



Lifeline

...a prayer letter from John and Jackie

June 21, 2001



Dear friends,

It is with thanksgiving that we write you again and greet you in the wonderful name of Jesus! What a great privilege it is for us to be able to share with you what the Lord is doing in our lives! It is also a great blessing to know that many of you pray for us. We again say, THANKS!

Home again! ...yet part of us feels like we are still in Ukraine. Here's a report about a ministry there that we didn't know existed until last month:

Prison ministry...

A new outreach into prisons has recently developed. There are several prisons in the region, with thousands of inmates. The Churches of Praise have an open door to the prisons, especially if they can bring humanitarian aid. The prison directors say, "Bring something for our kitchen, and you can do whatever you want."

The situation in these prisons is deplorable (as is true for prisons all over the former Soviet Union). With the economic collapse most basic services to the prisons were cut off, and they are left on their own to survive. Diseases are rampant. Though basic antibiotics would stop most of the diseases, medicines are nonexistent in the prisons.

Large numbers of the prisoners are dying. The government would deny this, but it is documented that fifty prisoners die each week in this one region alone, mostly of starvation. All prisoners depend on family and friends to feed and help them, since the prison has almost nothing to give. Only 25% get any help from their families. Most are rejected and forgotten, and many are sick and dying alone.

Our friend David Gladen was taken to see the prisons, but they did not let him in. He saw the graveyard, however, and took pictures of it. The pictures show dozens of fresh graves. Each grave is a trench that holds 12 to 15 prisoners. A wooden box is used for a body, taken to the graveyard, the body put in the trench, and the box taken back inside for the next dead prisoner. A little metal tag with a number is put on a wood stake to mark each grave.

A new church in prison!

Several months ago, a new convert in Galena's church was put in prison. Guilty of crimes before he became a Christian, he was after his conversion tried, convicted, and sentenced to seven years in prison. Now having been there a few months, he has lost 30% of his body weight.

Through him many men in the prison have been coming to Christ. When we arrived in Ukraine in May, it was reported that 20 men had repented and were meeting as a cell group in the prison. By the middle of May, it was reported to us that fifty were meeting. When we arrived home the first week of June we received the report that this prison church is now more than 100 men, but their meeting room only holds 80!

These men are just skin and bones. For the summer they can meet outside, and they meet daily for Bible study and prayer. They had only one Bible among them until a few days ago, when one hundred Bibles were delivered to them. (Bibles purchased by one of our friends.)

This is the story in just one of several prisons.

Sasha, ex-prisoner, now missionary to prisons...

The man in Gregori's church who heads up the prison ministry is named Sasha. He is the watchman for the main church, working full time through the night hours. He himself was in prison for 20 years, a former resident of the very prisons that he visits. Prison guards know him and are amazed at his new life. Sasha is a strong believer who radiates the joy of the Lord; his face glows with Jesus, and his heart burns with love for these lost men.

He tries to visit a prison every week, and to take food enough to help keep a few men alive, especially the believers. No money is available for this. He asked Gregori for two years salary in advance so he could buy food for the prisoners. Sasha and his wife had agreed that they would get along on her salary. Reluctantly Gregori agreed. Sasha has already used all that money in the last few weeks. (His two years salary totaled \$400.) Now he will work at the church as night watchman without pay for the next two years, but he gave it all with joy!

We would like to see this outreach supplied with funds so that Sasha can bring food and medicine to the prisoners. Gregori's vision includes taking large bags of rice, beans, flour, etc., but there are no finances for it.

Jesus loves these forgotten men.

Will you pray with us that many more prisoners will be reached for Jesus? Will you pray with us for the release of funds for this ministry? Hebrews 12:3 says "*Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them...*" You can't visit them yourself, but you can help Sasha feed them, and you can pray for them. Any amount would make a difference!

Jen and Scott are taking a team to Ukraine...

Our daughter Jen and her husband Scott are leading a team of young people to Krivoy Rog in July. They will be ministering at the church youth camp, and a new youth summer Bible School. They will also help start two churches! No doubt they will have other adventures with God as well! Please pray for this young team, most of them ages 15-16. We know they will be a blessing, and we know God will set their hearts on fire while they are there! Jen and Scott are still needing almost all their travel funds. Airline tickets need to be paid on the 29th of June - just a week away! Thanks for praying for them. If the Lord leads anyone to help them, checks can be written to Scarlet Thread. Designate your gift for Jen and Scott on the return form.

“Living in His Presence”...

We were blessed to be in four churches in Minnesota during April and June, to have the series of meetings we have called “Living in His Presence”. “Health, holiness and happiness through the blood of Jesus...”, “How to continually receive from God...” It was a joy for us to do this, and hope we were a blessing as well. We’d like to keep doing this ministry in various churches.

Our summer: prepare for expansion of the work...

We are preparing for an expansion of the work in Ukraine. One aspect of this is the writing ministry. I plan to give time this summer to resuming the project of writing small books. These will be translated for Ukraine, as well as be available here in English. The subjects relate to the foundations of our faith, especially the things that we repeatedly teach: Jesus Christ our foundation, the blood covenant, how to receive from God, living in His presence, healing, renewal of the mind, repentance and holiness, the power of His blessing, etc. Please pray for us both as I set my heart to do this work. The writing needs to be clear and simple, and able to cross language and cultural barriers. I write and Jackie edits. We are a team. “Help, Lord!” We greatly need His help for this.

Summer activities for us also include:

*Developing a web-site so that you can see much more of what is happening – such as looking at Ukraine outreach pictures whenever you want to!

*Reorganizing our office. Stuff has collected over the years. We need to update and downsize!

*Communicating with all those who help in our ministry. Beyond our newsletter, this involves time with old and new friends whom God has called to work with us in some way.

*Ongoing communication with Ukraine as issues arise.

*Coordinating teams who will go to Ukraine during the next year. This involves considerable communication with the teams, and with Ukraine, and involves many details such as passports, visas, travel plans, etc.

*It also means giving some time to the “home base” — from time with family, friends and churches, to reaching out to our neighbors, to taking care of some practical things like upgrading our neglected yard.

And there is another thing: we are looking to set up an apartment in Krivoy Rog for us and for the people that we send there. It looks like people from the West will be there almost all the time, and this living space has become a necessity. So, we need to locate the proper place for this (probably two apartments next to each other). It will be a base for living and office space so that we can be ready to serve the expanding work in Ukraine. We are trusting the Lord for the provision to purchase these apartments and furnish them. American dollars go quite a long way in the Ukraine economy, but this will still take a large amount – probably seven thousand dollars.

Gregori and the leaders are also preparing for expansion. Three Ukrainian pastors are being prepared to be church planters: Pasha, Uri, and Valodia. There is a plan for these

men, who have already planted churches, to do this more rapidly than ever – with the goal that each of them open several new churches in other large cities of Ukraine this year. It is a very large step for each of them.

We are believing for God’s provision to be able to assist financially in this church planting effort. In fact, we are believing God for a rapid multiplication of finances for ALL THE WORK in Ukraine! We have set goals to assist the churches there in 14 different aspects of ministry. It means we are trusting the Lord for a tenfold increase of mission funds for Ukraine!

Will you pray with us for this miracle of multiplication of resources? If you would like a copy of these financial goals for Ukraine, please let us know on the return form. As many agree with us in faith about these goals, we believe we will see God move!

You are invited to our home on Sunday evenings...

From now until September we will have meetings each Sunday evening at 7 p.m. in our home. These are informal meetings of worship, fellowship, time in the Word, and prayer. We would be honored if you come! Bring a friend!

A big thanks again...

What would we do without friends? Well, we would still trust the Lord, or course, for He is the greatest of all friends! But we could not be in this ministry, and we could not reach out to nations, without the prayer and financial support of many people. We know it is the prayer of faith that helps break through spiritual resistance and brings the release of God’s blessing. We also know it is the financial support of friends that keeps us alive, keeps us going, keeps us serving the harvest! To Him belongs the glory! And to you belongs our thanks as well.

May the blessing of the Lord and the peace of Christ abound in your life and in your family and in your service for the Lord!

With love,

John and Jackie

Prayer needs:

- 1. For many prisoners to be saved.*
- 2. For finances for the prison ministry.*
- 3. For the new prison church of 100 prisoners.*
- 4. For Jen and Scott’s funds for travel to Ukraine. Air tickets to be paid on June 29*
- 5. For more open doors in churches for “Living in His Presence”*
- 6. For writing small books*
- 7. For finishing the web site*
- 8. For purchase and furnishing of apartments in Krivoy Rog*
- 9. For Pasha, Uri, and Valodia as they plant churches*
- 10. For our personal financial needs*
- 11. For good use of summer weeks to strengthen our “home base” of ministry and rescue neglected projects at our house.*

Remember: for tax purposes, write checks to “Scarlet Thread Ministries”

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