

PARTNERS IN MISSIONS

Training National Leaders for "Ministry"



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Getting into prison: What does it cost to get into prison? The ministry opportunities are many for our students in Uganda. One of those opportunities is a church that operates inside of one of the local prisons. But why would the government give an outside church, the opportunity to start a church inside the prison? The answer is because the church cares about people, and showed it by bringing a bar of soap and a roll of toilet paper for each of the 140 prisoners. The guards wrote down our names and turned six white folk loose with the general prison population. They came back two hours later to escort us out. One of the missionaries brought her three-year-old son to roam and plan in the prison yard, while we preached to half the inmates. When you bring soap and toilet paper to prison, your security is not a question.

Grass Hut: A grass hut is a round, one room structure, with mud walls, a dirt floor, and thatch roof. There are no windows and a single door. It is possible to rent or own. The rental price for a grass hut is \$5-\$8/month. Furniture often includes a reed mat, a small bench, and some plastic chairs. I was surprised to see solar panels on a number of grass huts, and even a satellite dish on one. Cooking is usually done outside on an open fire, and the bathroom is definitely outside.



Stuck in the States: Normally, we visit the States and update part of our supporters during our Bible college's winter break, but we are now "stuck" in the States due to COVID-19. We had hoped to be able to return to Ukraine on May 13th, but borders remain closed. We have "open" return tickets, but Ukraine has not set a date for allowing international flights to resume. We are using this month's newsletter to share additional information about my recent trip to visit our students in Uganda. The students are experiencing difficulty in Uganda, because as "white foreigners" they are falsely blamed for the virus outbreak. The Bible college, as well as all schools, remains closed in Ukraine. There is already talk of delaying the start of the school year in Ukraine. For now, we maintain contact with family, students, and church workers in Ukraine, as we continue to do office work and developing on-line materials for this next school year.

Our Bible college has just made the decision that during this next school year, our cross-cultural mission program will focus on preparing students to serve in Uganda. We will continue to send students to central Asia and other parts of the former Soviet Union, but we recognize a growing understanding among Ukrainian churches that they are able to make a real difference in some very difficult situations.

Not allowed in church: I normally wore long pants, because it is not respectable for adult men to wear shorts. However, on the day we took the fishing boat out to the island, I wore shorts. I was still called on to preach. A few days later, as I was preaching in a different church, a goat came in the side door, right in front of me, then down the aisle, and out the front door. The goat was being chased by a deacon, and after the service I was fed "goat" for lunch. A couple of days later, a chicken also walked down the aisle as I was preaching. But some things are obviously not allowed in church. On Sunday morning as it was raining, a latecomer rode his motorcycle through the open front door of the church, and stopped beside one of the back pews. The preacher stopped his sermon to make an announcement, "No, you cannot park your motorcycle in church – park under the tree outside."

Our Calling: Twenty-five years ago our family became missionaries. We want you to know that we are still committed to what we began in 1995 when we left Mississippi and moved to Ukraine. For many years you have been partners with us in the process of *"Training national leaders for ministry"* in Ukraine. We are truly thankful for your faithfulness over the years.

At age seventeen, when I went to Bible college, it was to major in world missions. As I continued my education someone asked, "If you were using the gifts, talents, and abilities that God has given you, in the best possible way: What would you be doing?" The answer was obvious; "I would be teaching as a missionary."

The Odessa Theological Seminary was the first Bible college started in the former Soviet Union. From our arrival in 1995, we have seen more than 2000 men and women graduate and go out to serve the Lord. These are students who have been in our home and in my classroom. In Odessa, our ministry centers around the Bible college. We have both resident and non-resident students, both men and women, as well as students from the city of Odessa and neighboring countries.

"And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others."
2 Timothy 2:2

Our task is to prepare the next generation. For the past 25 years we have trained national leaders in Ukraine to take the gospel to Ukraine and Russia. Pam and I are missionaries, and part of our task is to prepare the next generation of missionaries.



Because the mission program has grown to be a large part of our ministry in Ukraine, we have chosen to add the "Odessa Missions" logo to our letterhead.

In the past we have said; **"PARTNERS IN MISSIONS is Training National Leaders for Ministry."** The addition of the phrase; **"Odessa Missions – Training National Leaders for Missions"** is a fitting growth to our work in Ukraine.

We are training Ukrainians to do ministry in Ukraine, and to do missions in the world. Some of our regular supporters have chosen to make additional contributions to help specifically cover the cost of involving our Ukrainian students in mission activity. This is great and we need these additional funds. Checks made out to **PARTNERS IN MISSIONS** will support the work of Ray and Pam Trantham as missionaries in Ukraine. Checks made out to **Odessa Missions** will be viewed as special gifts and used to train and send our Ukrainian students as cross-cultural missionaries. Both checks should be mailed to the same address in Fulton, Mississippi.



Grass hut with solar panel

Reporting to churches in the States

Water

We are continually thankful for those of you who have supported our work from the first day until now. We are equally grateful for those of you who have more recently begun to support our work. In both cases, you are "partners" with us in fulfilling the Great Commission in Ukraine. We are thankful that you have confidence that we are doing our job well. Over the past twenty-five years, two things have become evident: We are here to stay, and God is providing results through our ministry. We view the past twenty-five years as a success and look forward to many more. We need you. We ask that you continue with us during 2020 as "partners" in the work in Ukraine, through your prayers and financial giving.

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Give on-line:

