



Lifeline

...a prayer letter from John and Jackie

May 25, 2001



Dear friends,

We greet you from Krivoy Rog, Ukraine in the wonderful name of Jesus! A great big thanks to each of you who have been praying for us, and a great big thanks to the many who have supported us and helped in a special way so that we could fulfill this mission outreach.

Five days before we left on this journey, we had just \$50 towards our travel expenses and a stack of personal bills which had to be taken care of before we left, with no known income on the way. Five days of miracles took place from that point, with unexpected gifts from about fifty friends and families! We were so busy during those five days getting ready to go that we didn't have time to think about how much money we needed. We had to leave it with God. On the day our tickets HAD to be paid for, the money was there to do it! By the day we HAD to take care of our personal bills, enough gifts toward our personal support had also arrived! Not early...but not late either. And when we left, we had a considerable amount of funds in hand to be given as gifts to the Ukrainian churches. NEVER A ROUTINE EXPERIENCE...

Dozens of mission outreaches over the years have not made this a "routine" experience. Trusting the Lord to take us overseas again always makes us cling to Jesus again with all our strength. It always brings death to our natural senses. It always makes us follow our hearts rather than our heads. It is always an adventure! It always brings rejoicing to see God at work! And it always makes us deeply grateful for our friends!

Maybe that is a routine... Thank you Jesus. And thank you, friends.
WITH OUR UKRAINIAN FRIENDS AGAIN...

It is wonderful being here in Krivoy Rog with so many who have become our good friends – even though we still do not speak their language. (We wish you could all know them!) All communication is through our translators, Olga and Costa. Without them, we could do nothing. They are our ears and our mouth. We are very grateful that God in His grace has provided them, enabling us and other missionaries to minister here.

IN A RIVER OF ACTIVITY AGAIN...

Arriving here is like jumping into a fast moving river. Teaching in the Bible college is a high priority, which we do every morning till 1 p.m. Afternoons bring various meetings with leaders, and working with pastor Gregori in the continuous river of vision, plans, projects and people coming and going. Evenings find us either in the evening Bible college or in the daugh-

ter churches. It is seven days a week, morning, afternoon and night — unless we ask for a breather. We wish we could be in several places at once! Two hundred are in the evening Bible college, and sixty are in the full time day college. It has become a three year training, so three classes of students are in each school. We thank the Lord for the excellent teachers who have been willing to travel here each month, and for the Ukrainians who teach. Several of the graduating Bible School students are also being trained to teach in the college.

Many ministries have been started or are being run by these students. Hundreds of people have been brought to Christ through them, and dozens of Alpha courses have been run by them. They evangelize every week, with several kinds of outreaches, and serve in many other ways. We have watched the students grow, and rejoice to see the maturity in the those who are graduating!
MORE CONVERSIONS THAN WE HAVE EVER SEEN BEFORE...

Our meetings in the churches have been primarily evangelistic this time. Leading people to repentance (the Ukrainian term for receiving salvation), bringing people into the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and praying for healing...these things have been the heart of each meeting. What a privilege! In addition, the meetings have been advertised as "Come and be set free from curses". This culture has much witchcraft and superstition. From visiting mediums and psychic healers to suffering from the "evil eye" to being cursed by neighbors, this subject is of much concern to people in the community. We have never seen such large numbers of people at the altar for repentance as we have during this trip. In one daughter church, only four months old, two thirds of the people who crowded into a small meeting room came forward for repentance, then to be filled with the Spirit, then for healing. In another daughter church, half of those attending were newcomers and came forward to be saved. The pastor was amazed. Last Sunday morning, in the main church, nearly one hundred new people came for salvation! (Normally ten to twenty-five get saved on a Sunday morning.) They were unbelievers who had come to have curses broken off their lives.

Our message to them was, of course, that the power of the blood and name of Jesus breaks every curse, for Jesus took our curse on the cross and He "became a curse for us" according to Galatians 3:13. We emphasized that God's power to bless is much more powerful than the devil's ability to curse. After leading people to repentance and salvation (that is the

greatest curse breaker!), we led them to repentance from occult practices, from superstitious thinking, and from fear of evil and curses. Then we led them to renounce these things and simply commanded Satan to leave them in the name of Jesus. We put the emphasis on the power of their new life in Christ, the absolute power of the blood, and the overwhelming power of God's blessing in their lives.

Pastor Gregori announced at the Sunday morning meeting there would be three follow up meetings, to help them be established in their new freedom. He knew that in the community the witches and psychics say you have to come three times to get a result. So, why not tell these new believers to come three times? The following night the Bible School classroom was filled to capacity with these new converts, who had also brought friends and neighbors. More people got saved!

Last Saturday we baptized nearly a hundred people in water.

MORE HEALINGS THAN EVER...

We have heard more reports of healing and miracles this time than ever before. Some of them were because our friends Ian and Rosemary Andrews came from England just before us, who have a healing ministry. Hundreds were healed. But reports come every day — from meetings where we ministered, from regular church meetings, from the home groups, from believers praying for their neighbors, etc., etc. Last night at a leaders meeting in Galena's church there were two reports of cancer disappearing. A man said, "My mother no longer has cancer, the doctors say." It was evident that those present had known of her problem and they had prayed for her. The room exploded with praise. Another report was from a leader in the room who previously had a visible cancer in her cheek. Gone. It was gone. They all said how beautiful she now looked, and all could see it had disappeared. Actually the testimonies of healing have so many they are hard to remember. We have heard various testimonies of cancers disappearing ever since we arrived. We can't keep track of all the healings, nor can the church. It is part of church life.

MORE OPEN DOORS TO THE CITY THAN EVER...

It seems the doors to the city are opening wider and wider. City officials are welcoming the Churches of Praise, even asking for their help — especially in dealing with the epidemic of sex and drugs among the youth. These churches have become known and respected in the community for their changed lives, healed addicts, and restored families. Yesterday we spoke at an afternoon meeting, to which six hundred young teens from the schools were brought by their teachers. It was promoted as "City Youth Against Drugs", and hosted by one of the daughter churches. The main church's contemporary rock band Maranatha played and sang the gospel gorgeously and

fiercely, and preached boldly. (our translator Costa is the lead singer). It was all Jesus, Jesus, Jesus... with the blessing of the city! Two Bible School students gave their testimonies of getting free from drugs, and then Jackie and I spoke. City television was there, and public school teachers and officials. It was amazing! These are now ongoing regular events!

On May 11 was a national holiday (Liberation Day from WWII). The city did a big event in the park, and asked to use the church's sound system. (It's the best one in the city.) Yes, Gregori said, if we can sing three songs. OK, the city officials said. Tens of thousands of people came. Youth singers and dance troupes from the community came and went from the stage. Then the church's turn came. Three powerful male singers each sang, and they each preached boldly before they sang. The atmosphere of the crowd dramatically changed as these men belted out the gospel. Tears were evident in the crowd. God was glorified in this large public event — with the blessing of the city! Strangely, the master of ceremonies, when introducing the church singers, said "And now the organizers of this great party will sing for us!" He gave the church the credit for the whole city celebration! A few days later, a city official came to the Sunday service to publicly read an official letter from the city government thanking the church for helping with that celebration!

MORE CHURCH BUILDINGS ARE BEING PROVIDED...

Today, the city officially gave permission for the purchase of a building for Galena's church, a church of 450 people pastored by Gregori's wife. This is another miracle of divine favor — a miracle with a mountain of work. It is a very large, old and uninhabited office building, with broken windows and missing doors. But it is solid stone and cement with two levels, plus a basement. Half of it will be gutted to the outer walls and the second story removed to provide a sanctuary for seven to eight hundred. The other half will be offices, classrooms, rehab center, etc. An army of volunteers will rebuild it during the summer, by God's grace. New floors, new heating system, new plumbing, new roof, new windows and doors. \$15,000 has already been given for its purchase. \$15,000 in materials is needed for its restoration. Please pray!

This church, when smaller, was evicted from its space and met all winter outside in the park...in the snow. (Did you get that, Minnesotans?) Now they are evicted again from their rental space as of next Monday. It appears they can use an unheated summer theater in the park for a while. This new building **MUST** be finished by the fall.

One way we'd like help by providing the cost of feeding this volunteer construction army of perhaps 100 people. \$10 a month per worker or \$1000 per month is needed. This construction army will be

made up of church members on vacation from jobs, recovering drug addicts, Bible School students, and the homeless – led by a few knowledgeable people and Gregori himself, who was taught how to build large buildings during military service. Please pray for this project.

While here, five of the other smaller daughter churches are also buying buildings – not large ones, but sufficient until they grow large. Thanks to friends in our city and some in England this is happening.. Most of these purchases are under \$2000: One is a store front purchased for \$1000. The others are village style houses with yards, priced between one and two thousand. The interior walls will be removed, making room for 80-100 people, with some room to expand into the yard. These investments, though small from an American perspective — a house and yard for that small amount? — are large investments for the Ukrainians and miracles for each of these churches. Remember: under communism it would have been impossible for a church to buy a building! Having their own building means they can have activities every day when they want to, and not face the prospect of sudden evictions! One of the gifts given for this purpose was from a friend in Minnesota whose mother had recently passed away and left her a small inheritance. She gave \$2500 to the Lord to build a church in Ukraine. That \$2500 inheritance is buying two church buildings!

MORE CHURCH BUILDINGS ARE NEEDED...

At least six more church buildings are needed right now, plus finishing one that is being built. Two of these six will require building new buildings because of the location of the churches where there are no houses available, only apartment buildings. Land is available at a very low cost. Gutting Galena's new building will provide a lot of stone and cement for these projects. Thanks for praying. Every church needs its own building.

GUITARS AND MORE GUITARS...!

We brought with us two fine guitars and a good trumpet, gifts from friends. Instantly these instruments became full-time missionaries here, in the hands of the best musicians. They were received as worth their weight in gold! Pastor Gregori also saw the need for inexpensive guitars for street evangelism. With some extra funds we brought, he and David Gladen (who traveled with us, took hundreds of beautiful photos, and helped with Russian language) went shopping for guitars. They found a Ukrainian made brand for \$30. The store called the factory and asked for more. Not fancy, but playable and suitable for the streets and changing weather. Six were purchased to be given to churches to have music out on the streets. At the pastors meeting it was determined that seventeen more were needed right away. We realized we had enough extra funds, undesignated, with us for these guitars. The factory was called again. Seventeen more were purchased. You should

have seen the excitement when all these guitars arrived at a pastors meeting. Twenty three guitars! That means twenty three evangelistic teams on the streets praising the Lord with their guitar, gathering people and preaching the gospel. And they will do it! We were amazed at what was released by equipping them with these guitars! Twenty more of these "street guitars" are needed for the two big churches. Their cell groups are planning to meet out on the streets in the summer to win more people. A simple guitar and music in a public place is a powerful tool!

MUCH MORE TO SAY...

There is so much more to report. We'll write more later...about the church planting in prisons where hundreds are starving to death, the children's work, the rehab center for drug addicts, the dozens of neighborhood Alpha courses, the Lovelines crisis phone center, the medical clinic for the poor, the plans for new churches, etc., etc.

Remember, you have a part in all this through your prayer and giving! (And some of you have been here!) No one can meet all the needs we have described.

Pray. God will find those who can help!

ONWARD TO HOLLAND AND HOME...

Leaving Ukraine the 26th, we will stop in Holland for seven days. On Saturday and Sunday we will be in the home of our missionary friends Steve and Marilyn Hill and Carole Baerg from Canada who are church planting in Holland and Belgium, and we will speak to their leaders. Then we will minister for five days in central Holland at a YWAM family Discipleship Training School led by our missionary friend Marcia LaRock. People from several nations are in this school. Some of them may travel to Ukraine as part of their summer outreach. Pray for our time there, that God's anointing will be strong as we teach about "living in His presence".

We'll arrive home, by God's grace, on June 2.

THANK YOU!

We love you, we wish we could see each one of you in person — and thank you for praying, giving, and helping us in work the Lord has given us to do. May the Lord's blessings rest on you and your family. Keep your eyes on Jesus alone, and keep determining to follow Him wherever He leads you. As George Mueller said in the eighteenth century, "Where God guides, He provides." He provides everything you need.

With love,

John and Jackie

p.s. Please remember to pray for us during the days after we arrive home. Sometimes the enemy takes advantage during that period – with us being tired, etc. thanks