



Lifeline

...a prayer letter from John and Jackie

October 23, 2005



Dear friends,

We greet you from Krivoy Rog, Ukraine, where we are again in the middle of the harvest that continues in this part of the world. Henry Blackaby, a Southern Baptist pastor and leader, taught the Church this great truth: *Look to see what God is doing, and then adjust your life to be involved with Him in His great work.* That is what first brought us here, and that is what makes us continue. It is not our vision, and our work: it is God's vision and His work. We simply want to be at work with Him.

Outreach to troubled children...

A new ministry began this year in the Churches of Praise -- reaching out to the most troubled children in the city. Part of the plan is that every three months a celebration will be prepared for them at the main church. An outreach team made up of people from various Churches of Praise scours Krivoy Rog to find the kids with the worst problems. They go to the streets to find homeless kids, search the basements of apartment buildings, look for anywhere kids might hang out or hide. They go to the institutions in the city that house troubled or homeless kids and invite them.

This was done for the second time recently. The church sent buses to orphanages, schools, and city detention centers. They told them, "We don't have room for everyone, so please give us ONLY YOUR WORST KIDS, the ones most severely troubled." The officials scoffed at them, and said it would not work, that it would be chaos. But they sent them. All the orphanages were at camp, so the team thought perhaps only two hundred children would attend this time. However, one thousand of the city's children came - the kids with the worst behavior problems, and the most severely troubled.

Those thousand kids sat like angels in the church sanctuary. The room was made to look like a ship. The bow of a ship jugged out from the stage, with big sails. The ship was called "Praise". For the program, they sailed to three islands. The first island was the "Island of No Success", which was filled with unhappiness, and wild people that worshipped bananas. The second island was "The Island of Soap, Toothpaste, and Washcloths", where they were taught that clean bodies are important. Lots of water from squirt guns and bubbles filled the air. They next sailed to the "Island of the Church of Praise", where instruction was given for the necessity of a clean and pure heart. Hundreds of children stood with a desire for a clean heart.

Scripture verses were memorized on the spot. Candy rewards were given to those who could repeat the verses. Praise and worship was led by band of children playing instruments and a childrens choir. Everyone received a bandana, with the words written on it, "Little Sailor for Christ". Bananas were given to children, many of whom had never tasted one. A bag of gifts was given to every child. They were given food, and many took showers for the first time, using the twelve new showers of the rehab center.

Government officials attending were amazed. The director of the celebration told us there was no chaos in that room from beginning to end. Children followed directions and entered in enthusiastically.

The children's celebration hit the front page of the biggest newspaper in the city. City officials honored the Church of Praise, saying the city could never have done this, that it was done in a highly professional manner, and that (quoting the newspaper), "We the city bow our knees to the Church of Praise".

The total cost, with transportation, food, decorations, etc., was a little under one thousand dollars. The next one is in November, and as of now there is no money for it. Want to help? Every dollar gives an unsaved troubled child the greatest day they ever experienced, and a opportunity to go to heaven!!!

Mission College...

Seventeen students from last spring's Mission college received their diplomas this week. Three months of class is followed by six months of internship, planting churches in the villages. Every three months another class graduates. You would be honored to be in the presence of these new pioneers.

We had the privilege of spending this week with the newest crop of thirty, pouring into them the foundation of the Blood Covenant. Last week we did this with the regular college. We also did the super fast track version with the two evening colleges. So, we've been swimming in the deep river of His Blood Covenant every day since we arrived. Is this "suffering for Jesus"? We don't think so. It is the greatest joy of our lives. Thanks for helping us to build this foundation in new ministers who will take the gospel where we will probably never be able to go. We were especially amazed when Anya, the Mission College director told us that all the mission college students and graduates pray for us every day!

Church Planting...

The work continues. Gregory said the other day, "The foundation of our ministry is in the villages." We had a two-day ministers' conference, with 250 senior leaders and church planters present. Not all can attend this monthly event. The forty senior leaders bring as many as they can (financially) from the various regions of the country where Churches of Praise are being planted.

The praise and worship of these ministers is fiery. The prayer is intense. The love among them is strong. They love to be together, and they love to be taught. All of them are facing mountains of difficulty every day and every week, and they drink in all they can get when they come together.

Five of the senior pastors testified about their city church construction. All have seen God provide for them, and all need more to finish. None of their construction funds have come from us or other foreign sources. It is happening through their own people. The conference prayed for all of them, and Gregory led an offering from the ministers to be split among these five for their construction projects. It was important, not only for the money itself, but for the release of united faith and love among all the leaders and churches. It was a blessing to see this giving among them. We know they give to each other often in many ways, and we observe with joy their maturing faith.

As many of you know, \$30 a month for a year is provided for each church plant. This money comes through your designated gifts and the large giving of the main churches here. Many village churches are past the time of this one-year financial provision. The missionaries are now facing the challenge of continuing to help those village churches without external financial support. Many churches were not ready after a year to exist without the presence of the missionary church planters. So, the church planters have a great test of faith: how do they get to these far flung villages? How will God provide for them?

The senior leaders must travel even more, all over their region. Three or four have cars. The rest have to use public transport. Many church planters simply walk from village to village.

A vision for automobiles...

We, Gregory, and Galena have a vision to provide cars to the senior leaders, so that they can get around their regions more efficiently. Right now, we are asking God for ten cars for the leaders who are most urgently in need of transport. We see this as absolutely essential for the survival and building of new churches in these regions. The plan is to buy used cars - the simplest car, the Russian made Lada -for \$1500, and spend \$500 repairing each one. Will you agree with us for this immediate vision of transportation?

Also pray for supernatural wisdom for the financial side of the long-term vision of church planting. Everyone doing the work is stretched in every way. Tithing and giving is becoming a solid foundation among them; but the urgent need is to keep the church planters in motion, going to new territory while continuing to build where they have already planted. *This requires financial assistance far beyond the capacity of the Churches of Praise.*

We are expecting much more...

Pray with us for a supernatural release of new church planting funds. The last three years have been a financial miracle through a very few people. The future cannot rest only on the faith and giving of these few. Due to limited funds, we have now had to cut the support for prison church planting in half. This should not be.

Agree with us that God will raise up financial partners with a passion for souls and planting of churches. Pray also for increasing prosperity in the Ukrainian churches. We are seeing God lift them out of poverty, especially in the cities. But the economic condition is deplorable in the villages, where the harvest is so ripe, and the need so large. We believe the gospel and the presence of the church will begin to change that.

We don't provide salaries or permanent help to the local churches. We know that the local churches must rest on their own faith and see God provide for them and their pastors through their own faith and obedience. But that cannot happen until the gospel is preached, and until the church comes into being.

We want to help provide the tools of the ministry to the missionary church planters, and help keep them moving!

We know this means God must provide much more, either through those who know us, or through new relationships. Please agree with us by faith for this.

We appreciate you very much...

We carry you in our hearts, and we continually expect that you will experience God's blessing in your family, your work and your ministry. We consider it a great honor to send you our prayer letters, and a great honor that you take time to read them and to pray.

A special thanks, of course, for responding as God leads you to support us -- both for the needs of the home base, and for the harvest in Ukraine and beyond. Without your help, we could not do what we are doing.

May you remain steadfast in His love -- constantly remembering the great and magnificent promises of His Word.

With love,

John and Jackie