

PARTNERS IN MISSIONS

Training National Leaders for "Ministry"

Ray and Pam
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 **Odessa Missions**
Training National Leaders for "Missions"

New church plant: Acts, chapter two, describes the beginning of the church. That church has crossed borders and cultures, as God's saving grace has been proclaimed around the world. When I teach a course in "Church Growth," I stress that we are all Christians, because at some point in time, someone from a different culture, brought us the gospel. We must be following the New Testament model of starting new churches. A husband and wife team, who just graduated from our mission program, are carrying out that ministry in Odessa. Instead of leaving Ukraine, they have chosen to stay in Odessa to help plant an international church among students and other foreign workers. Although Bible studies and services have been going on for some time, this past Sunday was the official opening of the new church. Our Bible college president was one of the speakers for the opening services. --- You have a part in this work. Your prayers and financial support help train those who are advancing God's kingdom to the ends of the earth. Thanks.

Graduation continues: Last month, I explained that that we were unable to hold graduation ceremonies at the end of the school year. Because of continuing restrictions on the number of people who can gather at one time, we are continuing to graduate different groups of students, every few weeks. Our task as missionaries remains, "*Training National Leaders for Ministry.*" We are thankful that you are partners with us in this work.

Health update from Ukraine: It seems that no corner of the earth has escaped the COVID-19 pandemic. Ukraine has adopted a four-level restriction policy for dealing with the virus. Every two weeks, each "county" of Ukraine is assigned a certain rating, and different levels of quarantine are imposed depending upon levels of COVID in that area. The city of Odessa is a tourist area, a college town, and a major seaport. This has resulted in high rates of infection in our area. The past two weeks have seen significant rises in rates of infection for all of Ukraine. This past week, public schools switched to on-line-only classes until the end of December. We continue with face-to-face classes at our Bible college, but have chosen to go to on-line classes beginning in November. This is especially a challenge for students who come from rural areas with limited access to technology.



Opening service for new international church.



Below: former student
Above, preaching: Bible college president – also one of my former students



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We currently have two teachers out with the virus, and three other workers who have recovered. There is a growing acceptance of health precautions among the general public. Many Christians view church gatherings as "family" gatherings, and feel there is less reason to take precautions when you are with family. This has led to large outbreaks within several congregations. Public transportation remains the only option for travel for most people. We have stopped taking public transportation and our college has asked students to avoid public transportation if possible.

Travel to America postponed: It has been our normal practice to travel to the States and visit supporting churches when our Bible college takes its winter break. We feel it is important to keep you updated by making a personal presentation to your church. We were delayed in returning to Ukraine this past winter, because of COVID, and we are concerned about getting stuck in the US again this winter. The border of Ukraine was closed to foreigners last month, although it has reopened with restrictions. Pam and I are also concerned about the risk of flying internationally. Because of these reasons, we feel it is best to stay in Ukraine, where we can be sure to continue our ministry. We are comfortable and safe, and although other missionaries have chosen to leave, we feel we can be most effective by staying in Ukraine. We need your prayers as we continue to adapt to the changing situations and serve in the best possible way.

Graduates working in the new international church



Students and faculty enjoy southern BBQ

Picnic: We often invite students to our house and usually start the schoolyear off with a picnic and cookout in our backyard. That is definitely "out" this year. Pam and I decided the best alternative was that we would cook pork BBQ and sides, then the college cafeteria would serve this during lunch.



Left: Mission student returning this week, after four extra months in Uganda.

Center: Former student who will be returning with her.

