In the late 1980s, a small Bible School opened in Odessa, Ukraine. The plan was for this school to develop into a full seminary and then move to Moscow under the Soviet regime. However, when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) dissolved officially on December 26, 1991, this plan ceased to exist. Now organized as the Odessa Theological Seminary (OTS) under the direction of the Baptist Union of Ukraine, OTS began to experience various financial and theological challenges.

As far back as 1990, Dr. Bob Provost, TMS Board member and president of the Slavic Gospel Association, had informally come alongside in support of OTS. In 1998, the Baptist Union appointed a local pastor as the new president of OTS. To provide help and encouragement to this president, Dr. Provost sent TMS alum Bret Laird (M.Div. ’02) to Odessa. From 2002 to 2012, Bret and his wife, Katey, lived nearby and Bret served the president, helping him strengthen both the seminary and his developing local church. Bret modeled expository preaching and pastoral care and was instrumental in OTS refining their academic focus to emphasize the biblical training of pastors.

Of particular note is the OTS missions training program designed by Bret to equip Ukrainian men to serve in other unreached countries. It is helping Ukraine transition from a mission field to a mission force. We praise the Lord for Bret’s long-term impact that continues to bear fruit today.

Expectantly,

Richard Mayhue, Th.D.
Executive Vice President and Dean
We Train Men as if LivesDepended on It!

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