



Celebrating 40 years married!

Lifeline

...a prayer letter from John and Jackie

November 29, 2003



Dear friends,

Jackie and I once again greet you in the name of Jesus! In case you lost track of us, I was in Ukraine for nearly six weeks this fall, and Jackie joined me during the last two weeks. It's been good to be home again, and I found it took a little longer to readjust to Minnesota life this trip. Transition from Ukraine to urban USA is not easy.

Thanks for praying...

We want to thank you for your prayer during our travel and ministry. Entry and exit from the country was quick and without incident. Our time in Ukraine was busy and fruitful, and we were involved in things that we know were significant for the future of the Churches of Praise.

In one way, it was not an easy time. Previously we asked prayer for relationships among leaders, relationships strained due to the rapid growth and change in the Churches of Praise. We want to report that we have seen God intervene, with a major breakthrough happening since we arrived home. Please keep praying for the expanding leadership in the Churches of Praise. As we have written before, heavy responsibility rests on many young men and women (young in years and in faith) who are planting and establishing churches in very dark towns and villages. The senior leaders need God's wisdom.

Ten year celebration...

Shortly before we left Krivoy Rog, we were honored to be included in the ten-year anniversary celebration of the Churches of Praise. The main church was overpacked with 1,500 people, including bus loads of people from Dnepropetrovsk, Odessa region, and some villages. The main event was a ten hour service of praise and celebration! Worship bands from several churches participated, drama teams, skits, original music, preaching, and more praise and worship, dancing, and joy! The quality of music is as good as anything we have ever heard anywhere! Some who have been around Ukraine say the music in the Church of Praise is the best in the nation!

This was not an effort to bring everyone from the churches to a celebration, for there would not have been room for all. The talk is that sometime next year a stadium should be rented for a great gathering of all the churches of Praise!

Pastor Bob Hyde and two men from his church in England arrived the night before this celebration. After we left, they stayed on for two weeks. Bob taught on the subject of "differing world views", in the Bible College and to the pastors. He began this topic by discussing the war in Iraq, revealing considerable anger against America and Great Britain among the students. It proved to be a very instructive lesson, showing the difference between a political world view, and a Christian world view. Bob has a gift for making people think!

We had a wonderful final day with pastors, sharing with them out of Jesus' words, *"This is my commandment, that you love one another."* In the rapid expansion of the ministry, strengthening the bonds of love is mandatory in preparation for even more growth ahead.

Roma...

Here is an update on the dramatic recovery of Roma, the 12 year old son of Lena, who is the assistant Bible College Dean. You may remember that in late summer Roma accidentally touched a high voltage line in a construction zone, and was severely burned and injured when the electric current entered his neck, went through his body, and out his knee. Several skin grafts and weeks have past. He is now at home, having recovered more rapidly and completely than the doctors expected. His remaining problem is that he cannot yet voluntarily bend his knee, and is in physical therapy for it. God has done many miracles in bringing him this far; please agree in faith for the full restoration of his leg.

The financial picture for church planting...

In the following sketch of church planting, you will notice that a great deal is accomplished with a small amount of money.

The church planting budget for the Churches of Praise is nearly \$10,000 a month, which includes support for the following:

1. 210 new village churches in 10 of the 27 oblisks (provinces) of Ukraine.
2. 8 prison churches in Ukraine
3. 30 plus churches in Kyrgyzstan, and 14 missionary families
4. Outreach in several prisons in Kyrgyzstan
5. Church planting in Kazakhstan, Armenia, and Moldova.

Scarlet Thread has been supplying about 40% of this budget. Where does the rest of the \$10,000 come from?

1. Thank the Lord for the partnership of several other faith missions like ours who have become friends of ours and the Churches of Praise, and have (by faith) taken up some of the financial load. Like us, these are faith ministries who are dependent on gifts from others in order to help.

2. Several members of the Churches of Praise who are new business owners in Krivoy Rog are supporting about 15 of the new churches from their businesses. Hallelujah!

3. The 39 older Churches of Praise give; most of them are not large churches; though their giving covers a very small percentage of the need, it is large giving for the churches.

4. The main Church of Praise makes up the rest of the budget from its offerings. This means that more than 60% of the church's offerings go into church planting! Another 20%

goes to the Bible College and Rehab Center. The main church is trying to exist on 20% of its offerings!

We continue to pray that God will raise up many more friends for the Churches of Praise -- individuals, churches, ministries, and business people -- who will support the expanding work in prayer and giving. Pray with us for a widening circle of friendship and support for the Churches of Praise.

This past year we have been able to send our 40% of the budget because of several generous gifts given earlier. Those funds have all been dispersed. Some of you give monthly to the support of the village churches, and thank you!

A new influx of gifts is needed now to be able to continue helping at the same level. Actually, we are trusting God to raise the level of giving substantially, because church planting is continuing, and *the vision has now increased to 3000 churches!* Oh Jesus!!

The village church plan...

Here's a little review of the best investment in the whole world! The financial plan for establishing a village church is \$30 a month for one year. This covers food and lodging of the church planter (who works with 3-5 new church plants), as well as all expenses of planting the church. As an American, I am embarrassed to realize how far these Ukrainians make each dollar go. Monthly financial reports are submitted by everyone, with accountability for every cent (kopek). Gregory and the older pastors continually give advice to the new church planters on how to make the small amount of money go even farther.

The goal of the church planters is to keep moving to open new churches. They do not stay permanently in any village. Pastors and leaders are raised up among the new converts in the village and they lead the church without salary. This allows church to exist in villages where there is no economic base, and high unemployment. The task of the church planter is to move on after a year, while continuing to mentor the leaders of the churches they have opened. This is happening, though the time frame has to be flexible as circumstances dictate.

We believe that the presence of the church in the village and the proper teaching of the Word of God will begin to supernaturally lift the village believers out of poverty!

Church planting is done in teams, though each planter is responsible for his or her own villages. No church planter is out there all on his or her own. They each work together under the direction of an older Church of Praise pastor. There are perhaps twenty older pastors who each oversee a team of church planters and a network of new churches.

Help us pour the Word into red hot leaders...

The new generation of leaders in the Churches of Praise are *red hot for the Lord*, and they bring many others to repentance and salvation. Too often in the West we prepare people for so long that they lose their fire and passion. Our strategy is to help get the young ones moving soon, but keep them under mentoring and teaching so that they will grow and mature in the Word *as they are spreading the gospel*.

Understandably, this presents some problems, and is the reason we keep going and urging others to go. Now more than ever, the teaching of the Word of God is needed. How can all these young Christians be launched without the foundation of the Word? The answer is that they can't. They must have the foundations, and they must have the Word... now!

That is where we (and possibly you) come in. Our task is to pour the Word of God into them, and to keep a flow of teachers coming to them, especially those that can build them up in faith, and help lay a good foundation in the Word of God. In the West, we have an abundance of good teaching, even in Christians that don't think they are teachers. Consider yourself: whatever you know of God's Word, it is more than someone who has had NO background in the Bible!

There is also a need for more gifted and experienced Bible teachers who will go to impart deeper truths and broader understanding -- in the Bible Colleges, in the pastors' college, in the village leaders training, and in the churches themselves.

Giving time, energy and finances to the Ukrainians is a very good investment. They enthusiastically take the Word and put that Word into practice quicker than any other people we have ever met. On their own initiative they pour that Word into others! And they will (and are) taking it to the nations!

We will never get to all the places that these on fire church planters will go. We want to do all we can to equip them with the Word, and help speed them on their way. We can't do it alone. We need your help -- in prayer, in giving, and perhaps even going!

Will you help us to continue in this great harvest of lost people?

Expecting breakthroughs at home...

Along with the much needed increase for the Churches of Praise, our financial base at home is in need of an immediate breakthrough. We knew our home base finances needed to increase significantly in this year. We are still waiting for that increase to appear! We also want to make significant progress on the following areas while we are in Minnesota:

- 1. Increase our fellowship with God.*
- 2. Find anointed Bible teachers to go.*
- 3. Improve preparation of teams going to Ukraine.*
- 4. Widen the circle of prayer and financial support.*
- 5. Prepare books for the Churches of Praise.*
- 6. Improve communication and administration*
- 7. Complete the video story of the Churches of Praise*

Thanks again!!!

We thank the Lord and thank each of you who takes time to read our letters and to pray for us. Prayer is the backbone of this ministry. Without prayer support we could not continue.

To those of you who have given financially, we give a great big thanks as well, and may you experience God's multiplied increase! Be blessed!

With love,

John and Jackie