

Ukraine outreach report

January, 1995

Dear friends,

Greetings in Jesus Wonderful Name! Having arrived safely home in December and then rushing through the holidays, we would like to sum up our time in Ukraine (November 14 - December 15).

Jackie and I ministered to seven young charismatic churches during our 30 days in Ukraine, all of which are in or near the three main cities we visited: Krivoy Rog, Krasnoarmeysk, and Kherson. These churches were started six months to two years ago. They are representative of dozens churches that have sprung up in the country since the Soviet Union was dismantled. Due to the heavy legalism in the existing denominations, there has been little choice for those who have come to know the liberty of the Spirit but to establish new non-denominational congregations. This has not been easy. With no legal status, their existence is tenuous, and they must depend on God to give them favor with the local city governments. Moreover, it is common for the denominational churches to see them as "of the devil" because they clap and raise their hands, and experience deliverance from demons. Most help from the West comes to the denominations, who shun the new charismatic churches, leaving them with little outside assistance. Furthermore, the Orthodox church wants to stop all missions and church planting. However, God is greatly blessing the new churches with healings, deliverances and conversions in large numbers.

Almost every day we had the glorious privilege of telling the gospel story and leading some to salvation. During our first meeting in Krivoy Rog, a regular midweek service of the church, twenty people came forward to receive Christ. In a public school in Kherson, sixty young people, mostly boys in their teens, packed into a small room to hear us. At the invitation all enthusiastically rose to their feet to accept Christ. On another day, in a different school, a similar thing happened in a room full of mostly college age women. Almost every day in every place it was harvest time! Frequently we led new believers into the baptism in the Holy Spirit. On one Saturday we participated in the water baptism of forty-nine converts. Over the course of time we prayed for hundreds of sick people -- one at a time -- and were privileged to hear reports of many healings. One Sunday morning in a small church near Krasnoarmeysk, four ladies came in tears to pray the sinner's prayer. When we asked how soon they could be given Bibles, we discovered that most believers do not have Bibles! This whole church pleaded right then with pastor Leonid, who had started the church, to bring them Bibles. But economic suffering has made it very difficult for this most basic of needs to be met in any of the churches we visited.

God's grace was demonstrated to us in a great way. We prospered in body and soul, and all our needs were met. This is not to say it was easy -- it was a challenge! But as always, the Lord proved Himself to be totally trustworthy!

Remember — you prayed for us, and these are the answers to your prayers!

Remember — some of you gave sacrificially, and these are the results of your gifts!

It became clear to us that these new charismatic churches are the greatest hope for the nation of Ukraine! After returning home, we learned an interesting fact: in Russia, the northern neighbor of Ukraine, there are also many new charismatic churches, most of whom are being pastored by Ukrainians! This is evidence that investment in Ukraine is strategic; out of this country is coming a new generation of laborers for the harvest fields of Ukraine and the world.

But they need help.

Throughout the journey we stayed in the homes of pastors, humbled by their gracious hospitality and inspired by their valiant service and sacrifice. We laughed together, prayed together, and came to understand something of their joys and their sorrows. As we became better acquainted with them, we learned of needs in their churches -- needs that we could see are exciting opportunities for us to participate in God's harvest in Ukraine! None of these churches asked us for money; they are trusting God as best they can. We told them that we would let our friends know about their needs. We said we couldn't promise anything, but that we would pray, and see what God will do.

Here are some areas of need that we discovered:

1. Krivoy Rog: labor cost to build pastor Gregori's new church building: \$300 per month for eight months.

Land has been given to this one year old church by the local government (a miracle!). Materials are being collected now for a new church building that will seat 500. Pastor Gregori would like to put to work ten unemployed craftsmen from his church in the actual construction of the building, but he feels the necessity to provide food for their families. Just \$300 per month will feed the families of the builders (\$30 each per month), who can finish the new building in about eight months! Construction needs to begin in March. Pastor Gregori has an apostolic anointing and burden to help the other new churches in Ukraine, and to train new pastors. The vision is for this church to be a training center for new ministries throughout Ukraine — a place for conferences, seminars and a full-time Bible School. Gregori will no doubt head up a new association for Ukrainian charismatic churches. That all makes this an important and urgent building project!

(over)

2. Krivoy Rog: monthly support of pastor Pavel until his church can support him: \$50 per month.

Pavel is the pastor of the church which we helped start in 1993. Presently the offerings from this church (about 60 people) are enough to pay for their rental of meeting space and some administrative costs; with the small amount left they are trying to help five poor single parent families, but are not able to give a salary to Pavel. Pavel and Svetlana and their four children can live adequately on \$50 per month. His goal is that his own church would provide his salary, but this may take another 1-2 years of church growth.

3. Krasnoarmeysk: New heating system and furnishings for orphanage/church building: \$2000

A former school building has been donated by the city government to pastor Leonid's church (another miracle!) We saw it. It is a solid brick building, but the heating system froze and was ruined. The boiler and radiators must be replaced. The church will use it to care for 38 orphans that are now roaming the streets of the city. The church will also hold services there. Only \$2000 will replace forty-five radiators in this building and provide a new boiler, as well as pay for 38 beds, kitchen facilities, and other furnishings. Then the orphans and church can move in!

** It is an urgent need for many churches to find a place of their own. Most of them rent the only available space in town, which is the community hall, called the "palace of culture". There is little or no heat in these buildings, and frequently the believers arrive for a meeting, only to discover that the hall has been rented to a group who was willing to pay a higher price.

4. Kherson: Two serger sewing machines, fabric and supplies to start a Christian garment business: \$800

Pastor Vladimir's wife Galena is a trained seamstress and experienced in the garment business. With many unemployed, the Lord has directed her to begin a garment business to employ people in their church. They have been given four used sewing machines by a church in Russia, but they are not sufficient for the task. \$800 will purchase two new well built Russian serger sewing machines to greatly speed up the sewing process, and provide enough fabric and supplies for them to begin. They want to start with baby clothes, which are almost impossible to find in Ukraine. They want to make quality items to be sold at a reasonable cost, thus helping meet a severe need for clothing in the community.

5. All three cities: Bibles for believers, minimum of 2000 Bibles at \$1 each. \$2000

Many believers get a New Testament when they are baptized in water. But almost none, except pastors, have whole Bibles. 2000 Bibles will supply the immediate need in the churches that we visited. We can get them in Moscow for 90 cents each (Can you believe it?) They need to be in Russian, the common language of the Ukrainians. Believers will safely transport them from Moscow to these cities in Ukraine. *Don't you agree that these Christians need whole Bibles?* Many people have an income of less than ten dollars a month; many others are unemployed. There is no better way to "help these churches help themselves", than by making sure they have the complete Word of God!

Will you pray over these opportunities and consider helping these valiant people? There is little other help coming to the churches that we visited. Will you pray about financially supporting one or more of these projects? Someone may be able to take on a whole project. Others can help a little, and together, these projects can be finished. Due to the economic situation and favorable exchange rate for American dollars, **your gifts can go a long, long way in Ukraine.**

Please return the enclosed card with your gift for these Ukrainian local churches, as the Lord directs you. *Checks should be written to Prayer International.* Clearly mark the intention of your gift by checking the project number (#1-#5) on the card. If you want to give to these needs in Ukraine, but you do not want to designate it for a particular project, then mark #6, "where needed most". You can be assured that every dollar will go 100% to the intended use, and will be speedily put to work.

We want to thank you for standing with us in this outreach to Ukraine, and for your willingness to consider helping with further prayer and giving.

Yours in Christ,

John and Jackie Matthews