin, but leads also to joy in God. It was not difficult to draw lines to the message that still needs to be proclaimed in the churches all over the world.

Professor Van Appeldoorn was in Nis to speak about the New Testament with the students. The subject was the Four Portraits and The One Jesus. We noticed the four descriptions of the Gospel. Each evangelist has his own emphases. Besides the great commonality between the descriptions, there are also differences between the authors. Matthew, for instance, was written primarily particularly written for the Jews. This can be seen, among other things, from the many quotations from the Old Testament in Matthew's Gospel. Several other distinctive features of Matthew were looked at. Mark, for example, shows that the author mainly wants to demonstrate that the Lord Jesus is the Son of God. This is in contrast to Matthew. Matthew mainly calls attention to the fact that the Lord Jesus is THE Christ, the long-promised Messiah. The Luke's Gospel places the life of the Saviour in Roman history and he is emphatic for the importance of the gospel for the Gentiles. He is the one who also quotes Isaiah 40:6, for example, that 'all flesh shall see the salvation of God. John's Gospel emphasizes the Deity of the Savior. In John we read of two kinds of people: believers or unbelievers, in the light or in darkness. The call was emphasised that we should leave the darkness and go to the light. We must not be from 'below' but born from 'above'. Finally, the essence of faith was discussed. John emphasised that we must not only believe, but also what true faith focuses on, namely, on God, the Lord Jesus, the Word and His deeds. These are the objects of true faith.

In 2023 visited Dr. J. van Doleweerd the BTF in order to give lectures about How to teach children and teen about the Bible. In the programme, brought together the biblical message and pedagogy around some practical themes: Bible storytelling, religious formation talks, Bible reading methods and Liturgy. Each day ended with a practical exercise. Throughout the course, students were encouraged to put their new insights into an essay. Some quotes from students after the course: 'Our vocation as Bible teacher or Sunday school leader matters. It is not just another task, but very responsible! "A world opened up for me. There is much more about Christian education to learn and think about to think about than I thought. For example about the different approaches and roles you as a teacher can have. We can do much more do with our teaching. My teaching can be much richer and better and more effective, I have learned.' 'Love is important. Loving God and loving our neighbour (children). Children in the church come into a family. They need to be able to trust us. This requires that we show the image of Christ. That is a high calling. It is much more responsible work than I thought. It is about the reliability of the Word of God and the next generation in the church.' 'I bring the Word of God in the classroom and ask to my children to imitate that, to respond to that. My teaching needs to be more communicative, also the point of community is important and I also need to be transparent about my own faith, my doubts, my temptations. The Word of God is much more practical than I thought. It contains many instructions that I can apply in my teaching practice. I understood how important it is to teach literal Bible verses is and that you need to be prepared welly. I see now that I need to use real Bibles and that the phone is not the best medium. It is important to have a good attitude, and even the way how to be dressed as a teacher is also a part of education!'

The Balkan Mission is delighted and thankful to be able to contribute in this way to the education of the students of BTF. We hope and pray that the gospel continues from generation to generation also in the Balkan. Psalm 78: 4 We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done.

Mr Klaas Mulder - Balkan Mission

We thank God for all those who made founding and work of BTS possible, a seminary that is now celebrating its tenth anniversary. Several generations of students, in addition to being called from the Lord to the ministry and theological education they received, have taken or are about to take the next life step of full-time ministry.

The truth revealed in the following verse: "Many are called but few are chosen..." refers to salvation by God's choice. However, parallel to this truth, we can conclude that there is a selective calling of individuals for a higher ministry of serving the Body of Christ, the Church: "Many are called but few are chosen".

Let's analyze the example of the apostle Paul, who received a call from God in a spectacular way, although at first, he did not know what was happening to him. The man of God, Ananias, in Damascus at the time, received a message from the Lord concerning Paul: "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

To everyone's surprise, the one who persecuted Christ's followers immediately began to preach the saving message of the Gospel in Jesus Christ. That was just the beginning of the apostle Paul's ministry, although after those first steps of ministry, he was supposed to spend three years in Arabia.

Moses, in addition to being taught all the Egyptian wisdom, was powerful in words and deeds, he also had to learn a lot more, while he spent 40 years in the desert "service" tending sheep.

After spending three years with the Lord, the apostle Peter himself was in torment, when the Lord Jesus asked him three times: He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep. Take care of my sheep! Feed my sheep!" - were the words of advice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

From the examples of God's servants mentioned above, in addition to a calling and theological education, there should be another important feature of pastoral ministry, which is love for all people. God's servant should love people, because only with pastoral love will his ministry be more successful.

We wish BTS students a successful ministry in accordance with their calling, theological education and above all pastoral love for repentant and unrepentant sinners: Feed the lambs, tend and feed the sheep of Christ!



Dr. h. c. Branko Tihovejić - Pastor - Baptist Church Zaječar

Dear friends at BTS,

I am so encouraged to hear that you are celebrating the 10th anniversary of the founding of BTS, and that the Lord has sustained the seminary over this period. It was my privilege to lecture on the "Doctrine of Scripture" for a week in 2015.

I was with you under the umbrella of 'Pastor Training International', and visited with Simon Percy. The fellowship was rich, the food was delicious, and I found the faculty and students to be warm, appreciative, and responsive. Clear convictions about the foundational importance, divine authority, and complete sufficiency of Scripture are absolutely essential as a basis for the work of the seminary, and the training of pastors. I sought to convey to the students that the Bible is the sole rule of faith and practice, because "all Scripture is breathed out by God, and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work."

As you retain this conviction, communicate it to each new generation of students, build their confidence in the Bible, and train them how to interpret, preach, and apply it, I believe you will be carrying out a vital service to Christ and His church for many years to come.

With my warm greetings,

Bruce Jenkins - Pastor of Chiltern Evangelical Church - Caversham, UK



Dear friends at BTS,

Our first contacts date back to 1986. In that year we invited our dear brother Simo Ralević to visit Holland. Together with Simo and some Dutch pastors we travelled to England, to Leicester University, where a ministers' conference was held, organized by the Banner of Truth Trust. At that conference we also got into contact with Čedo, Dragisa and Branko. Several years later we got into touch with Emanuel too.

Afterwards we founded the Balkan Mission organization. Throughout the years, it was always a joy to visit Serbia and to have the opportunity to preach in your churches in Peć, Arandjelovac and Niš.

I will never forget the foundation of Balkan Theological Seminary. On 27th October 2013 we were there together with you and Jeremy Marshall. In three sessions I lectured on the Reformation.

Two people who were present at that time are now - ten years later - dearly missed, viz. brother Simo Ralević and brother Jeremy Marshall. Their mission has ended. They have received the wages of a faithful servant. They are now with the Lord. Both have tried with all the love of their hearts to glorify a Triune God, whom they now glorify eternally without any shortcoming or sin.

What a great privilege for poor sinners such as we are, to be saved by grace through faith. That all of us may have the desire to lift up the banner of free grace and proclaim forgiveness of sin by the blood and righteousness of Christ.

We remember the enthusiasm, the cordial atmosphere as well as the students, professors and pastors showing much interest in the lectures.

We hope and pray that studying theology at BTS will bear rich fruit. The church is in great need of sound preaching. That pastors may be equipped well here to preach and to teach and to become faithful missionaries. Not only with a lot of knowledge of the Old and New Testaments, systematic theology, exegesis, and church history, but also that the men may develop a real pastor's heart. That they may be men who are called by God to the ministry, who have a real compassion for the souls of the unreached and are aware of and concerned about the dangers facing the flock of Christ.

I hope and pray that the students will become pastoral leaders in their churches. To serve the church, to proclaim the Gospel of free grace and to glorify the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ. That they will be means in God's hands for the salvation of lost sinners.

We wish the staff and students, together with the guests and visitors a blessed conference on 27th October 2023, marking the 10th anniversary of BTS.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all.

Dear brothers at BTS, the Lord bless you and make you a blessing, as He did in the past, is doing now and will do in the future.

With warm Christian greetings,

Ds. C.L. Onderdelinden - The Netherlands Ex Chairman of Balkan Mission



We take ten years since the founding of BTS as a long-term continuation of our work. As one of the founders and professors, I am personally encouraged by all past and present events. I am also aware that this is just the beginning because there are big events ahead of us. I am encouraged by the students who have graduated and those who are studying.

It is important for all those who are called by God to the ministry to receive a high Theological education. I am also encouraged by all the professors and direct leadership of the seminary programs, Čedo and Emanuel Ralević in their roles.

By God's grace, I would like to give my full contribution in the further leadership of the seminary and the practical application of the courses I teach, 'Evangelism and Church Planting'.



Dr.h.c. Dragiša Armuš - Pastor HBC Vrnjačka Banja & BTS Chairman / Baptist Union Secretary



Dear brothers and sisters, professors and students of BTS. I greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and I wish all of you abundant blessings of God in your life and ministry for the Lord. First of all, I would like to express my great gratitude to the Lord God, who by His grace, 10 years ago, made it possible to establish the seminary in Niš and for the fact that during this time of the existence of the seminary, His merciful hand was with all of you and that He poured out his grace on His work through it. I am grateful to God that I, at least to a small extent, could be a part of this miraculous work of God and that as a professor I could participate in the preparation of the saints for the work of service (Eph. 4:12).

I am grateful for this form of cooperation with you and it was always a blessing for me to fellowship with you during those few days I would spend at the seminary and teach. I believe that this type of Biblical education, which is both practical and academic, is very much needed for today's spiritual leaders in churches in Serbia. We are witnessing that there are fewer and fewer workers for the Lord Jesus and the mission field is getting bigger. That is why I am thankful that BTS stands in ministry to the Lord with a desire, to awaken young people to the work of service and to encourage their zeal for the Lord.

Therefore, on this occasion, I would like to encourage young people, that if you feel that God is calling you or has already called you to the ministry, BTS is the right place for you where you will determine your calling, where you will be theologically and practically prepared for the ministry and clearly experience where and in what way God wants you in service, for His glory, for the blessing of Christ's church and for the salvation of many more people.

May God bless the ministry of BTS in the time ahead.

Pastor dr. Darko Kraljik
Bratislava Baptist Church
Precept Leader Academy





Dear brothers,

I find it incredibly inspiring to witness the work being done by BTS. My introduction to the gospel's impact in Serbia occurred while I was in England, and it brought me great joy to learn about the establishment of a seminary many years later. It was even more heartening to witness the partnership between MINTS and BTS in the endeavor to train men for ministry.

During my visits to BTS as a lecturer for MINTS on two occasions, I was profoundly impressed by the unwavering dedication and fervor exhibited by both the students and faculty in their pursuit of theological education. The atmosphere was one of intellectual rigor and spiritual growth, underscoring the profound significance of studying the Bible as a preparation for pastoral ministry.

BTS's unwavering commitment to providing future religious leaders with a solid foundation in biblical knowledge lays a cornerstone for the church in the generations to come. They gain not only a comprehensive understanding of the Bible but also acquire the skills needed for effective leadership and spiritual guidance.

I trust the Lord will allow these things to grow from strength to strength in the years to come.

Dr. Julian Zugg - MINTS President

My journey to the Balkan Theological Seminary began in 2016 when I taught a course in Christian ethics. It was a delight to meet Emanuel, his family members, and all the eager students ready to study how to apply biblical principles to ethical dilemmas. It was my first trip to the Balkan region, and it was fascinating to learn about Serbia's rich history.

I discovered that God had called Emanuel to start a theological institute where young men and women have an opportunity to study God's word at a graduate level! Since 2016, I have been back to Serbia twice to teach Christian ethics. It's encouraging to see that BTS now has a strong track record of providing Christian higher education to students who are preparing for the ministry.

Gary Elkins, PhD Toccoa Falls College



I met Čedo Ralević in 1988, if I recall rightly. I was a new missionary in Yugoslavia learning Serbo-Croatian in Belgrade. I was to become a teacher at the Eastern European Bible Institute in Vienna, which I later did. I was deeply impressed by Čedo's friendliness, his kindness, his warm spirit and openness to working with other Christians.

When his son, Emanuel, and his daughter-in-law, Jelena, wanted to come to study at Tyndale Theological Seminary in Badhoevedorp, the Netherlands when I was teaching there, I was very happy to have them as students. They were both serious and dedicated students and did very well academically. They were also considerate and kind to their fellow students and well-liked.

I was deeply impressed with Emanuel's desire to start a training institute in Nis to help train pastors from around his area. I was glad to be able to teach there once, Apologetics.

I was also happy to refer some other friends to teach there. I am impressed with Emanuel, Jelena and Čedo's dedication to BTS. It has been a great joy to see Emanuel and Jelena develop in ministry and to see the seminary grow and maintain its witness and mission. I wish you all another ten years, at least, of God's richest blessing and supply! Your dedication to your homeland is an inspiration!

Dr Philip Gatschalk - Tyndale Theological Seminary Holland

Three times I gave during a week lecture for Balkan Theological Seminary. The last time was September this year on the Pentateuch within the course Introduction to OT Theology. I noticed the biblical and reformed stance of the seminary and the thoroughness of the programme it offers. Although it has a Reformed Baptist constitution, I think is a good thing that students from other backgrounds who heartily accept the final authority of Scripture are welcome. I pray that the Lord may bless the labours of Balkan Theological Seminary to provide the churches on the Balkan with faithful ministers who proclaim the whole counsel of God, of human sin and depravity and of Christ as the only and complete Saviour so that they who hear this gospel, glorify in the Lord alone.



Dr. Pieter de Vries
Lecturer of foundation 'Godsvrucht en wetenschap' (Piety and Learning)
Retired minister of the Restored Reformed Church (Hersteld Hervormde Kerk)



We are grateful to God for the 10th anniversary of the Balkan Theological Seminary (BTS) with its center in Nis. In these challenging, unpredictable, fear inspired times more than ever we need excellent education and knowledge from the Bible to keep our faith in God grounded and strengthened despite all that surrounds us and awaits us in the future.

This is exactly what BTS has been doing all these years, and we congratulate them on their important mission. God said a long time ago through the prophet Hosea: "My people are perishing, perishing because they have no knowledge" Hosea 4:6. Unfortunately, we see great ignorance in our area regarding the Holy Scriptures and even God himself, where human tradition has become more important than the essence and foundation of Christianity/the Bible.

We are all witnesses in these times that believers are less and less interested in reading and studying the Bible, which unfortunately reflects on the spiritual strength of the individual as well as the church. The Bible unambiguously calls us to study thoroughly, memorize the verses from the Bible and most importantly with the help of the power of the Holy Spirit to apply/live the truths from the Bible in our daily life and the times in which we find ourselves and serve. Apostle Paul warns his associate Timothy and all of us (the Church) for all these few thousand years about the importance and centrality of the Holy Scriptures in the holy life of the Church and the individual.

"All Scripture is inspired by God and useful for instruction,
for counseling, for correcting, for bringing up in righteousness, so that the man of God will be kind,
ready for every good work"
2 Timothy 3:16

Aurelius Augustine (354/430 AD), also known as Augustine of Hippo, and best known as St. Augustine, a Roman writer, philosopher and theologian who is remembered as one of the most important figures in the history of Christianity, when he was struggling with his sinful lifestyle, he asked the following question: "What now, Lord, and how long will this state of affairs last?" Then they heard a nearby child's penetrating voice, chanting and repeating: ("Tolle - lege, tolle - lege! in Latin)", meaning "Take - and read!". He immediately took the Bible and began to read the Epistle to the Romans, and thus God converted him. He writes: "You turned me to yourself!"

May many people here in the Balkans experience this kind of conversion through reading and studying the Bible. BTS has precisely this role to raise and educate existing and future preachers, teachers, evangelists and missionary workers to guide all people to the deep truths of the Holy Scriptures. May God use BTS in the next 10 years to raise Christ's Church through constant education and training. We pray to God that Dean Emanuel Ralevic and his team will be even more committed so that BTS will be that loud penetrating voice in the Balkans in the next decade that calls all people and directs them to the Holy Scriptures-Bible: "Tolle - lege, tolle - lege!", "Take - and read!"

Samuil Petrovski
Pastor ECF Belgrade
IFES National Director

My introduction to the history of BTS was when, as a child, I would go on mission trips with my father, Rev. K. Veldman and the family to visit and bring Bibles to Rev. Simo Relavic. One of the indirect blessings of those missionary efforts was the establishment of BTS, under the direction of Rev. Cedo Ralevic and his son, Rev. Emanuel Relavic. Since then, after having become a pastor and professor myself, BTS has invited me to preach and teach theology to students of BTS in Serbia.

What a privilege and blessing that has been. Yes, the Lord has been good and faithful for the 10 years of BTS's existence, and we pray will be in the future for the establishment and extension of His Kingdom in Serbia.

Rev Dr. Meine Veldman
Reformed Church of America, Ontario, Canada
President Evangelical Reformed College



Ever since I found out about the Balkan Theological Seminary in Niš, I was positively surprised with the opportunities offered, and later with the complete work, effort, and commitment to the education of young people in the south of Serbia.

I was most encouraged by the fact that BTS is flexible, so students can be from different denominations. That is why Pastor Bojan and I decided to send six believers from our "Roma Church" from Leskovac to study at BTS. All of them, as students, always showed enthusiasm and satisfaction with the acquired knowledge at this Seminary. Since one of the main visions of our church is "Discipleship", BTS program fully fits into our mutual collaboration, where, through teaching, young students receive the qualities that help them improve discipleship in our church. Another very important thing is fighting against the lack of education among the Roma, to which BTS greatly contributes.

And the third, very important thing for us is planting new churches and saving of souls. Without raising educated leaders, elders, and pastors, this is impossible.

This year I was honored with an invitation, which I wholeheartedly accepted, to be a member of the extended board of Balkan Theological Seminary.

May the Lord God bless and guide BTS with the anointing of the Holy Spirit and may hundreds and thousands of students be educated and armed with knowledge for the salvation of our Serbia.

Pastor Šerif Bakić - Spiritual Center Svetlost Leskovac

I give thanks to the Lord for the tenth anniversary of the Balkan Theological Seminary (BTS) and for the students who have benefitted from the teaching and opportunities for ministry it has provided. It was my privilege to teach in its earliest years and I have happy memories of the fellowship with both students and staff. I gave a series of lectures to introduce hermeneutics to the students and their commitment to the inspiration and authority of Scripture was abundantly evident. The students listened attentively in the lectures and we had good discussions, both in and out of the classroom. BTS is providing a sound biblical foundation that is crucial to its students for their future ministry and so will prove to be for the spiritual good of the peoples of the Balkans.

It is a joy to know that the work continues. I send my greetings to all involved and the assurance of my prayerful good wishes and continued support.

Rev Martin Leech
Former Director
European Missionary Fellowship, U.K.





Greetings on behalf of my family, my church, and the good people of America. It is with profound gratitude and unparalleled blessedness that I thank our Lord God for the opportunity to co-labor with you at the Balkan Theological Seminary (BTS) in Nis, Serbia! What a joy!

For over 10 years, I have been a professor at the Seminary and I have experienced the professionalism and dedication of the entire faculty and staff. The qualities of leadership demonstrated at the Seminary are clear and undeniable: BTS and its professors are academically sharp – spiritually discerning – dedicated to the truths of God’s inerrant Scripture...and most importantly, most humble in its pursuit of “servant leadership” in caring for students and demonstrating the love of our Savior.

I have had the wonderful opportunity to travel to other countries and teach God’s Word – Armenia, Poland, Ukraine, Guatemala, Africa, and the United States. I say in all truth and honesty that my singular pride and joy is to visit you and serve at the Balkan Theological Seminary! Praise the Lord!!!

I consider as one of the greatest privileges of my life to serve on the faculty of the Balkan Theological Seminary!

Dr. Michael E. Erickson, PhD
Professor of Bible and Theology
Faith Theological Seminary at Catonsville, MA USA

I was especially honored when I was invited to teach at BTS, which as a theological educational institution is a logical consequence of the long-term dedicated service of the Ralević family and the Christian Baptist Church in Niš, and elsewhere in Serbia. Their church ministry, and especially publishing ministry of brother Simo Ralević, made a great contribution in establishing sound foundations of the Evangelical body in the region of former Yugoslavia, including Macedonia.

They also played a significant role in my spiritual development as a young Christian. Reading the biblical studies and sermons of brother Simo Ralević, I was strongly encouraged to devote myself to theological education and serving the Lord. That is why I consider it a great blessing to be part of a team of such exceptional lecturers at BTS.



My personal impression by serving at BTS is the dedication of the entire team in building a Christian educational institution, which not only provides strong theological knowledge, but also trains Christian workers to practically apply knowledge in their ministries. This practical focus of BTS is the basis for intensifying missionary activity in planting new churches and strengthening existing ones.

The personal example of the entire BTS team, which shows exceptional care for students and lecturers, hospitality, as well as selfless help to students for successful learning and service, also has a significant contribution to building dedicated servants.

Therefore, I believe that BTS is a real bright spot in Christian education and service not only in Serbia but also in the wider Balkans.

Pastor Mite Goshev
Good News Church – Skopje Macedonia
Lecturer of Church History and Patrology



CURRICULUM - STUDY PROGRAM OF BALKAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Balkan Theological Seminary primarily aims to shape the mind and heart in the spirit of biblical, evangelical, intellectual and academic heritage. In this way, we provide professional theological education and practical training focused on pastoral and missionary work. With the greatest care the faculty draws the biblical values of God's revelation, integrating them systematically through study programs.

At Balkan Theological Seminary, higher education activities are carried out through professional studies, which equip students for the application and development of theological knowledge and skills needed for today's church ministry.

Based on the above, according to Bologna Process, (European Higher Education), the FIRST and SECOND degrees of study and one-year certified program are carried out, which can be seen in more detail in the table below:

DEGREE OF STUDY	TYPE OF STUDY	DURATION	TOTAL *ECTS
2nd	MA in professional theological studies	Two year (4 semesters)	120 ECTS
1st	BA in professional theological studies	Three years (6 semesters)	180 ECTS
	Bible Certificate in professional theological studies	One year (6 semesters)	60 ECTS

1. Bible Certificate in professional theological studies

One-year theological program (10 compulsory and 2 elective courses). Upon successful completion, a BTS Certificate is obtained. If you would like to learn the biblical basics, the skills of expository preaching, the way to interpret and contextualize the biblical message, as well as to thoroughly and systematically study the basics of theology and church doctrine, then one-year program is the right program for you. You will learn to studiously approach spiritual values, and at the same time you will work on your spiritual growth.

2. BA in professional theological studies

The BA three-year study program of theology provides knowledge of the triune God and the relationship that connects him with man in the history of salvation. The study plan presents courses that enable a student to learn biblical foundations and systematic, practical, moral and spiritual - theology. The form of study suits those who need to balance education with family obligations, with employment or with other studies.

This program enables intellectual and spiritual deepening of faith and prepares students for subsequent master's studies in the same field. Students have the privilege of acquiring, in addition to theological disciplines, interdisciplinary knowledge from various fields such as ethics, psychology, Christian pedagogy, biblical and foreign languages.

The right to enroll in BA studies is available to all candidates who have completed a four-year secondary school of all professions. Candidates who have completed a three-year secondary education only must complete a 4th year as well prior to enrolling at this program.

BA program is accredited by Miami International Seminary.

3. MA in professional theological studies

As from 2024 Balkan Theological Seminary will offer MA in professional theological studies to all candidates who are interested in enrolling at this program. This program is designed to meet the needs of pastoral care and church-mission work in today's modern world.

It implies the acquisition of competencies necessary for preaching the Gospel, taking care of believers, teaching the basics of faith. It is also necessary for valuable and ethical service to modern society. The Master's program is demanding, foundational and invaluable for leadership positions, as it prepares students to serve Christ and His Church through Biblical, experiential and practical service.

The Master's program at BTS is conducted in cooperation and with accreditation of important theological institutions, namely: Miami International Seminary – MINTS, Florida (USA). Another great theological institution that BTS is working on cooperation and accreditation is Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary from Michigan (USA).

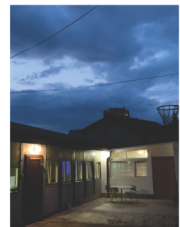
After completing the master's program, the student will be able to engage in detailed exegesis of Bible verses, using expert knowledge of the original languages, historical circumstances, literary and theological relationships. The student will understand the main issues in faith and life that the Church has faced throughout its history. The student will be able to systematize exegetical, historical and theological data into a consistent and coherent theology and explain how that theology applies to the personal beliefs and behavior of believers. He will use homiletic skills to proclaim the Word of God to the Church. Develop effective pastoral skills in leading worship, teaching youth, exercising leadership and administration, public counseling from the pulpit and in person, and engage in evangelistic mission work. All persons with completed BA studies, primarily in theology, have the right to enroll, and it is possible - with prequalification exams - to enroll candidates who have BA in one of the social and humanistic science.

Balkan Theological Seminary in Niš is primarily focused on the education of servant-leaders who should become Christ-like. Our teaching ministry exists to spiritually form students, to glorify God and be changed to stand firmly on the foundations of Christ's teachings. This means that they will not only progress intellectually but will grow spiritually by experiencing a spiritual transformation towards maturity and Christ-like character. In this way, they establish the potential for church and missionary service with children, youth and adults.

BTS



10BTF
BALKANSKI TEOLOŠKI FAKULTET



BTS BOARD



Emanuel Ralević
Member / BTF Dean & General Secretary



Ćedo Ralević
Member / BTF President



Dragiša Armuš
Member / Chairman



Mite Gošev
Member



Branko Tihovević
Member

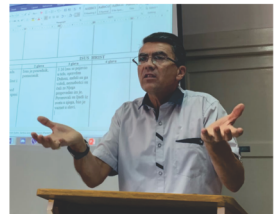
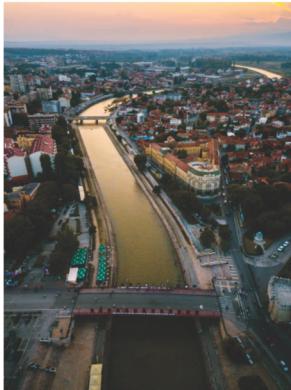


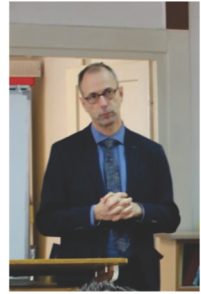
Michael Erickson
Member



Šerif Bakić
Member







IN MEMORIAM

Jeremy Marshall (1963-2023)

"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you". Phil.4:8-9

The apostle Paul gives us himself as an example. As I think of late Jeremy, his love, his compassion, his true friendship, it is truly one of a kind. His life was indeed an example to follow. We all should put into practice what he was doing. One to one evangelism, comforting, counseling, loving us all, things that he was doing are as admirable as they can be. What an encouragement he was! Few months ago, he was on video call with me and Cedo, he noticed that I was tired and stressed out. With a gentle and humbling voice, he told me "Emanuel do not worry God will take care of it". That is who Jeremy was! No, we did not lose our friend Jeremy, heaven needed him, his heavenly Father needed him home. The day will come when we shall see him again and spend eternity with him.

Jeremy Marshall has been one of the very close fellow-workers and consultants of the Balkan Theological Seminary, since its

foundation. Unfortunately, he recently passed away and went to be with his Lord.

In memory of his contribution to the development of the Seminary that he loved, we bring you a text commemorating his life written by Ian Hamilton - Banner of Truth Trust.

A Tribute

Jeremy Marshall passed into the nearer presence of the God he loved and served with such delight on Sunday morning, 13 August 2023.

Since he was first diagnosed with cancer ten years ago, Jeremy gave himself to redeeming every moment of every day in the service of his Saviour, Jesus Christ. I cannot think of a life that more humbly and uncomplainingly sought to embrace God's sore providence and use it for his glory. Jeremy was greatly privileged to be born of godly parents, his late father John and his mother Susan. With his three sisters, Deborah, Sarah and Becky, Jeremy grew up in a wonderfully rich, feisty, loving, richly human and deeply Christ-loving home. In God's gracious providence, Jeremy could not avoid being shaped by the intellectual rigour of his parents, and above all by their wholehearted devotion to the God of the Bible and evangelistic passion. Much could be written about Jeremy's intellectual brilliance and his achievements in the business world. He attended Cambridge and became the CEO of Hoare's Bank, the UK's oldest private bank. As one friend wrote, "He never let his achievements overshadow his humility, kindness, and generosity. He made those he met feel cared for". But in the values of eternity, Jeremy will be best remembered for his faith in Jesus Christ, his love for and commitment to his family, and his unwearied passion to share the Gospel of the grace of God wherever he went.

When Jeremy was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer in 2013, he resolved to live the remainder of his allotted years to make known Jesus Christ as 'a dying man to dying men'. He wrote a book, *Beyond the Big C*, that detailed his cancer journey and spoke of the living hope that Christians have in their risen Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Eternity alone will reveal the impact his life and living faith had on so many.



IN MEMORIAM

Many years ago, I listened to the Marshall children hilariously recount their escapades with Mum and Dad, travelling to Eastern Europe with Bibles and gospel tracts hidden in their Volvo. As I listened I thought, "This is a wonderful family. These are richly privileged and blessed children." One of them is now in the nearer presence of the Saviour he loved. Jeremy leaves behind, but only for a time, his beloved wife Jeanette, their three adult children, and his dear mother Susan. May his life inspire us all to work while it is yet day, for the night comes, when no one will work (see John 9:49).

Simo Ralević (1940 -2021)

From his conversion in the 1960s until he moved to the glory of his beloved Lord, brother Simo left a great mark in the Baptist world, on the land of the former Yugoslavia and much wider, beyond the borders of our country.

After completing his studies in theology in Novi Sad, brother Simo returned to his hometown Peć, Kosovo, where he soon founded a church where he faithfully served until 1999. He reluctantly left his hometown with all the members of the church during the war, came and continued his spiritual work in Nova Gajdobra and then in Arandjelovac, where he completed his earthly mission in 2021.

Brother Simo Ralević is known not only in Baptist churches but also in many other Evangelical churches for his books and brochures that he wrote, published and sent. If you were in Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia and Montenegro, certainly in Serbia, everyone among the faithful knew and gladly took and read his books that brother Simo sent them.

I would like to quote just one example, out of many. When I preached in one church, someone asked me and said "...I grew up spiritually with the books of brother Simo." Isn't that wonderful!

Brother Simo has published around 300 different titles. He was theologically very educated, in interpretation of the Bible very precise, practical, simple and easy to understand. And that's why we loved him and as such we miss him a lot. He was very disciplined, diligent and uncompromising in his presentation of Biblical truths.

He was a great teacher, evangelist, writer, traveler and always open to getting to know Biblical doctrine more deeply and applying it in his spiritual work.

He made a great and immeasurable contribution to the establishment of the Balkan Theological Seminary in Niš, where he taught the first generation since 2014. He gave lectures from the first 11 chapters of Genesis, then the Epistles to the Philippians and Colossians.

All that makes him memorable is that whatever he did, he did it to the end, competently and completely. For us, he remains a great example as a man of faith. Everything he did, and he did a lot - saying he was doing it to the glory of God.

Enjoy, dear brother, in the glory of the Lord. We miss you a lot. Let's meet up there!

Dr. h. c. Čedo Ralević



BTS STATEMENT OF FAITH

We believe that the Bible is the Holy Scripture that contains 66 books, word by word, given by God, inerrant and inspired revelation to men, and the only rule of our faith and practice.

We believe in one God who has revealed himself in three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

We believe in the Deity of Jesus Christ, His sinless birth, sinless human nature, vicarious death on the cross, physical resurrection, that He ascended into heaven, and that He will personally come again.

We believe that the Holy Spirit is the third divine person, equal in power, holiness and wisdom to God the Father and the Son. He reproves sin, regenerates and baptizes every new born Christian through faith, into the body of Christ. We believe in the necessity of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

We believe that Satan is a real person, an evil spirit being, the cause of all evil and lawlessness, and that he will surely be judged in the end and cast into the eternal lake of fire.

We believe that man is the crown of God's creation, and that he willingly transgressed the Lord's commandment and thus suffered not only physical but also spiritual death, which is separation from God. Based on this, we believe that all human beings are born with a sinful nature.

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died and rose again for our sins according to the Scriptures and that everyone who believes in Him is saved and has eternal life. Everyone who is born again is protected by God and thus salvation can never be lost.

We believe in one true church - the body of Christ, which consists of all born-again believers regardless of color and race.

We believe that baptism is a commandment of Christ, and it is performed by immersion into the water, based on the testimony of the faith of the one who is baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We believe that the Lord's Supper is Communion, an act instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ that Christians keep until the second coming of Christ.

We believe that the Gospel should be proclaimed to every person as Christ commanded: Go therefore and teach all nations...

We believe in the second coming of Christ. Then he will take his church to himself before the great tribulation and establish his millennial kingdom, and then the new heaven and the new earth. We believe that during the second coming of Christ, everyone will be resurrected.

All saved, born again Christians will be resurrected in glorified bodies for eternal life in Paradise while all unsaved, those who have not repented will be resurrected for eternal damnation in Hell.