



Lifeline

...a prayer letter from John and Jackie

January 23, 2000



January 22, 2000

Dear friends,

Greetings once again in the Wonderful Name of Jesus! I am writing this from Krivoy Rog, Ukraine, and Jackie is editing it from Minnesota. It is a blessing to be able to write to you, and thanks for letting us keep in touch!

Another interesting adventure:

Every journey has some kind of new adventure. This one was no exception. The adventure this time had to do with delivering gifts for more than one thousand children. On our last journey to Ukraine in November, a goal was set to have a special children's Christmas celebration in mid January. (Christmas is celebrated there on January 7.) At the time, it was going to be for 750 children of the church. Most of these children have never been in the church building. Since it is too expensive for most parents to bring them to church on public transportation, home cell groups for children have been established around the city. Over fifty of these children's cell groups now exist. They use Superbook children's Bible learning materials produced by CBN broadcasting. Until recently they only had one teacher's book for all the groups. All teachers had to hand copy each week's lesson! Then someone in our home church gave enough for twenty teachers books. This trip I carried a gift of \$500 from a friend's ministry, given so they could purchase more teachers manuals. Thank you, Jesus!

The Christmas celebration was to begin the day after I arrived, with children brought in by chartered buses to the church. In December, the vision had grown to 1200 children, since some orphanages had asked if they could bring their children. By January 1, the plan was now for 2500 children, twice as many as the church can hold! In order to accommodate the numbers, two meetings were needed instead of just one.

"Lord, You can get these gifts to Ukraine...Somehow!:"

Thanks to pastor Jean Lund, people started bringing to our home church small children's gifts to carry to Ukraine. Soon, I knew I had a problem. Two suitcases, the allowable limit on the airline, would not be enough room for hundreds and hundreds of stuffed

toys, gloves, toothbrushes, etc. Gifts kept coming. The piles kept growing. We decided to ask Northwest Airlines for special favor. More gifts came. By departure day there were eight huge duffel bags of gifts, enough for more than a thousand children. With my two bags, that meant ten large bags of luggage to get on the airplane! Northwest Airlines indicated they would allow some of them to go free, but I would have to pay for the others. That could cost hundreds of dollars. The only extra money I had was for more gifts for the children. "Lord", I said, "please protect the children's money." I decided if God provided these gifts, he would get them there! Thanks to Verne Comstock, I didn't have to lift the bags myself into our van to take to the airport. I asked the Lord for help all the way, for there was no way I could manage all this luggage. (By the time of my departure the Ukrainians knew what I was bringing, so help was there waiting once I got through Ukrainian customs.)

Angels at the airport:

I arrived at the Minneapolis airport, and asked a "skycap" to help, explaining my problem. He loaded the bags, and took me inside. I told him to find a service manager. He went back to the offices, and came out telling me it would be in my record if these bags were approved. That, I said, was my problem. The approval wasn't complete. He then went over to one of the ticket agents. They talked; then he came over to me and my mountain of bags, and said "Come with me." He and the ticket agent said, "You can be glad you found us." I said, "These are gifts for a thousand Ukrainian children." "We like kids," they said. Without checking my record or weighing them, they tagged them all for Kiev and whisked the bags to the plane with no questions and no payment! Thank you Jesus! On arrival in Ukraine the customs agent did not seem impressed with my load of gifts for children. (I had hired a porter to carry them for me.) "We have rules", she said. "This is too much humanitarian aid for one person to bring. You'll have to pay duty." I asked for mercy. Several officials later, they bent their rules, I paid a little, and I and the bags were on our way to the train. Two young men did the rest. I was blessed the whole way. I never even touched the bags — from our church to the church in Krivoy Rog!

The Ukrainians had also collected gifts for a thousand children. With the money I brought they went out and got more, and all was made ready to give to 2500 children. I also carried a \$500 gift from someone to pay for the many chartered buses needed to transport 2500 children.

A beautiful sea of small faces:

They came from all over the city, from orphanages and schools. There were 1200 on Saturday, and another 1200 on Sunday. What a beautiful sea of small Ukrainian faces! (Jean and Ann, you would have loved the sight!) Singers and actors from Ukrainian CBN Broadcasting's Superbook Productions were there for the celebration. This team of fourteen talented adults presented a wonderfully produced multimedia Christmas presentation, with music, drama, lights and action! The kids loved it, and they each received their nice Christmas present! Meanwhile, the celebration was expanded to three of the daughter churches, and another 1200 children were brought to these locations on Monday. So, it ended up being a ministry to nearly 4000 children! No doubt hundreds of children prayed to accept Jesus at these celebrations. We also prayed for healing at each event, with hundreds responding.

A busy place, as usual:

Apart from this activity for the children, things are bustling and busy here as usual in the main church. Construction never stops. New walls are being ripped out for more classroom space. Benches are being covered for the new sanctuary holding 1300 people. (1800 when the balcony goes up in the spring.)

We had another wonderful water baptism the other night. 175 people were baptized. Sunday morning the church was packed. I gave the altar call for salvation. Perhaps one hundred people came forward to accept Christ. What a joy to be back in the classroom with the Bible School students. They are exuberant for Jesus and hungry for His word! Ongoing evangelism is part of the school. In an average week, hundreds of people receive the love of Jesus and hear the gospel through the outreach of the main church and Bible School!

A special gift for church vehicles:

I had the privilege of carrying a special gift of over \$10,000 for two vehicles: a car for pastor Gregori and a minivan for the church. It appears they can purchase a new Russian made 13 passenger minivan for \$5500. The pastor's car will probably be a good used European brand. We thank the Lord for this much needed assistance for the church. No vehicles will be more used for God's service than these! Now the Church of 1,000 will have 4 vehicles total. (No parking lots needed here!)

Ukrainians: to the regions beyond!:

We thank you for continuing to pray for the Ukrainians and the work here. Freedom for the gospel has continued in Ukraine, while much more restriction has come to Russia itself and other countries of the former Soviet Union. There is a sense that God is preparing the Ukrainian church for great service in the harvest fields. They perhaps will have more access to Russian speaking peoples in the days ahead than we do as Westerners. We want to do all we can to help them be prepared.

Some of the believers, especially those in the Bible School, are beginning to hear God's call to go to the central Asian states such as Kazikstan and Tajikestan. Pastor Gregori is ready to make an exploratory trip to these republics this year, to lay groundwork for sending missionaries there as soon as possible. Please pray for this. To see people who we have been helping to train be sent as missionaries will be a fulfillment of our vision for working in Ukraine!

Jesus the Rock! School of Prayer:

Enclosed you'll find a brochure about our upcoming school of prayer, starting Feb. 22. You'll notice as you read it that it is the first of five different schools, each six sessions long, which will be held at Church Upon The Rock. We'd appreciate your prayer for this school. Most of the advertising has been sent to pastors all over the Twin Cities. Please pray that they would have time to pay attention to it, and pass on the word to people in their church. We feel it best to work through pastors and offer the schools of prayer as a way of building up the prayer life of their church. We are also hoping it will help our home church significantly. Pray with us that many hungry people will come from all over the Twin Cites, and that God will anoint us to lay good foundations for prayer in the lives of all who come. You, of course are invited, and perhaps you could pass the word to someone who might benefit from attending.

Thanks again!!

We will never cease thanking you for being part of our lives and our ministry. We will never cease being aware that it is your prayer and support that makes it possible for us to be in this ministry. To all who pray for us, thanks. To each who is able to help financially, thanks. May the Lord bless you abundantly - your family, your work, your relationship with the Lord and your service to Him.

Knowing Him is the best thing that has ever happened to all of us! Glory to God!

With love,

John and Jackie