



Lifeline

...a prayer letter from John and Jackie

October 23, 2000



Dear friends,

Greetings from Krivoy Rog! Once again, by the grace of God we arrived safely in Ukraine, this time with our friends Marcia LaRock and David Gladen. Our feet hit the ground running as usual, though we were able to get a night's rest first on arrival!

Sunday morning in the main church would raise anyone from the dead, we think! These churches are well named – “The Churches of Praise”. The strength and anointing on the musicians and singers is unusual. Praise and worship, preaching, altar calls, baby dedication, and a wedding made up a four hour service our first Sunday here. It didn't seem that long. Jackie did the baby dedication, Marcia preached at the offering, I did the wedding, then preached and then prayed with perhaps thirty people who came to “repent”, as it is said here for those coming to be saved.

Harvest continues here...

Normal church meetings bring unsaved people to the altars. Testimonies continue of healings, miracles, lives restored, alcoholics and drug addicts delivered. Dozens of Alpha courses are held all over the city, bringing many new believers into the church. New churches are being planted with the help of the growing Bible School students. Two churches were opened this summer, and now there are twenty-four, ranging as small as twenty people in a village setting to one thousand members in the mother church. The vision is to see ten or more new ones opened next year. *Each new church needs sponsors for the first year: \$100 a month for pastor's support plus \$1200 for a keyboard and sound system. Four need this immediately.*

A new class of forty students are in the Bible School, with many potential leaders, pastors, and missionaries. The second and third year classes include sixty, so there are now one hundred full time students. Another two hundred are in the evening classes. The third year class of twenty-five are working in the opening of new churches and doing evangelism with the other daughter churches. It is great to see this group of dedicated people giving themselves to reaching the lost and serving the churches. What better way can there be to raise up new leaders!

I taught on prayer and spiritual warfare in the Bible School for the first time. I have never been led to teach on prayer in Ukraine - partly because they have been strong in prayer, and partly because the Lord never told me to do it. He spoke to me to do this shortly before we left home, so I have plowed with all the students in the foundations for a life of prayer and spiritual warfare. They have expressed much appreciate for this teaching.

Other blessings for the church...

Pastor Gregori finally has a new car – almost new – a bright red “Skoda”. Another miracle for the church! Gifts from two businessmen in Minnesota, a church in Germany, and the mother Church of Praise here, made this purchase possible. This car, plus the van given last winter, has made it possible for much more evangelism and work among the churches.

While here, three phone lines were installed in the main church. Another miracle! It can take years to get a phone installed, and it may never happen. But they are in! The vision is to open a Lovelines crisis phone center like Lovelines in Minneapolis. Please pray for the establishment of this. It will be a great outreach in this city of troubled people.

Other activities for us...

Marcia and I had fun one day in street evangelism. She went as “Sunny” the clown, who warms the hearts of children and adults alike on the streets. Since Sunny doesn't talk, I would introduce her as my friend from the USA after she had warmed their hearts. How easy it was then to talk about Jesus and pray with some to be saved (with the help of Constantine our translator, of course!)

Jackie spent much of her time here with the organization of a pharmacy/clinic being opened in the main church. This consists of a small room with new cabinets for medicine, a table and chairs. Boxes of western medicine (from English and Canadian churches) had to be sorted and labels translated carefully. Mistakes could be dangerous for people! Sick people started mobbing the clinic before it was near being ready for service. As we are now leaving, it is in partially good order, and the church nurse Natasha has been placed in charge.

New churches started, but not as expected!

Plans for church planting while we were here turned out differently than expected. We helped open one church quickly in a village area, one that was not scheduled to happen until later. Thirty people came to Christ at once, their pastor was introduced, and the church began – all in one evening! The other, planned for Dnepropretrovsk, as we told you, began in a different way. Evangelism teams were sent there for several days, and a building was found that could be used for meetings. (Finding a place to meet was a miracle in itself to the Ukrainians.) One meeting was held, which brought together some pastors from that city, some of their people, along with some people from the neighborhood. No one repented this first meeting. It was a “seed sowing” time of praise, preaching and friendship building. Teams of musicians, intercessors

and evangelists will go there weekly from Krivoy Rog, and Sunday evening meetings held weekly. The harvest will come one week at a time, it is expected. Pray for this new work.

Pastors commissioned...

Five pastors of the daughter churches were ready for commissioning and ordination as ministers, so we had a circuit of five special meetings in their churches to ordain them. As we were packed into a village house church praying over their lady pastor, the power of the Spirit overwhelmed her. I thought at that moment I'd rather be in that poor village house church helping Gregori commission this faithful woman of God, than be in the grandest cathedral of the world!

Seven year celebration...

Sunday, October 21 was the seven year anniversary of the founding of the mother church – which was when we first came here. It was a birthday celebration for the church and a time of honoring pastor Gregori. Freshly painted floors and doors, balloons, great special music, videos of the church construction, pastors giving flowers to Gregori...it was a great time. Jackie preached, and she prayed with forty or fifty at the altar for salvation.

That Saturday we also were invited with Gregori and Galena to the church of the old pastor under whom Gregori served as pastor for many years in the Pentecostal denomination. This was a milestone, for the old pastor had expelled Gregori from the denomination seven years ago when the Holy Spirit started to set people free. (...too much hand clapping, smiling and joy, he said.) Years later they reconciled at Gregori's pastors' conference, where we watched the old pastor present to Gregori a church building in one of the villages. When he presented it to Gregori, he had said, "I can't believe I'm giving this church to 'dancers and whistlers!'" Now the old man's church is pastored by his son-in-law, who was the best man in Gregori's wedding. Galena's closest friends of her youth are leaders there. So, it was an emotional time as the old man welcomed us all with many tears, and Gregori and Galena's friends honored them. I preached, and so did Galena. A woman pastor... unheard of! A woman without a head covering... unthinkable in that Pentecostal denomination! Yet, she was received with great affection. She's a powerful preacher!

Our time here felt like the completion of the first chapter in the life of these churches, and the opening of the next chapter. The evangelistic foray into Dnepropetrovsk was the first step in the vision to plant mother churches in other major cities of Ukraine. We also discussed missionary vision. Plans were put in motion for exploration into Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan, with a church member who is from that region of the world. One of Gregori's pastors

is from the country of Moldavia. This pastor is now praying about going to Moldavia to plant a church there. Meanwhile, every region of Krivoy Rog itself continues to be a target for evangelism and church planting by the church and Bible School.

We are seeing the beginnings of why we keep coming here, and why we send other pastors and missionaries here: to help the Churches of Praise and Praise Bible College become a fountainhead of evangelism and missions – to reach cities and nations. It is an honor to assist them. *They need much more help.* They cannot do it themselves. Thank you for being partners with us in this effort. You share in this fruit through your friendship, your prayer, and your giving.

On to Argentina...

As you know, from here we go to the city reaching conference in Argentina. Actually we go home for two days, then fly back to New York and down to Buenos Aires. We hope Gregori and Galena and two translators will meet us in Argentina, but as we left they were having severe visa problems. Jackie and I will be back home on Monday, November 6. Leaders of the great Argentine revival will speak at this conference, as well as a couple of well known American revivalists such as Tommy Tenney, who wrote the book [The God Chasers](#). Following the conference we will participate in outreach to the city, and attend an evangelistic crusade led by Carlos Anacondia, who has led millions to Christ.

Welcome to the Matthews' house!

You are invited to our home for six Sunday evenings, starting November 12, at 7 p.m. We hope to see some of you whom we have not seen face to face for a while! We feel the need to strengthen friendships for prayer and future ministry, and to minister to you in some way, as the Holy Spirit leads. If you cannot attend, please note that on the enclosed card, with any prayer requests. We will pray for these needs at the Sunday meetings.

And again, thank you...

We love you and appreciate you very much. It is always amazing and humbling that many of you pray for us. It is amazing that you read the letter – which is usually quite long! Every financial gift is received as given to the Lord, regardless of size. Thank you for listening to the Lord and responding to His leading in prayer and giving. We look to Him for everything, yet know we cannot live or serve alone. We are part of His body, and He uses the members to care for each other. Thank you for your care.

May the Lord bless you in every way as you trust in Him, keeping your eyes fixed on Jesus, forgetting the things that are behind and pressing on for what lies ahead – the upward call of God that is in Jesus Christ!

With love,

John and Jackie