

PARTNERS IN MISSIONS

Training National Leaders for "Ministry"

Ray and Pam
Trantham

 **Odessa Missions**
Training National Leaders for "Missions"



Tickets - We are thankful, that we have finally received tickets to return to Ukraine. Although we had planned to stay a little longer during this visit to the States, we certainly planned to be back in Ukraine before now. The COVID-19 virus closed Ukrainian border crossings in March. Even though there have been fewer cases reported in Ukraine, the medical infrastructure is less prepared to cope with an outbreak, which has resulted in a more restrictive shutdown than in the States. In mid-June, restrictions began to ease on international travel, and we immediately booked a flight for **9th July**. We continue to receive regular advisories from the US government, about travel conditions in Ukraine, including the most recent showing Ukraine extending quarantine conditions until July 31st. Our Bible college, as well as all schools, have been closed since March, and serious questions are being raised as to what reopening will look like this next school year. I have been using the additional time in the States to develop additional on-line course materials for this fall. At this point, plans are to moved forward with in-person classes, but I suspect on-line courses will continue to play an increasing part in the educational process.

June 25th - We have long awaited this day. Twenty-five years ago, our family arrived in Odessa with sixteen suitcases. Today we celebrate **25 years as missionaries** in Ukraine. I remember that first afternoon in the Odessa airport, ... it was raining, and they left our luggage setting outside on the tarmac as we waited to clear customs. We then had to go outside and bring our own luggage into the building. When we first arrived in Ukraine, we do so, having bought a return ticket to America. We had sold our house, along with everything else in America, and our intention was certainly to stay as long-term missionaries, but there were many uncertainties. We still live in an uncertain world, but after the first year, we have always bought airline tickets "to America," with a return ticket to Ukraine.

Our mission work has always been that of, "*Training National Leaders for Ministry.*" This has taken on three stages over the year. During the first ten years this was marked by most of our time being spent in the classroom doing traditional classroom lectures. During the second ten years, I continued with regular classroom lectures but also focuses on producing new course materials and distance learning materials. During the past five years, a growing amount of our time has been spent preparing Ukrainians to serve as cross-cultural missionaries. During the past 25 years, having students and church members into our home has remained a priority. It is impossible to know an exact number,

Ray, Pam, Regina, and Rena
early days in Ukraine



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Missionaries in Odessa, Ukraine since 1995.

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but it is estimated that Pam has fed at least, 250 guests each year for the past 25 years. We could not begin to count the number of foreigners or nationalities that have sat at our table. On a few occasions, we have hosted top religious leaders from Ukraine and heads of international organizations, but most of the time it was just hungry college students.

As our daughters grew up in Ukraine, they were never high school cheerleaders or prom queens, but they learned foreign languages, toured European capitals, and once flew with President Jimmy Carter. They learned to barter over the price in the open market, cut up the animal, and cook from scratch. There has always been a constant stream of guests, at our table or sleeping on the floor, and we are pleased that now Regina and Rena have families of their own, they can be counted on to play their part in a global society.

We do not know what the future holds. The Book of James warns about making human plans, as if we, instead of God, ruled the universe. But God does give us wisdom and choice. Our choice is to remain for the foreseeable future as missionaries in Ukraine. We see 25 years as just the beginning. Ukraine has changed over the past years, and so have we. The COVID-19 global pandemic calls for rethinking international travel and interaction, the US is playing a smaller role in our global economy, geopolitical threats and global ecological changes pose uncertainty, while race and societal issues fracture our once "united" States. But, in spite of all of this, one thing that we have learned over the past 25 years, is that God is faithful. When we sat out for Ukraine, one of the biggest questions in our mind was, "Will God take care of us? --- Can God handle the challenges we will face in an uncertain world?" For 25 years the answer has been "yes". It is with this assurance that we confidently move into the future. Romans 8:31 asks, "If God is for us, who can be against us?"

June 25th – There is another important event that happened on this date. Today we mark the 25th anniversary of being in Ukraine, but fifteen years ago, on our tenth anniversary of us being in Ukraine, Regina and Sasha were married. The service was conducted in both English and Russian, and blended traditions of an American and Ukrainian wedding.

Right: Regina and Sasha update American supporters about their ministry in Ukraine.



A STUDENT'S PRAYER AT END OF CLASS: Our God of mercy, we pray that none of us would be content to ignore the salvation of any other. We pray that none of us would be silent when our friends, family or acquaintances are bound for hell. We ask that our children would be saved, that our parents would be saved, that our brothers and sisters, our grandparents, aunts and uncles, and our neighbors and colleagues would be saved. We pray that we would do all within our power to bring the salvation that you offer to them. We thank you that you have purchased our lives and that you have given us the truth to share with others. Help us to be faithful to the end. In the Name of Christ, Amen.

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