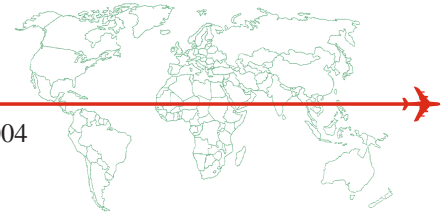




Lifeline

...a prayer letter from John and Jackie

April 22, 2004



Dear friends,

Jackie and I greet you once again in the wonderful name of Jesus! It's been two months since we last wrote. Our ten-year record of regular monthly letters was a little tarnished these last four months; hopefully we can resume our monthly habit.

As you may remember, the last half of February and first half of March, we were again in Ukraine and I (John) in Central Asia. We reported on some of our time in Ukraine in our last letter of February 29. Here is a bit about the Central Asia connection.

Central Asia...

I could preview this report with my adventure in obtaining visas for three Central Asian countries while in Ukraine, but I'll spare you the details.. In short, I got them. It is interesting that Ukrainians need no visas for any of these former Soviet countries. ONLY the Ukrainians seem to have this favor -- not Russians or any other nationality, as far as we know. We believe it is God's favor and evidence of His call on Ukraine to carry the gospel to the former Soviet world.

Church planting from the Churches of Praise began in Central Asia two years ago in Kyrgyzstan, under the leadership of Uri and Olga. Now there are about forty-five churches in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, plus churches in two prisons. Our trip to Central Asia was for the purpose of meeting with Churches of Praise leaders. The time was fruitful and important for the future of church planting – not only in Kyrgyzstan, but also in four other countries. We visited three of them: Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Our "divine appointments" included personal encounters that will help open up the work in Afghanistan and Turkmenistan.

Since our purpose was to meet with people who are planting Churches of Praise in these countries, there were many personal and small group conversations and lots of prayer. The ethnic roots of these planters are diverse: Kazakh, Kyrgyese, Korean, Hui Chinese, Ukrainian, Tatar Uzbek, etc.. The people groups they are working among also are varied.

Common to all of them is fire in their hearts, and a desire to reach the lost. My part at times was to listen to them, and then to assist Gregory in hammering out the practical steps of planting Churches of Praise in unreached villages.

In addition to the forty-five churches in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, six new churches are now being supported in far western Uzbekistan, in a autonomous region called Karakapalkia, on the south end of the Aral Sea. The Aral Sea is literally drying up, caused by diverting all the inflowing rivers to irrigate large desert regions in Central Asia. Consequently Karakapalkia now has hundreds of square kilometers of salty dry seabed. Some sea going vessels sit like ghosts in this

desert, hundreds of kilometers from the water. For some reason, even land not formerly under the sea is turning salty, and crops are hard to grow.

We met for a day in Tashkent (capital city of Uzbekistan), with a pastor working in Karakapalkia, and are now supporting him in establishing six new churches that he has already opened. We had learned from his letters to Gregory that there is a ripe harvest among the Karakapalkian people. A family from Krivoy Rog will be moving there this summer to work with this pastor, and then by God's grace gather a team and open Churches of Praise.

Another reason to work in Karakapalkia, other than people hungry for the gospel, is that it shares a border with Turkmenistan. Turkmenistan has been a nearly impossible place for churches to exist. The dictator of Turkmenistan made himself into a demigod and has been oppressive to any mission work. Gregory has nevertheless felt that God would soon open a door, and Karakapalkia would be a "staging area" to enter Turkmenistan..

As we were leaving Uzbekistan, we met an Uzbek church leader boarding the plane with us.. Gregory discovered that this man knew believers in Turkmenistan that could help us begin church planting in their country. Moreover, he had in his possession a copy of a new law just passed by the dictator of Turkmenistan, giving churches of any size the right to register and have legal existence in the country! The law also stated that the government would not hinder anyone who would come to help the churches. Wow! We were thrilled! We believe Churches of Praise will sometime soon be found in Turkmenistan!

The fire keeps spreading in Ukraine...

Church planting fire continues in Ukraine, with more and more churches being opened in villages and towns where there is no church. Eleven prisons now have churches. Churches of Praise have more than 1500 church members in the prison churches, all born again through the prison ministry. All together, there are now more than 400 Churches of Praise in Ukraine, Armenia, Moldova, and Central Asia. (Remember: two years ago there were a total of 33 churches.) Village planter Galena continues to be the "champion" church planter, having opened (as of yesterday) 109 churches with her team of planters. She has become the model for all the other village church planters!

Congress of the Churches of Praise...

June 1-4 will be the second annual international Congress of the Churches of Praise. It will be a four day gathering of workers and church planters, held in the main church in Krivoy Rog. This year it is expected to be a gathering of about 1000

workers and leaders! For many, especially for ministers in new village churches, it will be the first time they will meet their Churches of Praise extended family. A year ago, many of them were not even in the family of God! It will be just as thrilling for us as for them to be part of this great gathering! Pray with us that this event would be under the direction and anointing of the Holy Spirit, that all would leave with a renewed passion for Jesus and love for the lost world.

Our travel...

We will travel to Ukraine with our evangelist friend Mark Johnson -- Mark and I leaving the USA on May 20, and Jackie on May 27. We plan to return during the second week of June.

Please agree with us in faith and prayer. As always, we are trusting God for our home base needs as well as for our travel funds. Our tickets must be paid for on May 6, two weeks from the writing of this letter. *We still need all the travel funds. Jehovah Jireh!*

We wish you could all come with us, and sit among this fiery new generation of pioneers! If you're not going, you could be a *sender* – through your prayer and giving!

The prison work...

There is a growing opportunity for you to participate with us in this ripened harvest. As an example, there is a need to raise the monthly support for the prison outreach: The amount that once was supporting outreach to three prisons is the same amount now being used to work in 11 prisons! Taking food and medicine continues to be a very important part of the work in the prisons. Sasha and Tanya are excellent in making every dollar stretch, and are pouring their lives into the prisoners and their families, working long hours with almost no salary. We now are establishing a reasonable salary for them.

You may remember that their oldest son became ill and died in prison last February. This has only spurred them to double their efforts to reach other sons and daughters who are locked away in the prisons. Many of them die there without hope.

When a prisoner is soon to be released, Sasha and Tanya attempt to contact family members, if any, and help prepare for the reentry of the prisoner into life without bars. Many of them are discharged right into Shining Glory Rehab Center at the main church.

Sasha and Tanya are also helping the children of prisoners. Many moms and dads leave their children in deplorable living conditions while they are in prison. Providing these children with shelter, food, clothes, and medical help is a heart rending, desperate need!

We have decided that it is a necessity to increase the monthly budget for the prison ministry by 50% Will you agree with us for these extra finances?

The Rehab center...

A new rehab center building is about to be built, across the street from the main church. Actually, two centers will be built – one for adults and one for children. The children's rehab is a new vision – to save the lives of homeless and addicted children. Many of them sleep in the dark basements of apartments, living more like animals than humans. Many are

mentally damaged from drugs and glue sniffing, and most have no idea what it is like to have a warm bed, food and love.

Funds have been given for the basic construction of the rehab center. There remains a great need for beds, linens, and other equipment and furnishings.

The fruit in the lives of men and women coming from the Rehab Center is amazing! Former addicts and criminals are rapidly becoming fearless witnesses for Christ, able ministers and church planters! Money invested in this vision is sown in excellent soil!

Summer camps for village youth...

This summer, there will be six village youth camps. A leadership team from the main church will help Jen and Scott (our daughter and son-in-law) in this new ministry. Youth in the village churches will reach out to the other village youth, inviting them to spend several days with them. They will stay together in homes opened by local people, or in some of the abandoned houses and buildings that exist in the villages. Though the arrangements will be somewhat primitive, the camps will be a great times of instilling the Word of God into the village youth, and provide life changing experiences!

The plan is to provide camping cots, sports equipment, and food for these camps. There is a need to purchase 150 cots in Ukraine, which will be used not only for the camps, but in multiple ways throughout the year. Please pray and agree with us that many will be inspired to help provide for these evangelistic youth camps, and help Jen and Scott get there. They will travel to Ukraine near the end of June to oversee and launch the camps.

The home front...

Since arriving home in mid March, I (John) have been busy almost full time reconstructing our downstairs area into a more professional office and efficient work space for Scarlet Thread Ministries. Until recently, I have been working in the same area on several folding tables, without storage space. Everything was always near chaos. Now the rooms are beautiful and efficiently furnished for work. It is a blessing to be able to work in a more orderly and pleasant environment – thanks to the Lord's provision, the help of Jay my oldest son, and enough time for me to do the work.

We hope in the next four weeks to get caught up on work for which the office space exists! Tasks of administration and communication sometimes make us wish days were longer than 24 hours!. We want to also accomplish other important things such as writing and publishing teaching material for the Churches of Praise. Keep praying for fruitfulness when we are at the home base.

Another big thanks!!

We deeply appreciate your friendship, prayer and support. You help us to keep going, whether by spiritual or financial assistance. God bless you and your family in every way, and make you a blessing to many. May you experience fresh joy of the Lord and new power for living!

With love,

John and Jackie
