



## *Lifeline*

...a prayer letter from John and Jackie

November 24 , 1999



Dear friends,

Jackie and I want to thank you for praying for us, as we travelled to California, Holland and Belgium, and then on to Ukraine. The Lord met every need!

### ***A Ukraine connection in California...***

We had a blessed time in the mountains of California, at Big Bear Christian center, getting to know the pastors and the church. We have known few pastors like these, whose hearts are so tender towards missions. It was wonderful to see how they are adopting the work in Ukraine as part of their vision. Dr. Mike, associate pastor, will be returning to Krivoy Rog in March, and several people in the church want to go with him.

### ***A last minute adventure in Minneapolis...***

After a few additional hours with Jackie's sister in L.A., we boarded the flight back to Minneapolis. There we would meet Ann who would travel with us, and get our extra bags of humanitarian aid. Thanks to pastor Jeff Orluck for getting the bags to the airport!. We still had no passports...

Our passports and visas arrived from the Ukrainian consulate in Chicago on a flight that landed in Minneapolis an hour before our return flight from California landed. We had a four hour layover before boarding the flight to Amsterdam — the only time we could meet up with our passports! They were not at the airport business desk where we were told they would be waiting for us. It was after office hours, so our travel agency and the consulate were closed. Where were they? I remembered that they were to be on a United flight, so we ran to a United check - in desk to inquire. They knew nothing. Then they remembered United had a parcel service in another part of the airport, but didn't know the phone number. Someone finally found it, called, and yes, there was a package for Matthews there. Run to the other end of the terminal, they said, and a man in a blue shirt will meet you with the package. We did, and he did. He didn't even ask for our identification... What other young senior citizens would be running across the terminal to grab that package in his hand?

It was then time to check in for our KLM flight. When we needed our passports, we had them. Hallelujah! Got a little exercise, too! Also, the remaining funds needed for our journey had come in the day before, and were now in our bank account (thanks to Becky and Cheryl at our church office!), so that we could access them with our bank card. Not early....but not late either!

### ***A whirlwind tour in Holland and Belgium...***

We were escorted by Steve and Marilyn Hill to several cities in Holland and Belgium where they have become involved in church planting. We travelled, we ate, we prayed, we enjoyed their company. We stood on the spot in the central city of Utrecht, Holland, where the first church in the nation was planted nearly 1400 years ago! Steve and Marilyn are now planting a church nearby. A wonderful three days!

### ***And on to Ukraine...***

After these three days, pastor Roger Sutch flew in to meet us in Amsterdam, and the four of us boarded the flight to Kiev. An all night train ride brought us to Krivoy Rog, where we were welcomed, fed, and rushed to two churches for the Sunday a.m. meetings. What a joy to be back with our Ukrainian friends, who now hold a favorite place in our hearts!

The main church has grown to more than one thousand people ( plus children). The 16 daughter churches range in size from 40 to 300. The Bible school has approximately 100 full time students and 200 evening part time students. About half of them are first year, the others second year.

### ***Every day was a privilege of ministry...***

Our daily schedule was teaching 10:30 a.m. till 4 p.m., with a one hour break for lunch. Evenings were spent in the evening Bible School and ministering in several of the daughter churches. Sometimes we were together as one team, and sometimes we split up to go to different places. We all taught in the Bible School. Roger and I taught on the theme of our vision and calling as believers. Jackie's subject was having the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. Ann brought vision for children's ministries.

### ***A beehive of work going on in the church...***

It is difficult to describe the "beehive" of activity that was going on at the main church. The sanctuary is under construction, being more than doubled in size to hold 1300 people, and finally 1800 when the balcony is installed. When the new half was enclosed, the meetings were moved to that side, so that the old half could be redone. Out went the wall between new and old, the floor, and a basement was now being dug out by hand under the old half to enlarge the dining room and kitchen under the sanctuary. All was being done by people willing to work just so they can eat. They were being fed three meals a day. Some were whole families. Bible School students, children, and the elderly worked together. Day after day dirt was hand shoveled and carried out in pails by this unending line of workers. Another half dozen other projects were also in progress around the place, plus classes, meetings, music practice, prayer, and people coming and going. A beehive.

### ***A list of opportunities in Krivoy Rog for prayer and giving:***

#### ***1. Suppling the daily bread...***

Some workers live in the church. With the Bible School, the homeless, the workers, and the staff, the church feeds 170 people every day. We continue to trust God to provide the funds necessary for the church to keep feeding these people. It is an important investment in the lives of the students, and a ministry of mercy to those who are in desperate need. For many, this is their only way to eat. *Will you pray with us that this need (more than \$1000 per month) continue to be met?*

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## 2. *Children's teaching materials...*

We spent time with Igor and Tanya, who direct the children's ministries, and we helped pastor Gregori ordain them as children's pastors while we were there. Under communism, it was illegal to teach children the Bible, and so there is no tradition of children's ministry in the country. Only now is the vision for children being raised up. It has not even been possible for most families to bring their children to church, since the bus fares are too costly. Last winter, a ministry of children's home cell groups began, as a way to reach and teach the children. By spring time, there were eight of these cells functioning. When we arrived this time, six months later, there were fifty-one such groups around the city, averaging 15 children each! That means over 750 children in weekly home Bible studies! And more are being started! Praise God for Igor and Tanya and the new children's workers. They do this ministry at great sacrifice, and with little materials. Their vision is for each cell group to have teachers manuals and videos from Superbook (CBN ministries) which cover the whole Bible. *The cost is about \$50 per set. They have eight sets now. They need a set for each of the fifty-one groups. Pray with us that this need will be met.*

## 3. *A car and a van...*

One of the pressing needs that makes pastor Gregori's life complicated is the need for a vehicle — *really two vehicles*. One is new car for him. His old Russian Lada has served well for many, many years, gone several hundred thousand miles, and been raised from the dead countless times. This little car has probably carried more weight in people and supplies in its lifetime than most trucks or buses! We think half the church building was hauled in this little car or in the trailer it pulled. His car is one of only three cars in the whole church of a thousand people. Now the Lada is no longer safe for driving very far, making it difficult for Gregori to visit the daughter churches. *A low mileage excellent car is available for pastor Gregori to purchase. Would you pray for a release of funds for this?*

The church also needs a van. Supplies and people could then be hauled by people other than pastor Gregori, freeing him for more important ministry. *Please pray for this van to be provided.*

## 4. *A desktop computer...*

The church needs a desktop computer. A new laser printer and new copy machine have been given. It is best to purchase the needed computer from the company in Krivoy Rog that sold them the copy machine and laser printer. Though there is a laptop computer, it is not adequate for office needs, and it needs to be at pastor Gregori's house where the telephone line is for e-mail. (It may take years to get a phone line in the church.) It is dangerous to be carrying a laptop computer out in public to and from the church. Last year a young man was killed on the street for his laptop. *Pray for the provision of a good desktop computer for the church.*

## 5. *Bibles...*

There is an ongoing need for Russian Bibles. So many people have been saved and need Bibles. Up till now, a Bible was presented to each new believer at their water baptism. Now it is given to them when they have finished the 10 week

Alpha course of discipleship. 360 have graduated from 24 Alpha groups in the last few weeks, mostly new converts who have now joined the churches. \$3 will provide a Bible. Can you think of a better use for \$3? Hundreds more will be saved and go through the Alpha courses in the next few months.

*Pray that the need for Bibles will be met.*

There has also arisen a special need for 200 ENGLISH Bibles. Lyubov, our main translator, has started English classes for all the full-time Bible School students, and half the Evening school students. They are doing amazingly well, after only a few weeks! We know that English Bibles will greatly advance their English skills. *Pray that God will provide these English Bibles to be carried to Krivoy Rog as soon as possible.*

## 6. *Vitamins...*

Vitamins are preventative medicine for many who are not eating well in Ukraine. We want to send a large supply, and can get a below wholesale price from a pharmaceutical company. *Pray for a release of funds for these vitamins.*

## 7. *A meeting place...*

Please pray for one of the newest churches, led by nineteen yr. old pastor Pasha, at the south end of Krivoy Rog. Having outgrown the possibility of meeting in an apartment (now more than 60 people), they have been meeting on the street, unable to find a place to meet. So far, no one will give them permission to meet anywhere. Winter is arriving, and they will worship in the snow if necessary. *Pray that they will find favor with authorities and a meeting place be provided.*

*Thanks for letting us share about these opportunities...*

I know we have itemized many needs, but since it is Christmas season and year's end, perhaps the Lord will lay it on the heart of many people to give toward these needs. The churches in Krivoy Rog are certainly a fertile spiritual soil. Any investment there, we believe, will bring lasting fruit! And it will increase the harvest in the lives of the givers as well!

## *Returning to Krivoy Rog after the Holidays...*

A few days after New Year's, I am planning to return to Krivoy Rog in order to spend considerable time teaching in the Bible School. It is a high priority to see new leaders well trained and well grounded in the Word. Ken Beaudry from Elk River is planning to go with me, for the purpose of holding Holy Spirit evangelistic meetings in the main church every evening for two weeks. I will perhaps stay longer than Ken, teaching the "Scarlet Thread" of our redemption in Jesus Christ -- the great theme which ties the whole Bible together. I look forward to spending time with these hungry students.

*Please pray for the Lord's confirmation on these travel plans.*

*Thanks again for praying and caring and giving...*

We can never say thank you enough for allowing us to keep you informed, and for your prayer and care for us and for the work the Lord has called us to do. To those of you able to support us personally, thank you. And thank you for giving us special privilege and honor of passing on to the Ukrainian church gifts that are given to their needs.

What more wonderful life could there be than this partnership with God in His glorious business of redeeming lives? You and us...we are blessed...blessed to be a blessing!

With love,

*John and Jackie*

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*Remember: for tax purposes, write checks to "Scarlet Thread Ministries"*

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