

PARTNERS IN MISSIONS

Training National Leaders for "Ministry"

Ray and Pam
Trantham

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



How Long, O Lord? The writers of the Old Testament often asked this question as they waited upon God's deliverance during a time of trouble. We find ourselves asking the same question as we watch the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. When can we return to our ministry in Ukraine? When can we return "home?" A question many people have asked, which we do not like to think about, is "What if you can't go back?"

God is faithful: We must always remember, "God has not changed." God is the same as he was before COVID, ... God is the same as he was before Russia invaded Ukraine. God is the same as he was, the day you were baptized. I became a Christian 50 years ago, and my experience is that God has always been faithful. Even though God does not change, our world changes and God calls us to be good stewards of the situation that we are in. It would be foolish not to ask, "If you can't do what you did yesterday, ... then what is the best possible way to serve God today?"

Our calling: In 1995 our family chose to move to Ukraine as missionaries. We chose the name, PARTNERS IN MISSIONS and defined our purpose as follows: ***"Partners In Missions is engaged in training national leaders for ministry, and the production of teaching and training materials in the former Soviet Union."*** We have never regretted this decision and have never questioned this purpose or calling. Our intention in 1995, was that this decision and move to Ukraine, would be ongoing. We sold our home in Mississippi, and over the years have used those funds to build a home in Ukraine.

Our current desire: We came to the States to update supporting churches during our Bible college's winter break. We had return tickets until the conflict in Ukraine began, and then all flights were canceled. Our plans remain to return as soon as possible. Our daughter has repeatedly said that it was a good thing that we were already out of Ukraine, because she knew that it would have been difficult to convince us to leave.

Time to evaluate: When can we return? We do not know. We estimate that it will take a least three months before anyone can begin to make a prediction for when missionaries might return to Ukraine. This is not to say that we think we will be able to return in three months, but that we need to wait three months, before we can even predict a later date for return. A month ago, no one expected this level of war in Ukraine. We



Sasha and brothers in Odessa



Humanitarian aid being distributed



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estimate that in the next three to six months, a clearer picture for the future of Ukraine will begin to emerge. God knows the future, ... we have to wait.

Now: The end of Acts 24 and Acts 28, mentions that the Apostle Paul spent several years in prison. When I read this text in the past, I have often thought, "What a waste of time." I have often wondered why God would allow Paul to spend several years of his missionary career in prison. (I have never been in prison.) Two years ago, our return to Ukraine was delayed because of the COVID lockdown. Fortunately, I had good office space and a good computer and was able to do much of my regular work remotely. During that same time, I was able to travel to Uganda and work with our mission students. The past several weeks have been some of our busiest time, ... We have done TV, radio, and newspaper interviews. We have spoken for various civic clubs, as well as churches on every occasion possible. During the week most of our day has been spent corresponding with people in Ukraine and trying to coordinate humanitarian assistance. We are sure that over the next few weeks this frenzy of crisis activity will slow down, but we continue to have full days of ministry that is being conducted on-line.

Ministry: If we were back in Odessa, much of my daily activity would be spent in my office on our college campus. It is not possible to physically be in Odessa, and I certainly miss the comfort of my own office. For security reasons, my computer and many other electronics were evacuated from my office to Regina and Sasha's basement. Today, I am spending much time staying in contact with people in Ukraine and working remotely. We feel that we have, and continue to play a critical role in assisting our Bible college and Ukrainian ministry partners. Over the past years, I have taught regularly in the Bible college in Armenia. Because of the COVID lockdown and restrictions, I have been unable to teach there recently. We are working on an extended trip to Armenia, and possibly Uganda for upcoming classes. This is all to say, that during the next few months, we remain very active in cross-cultural mission work, even without physically being in Ukraine.

Future: Our goal is to return to living in Ukraine as soon as possible. We realize that may take some time, so we are exploring alternative and remote ways to continue our missionary work. Our task remains that of, *"Training national leaders for ministry."*



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Family: I grew up in Corinth, Mississippi, and my parents continue to live there. This is the place that we return to, when we are in the United States. We are continuing to stay with Ray's parents in Corinth.

Regina and Sasha: Just before the conflict began, Regina and daughters, Emily and Evelyn, left Odessa to stay with friends in the assumed safety of western Ukraine. It was soon realized that none of Ukraine would escape the devastation, and local church leaders urged Regina to leave Ukraine. Knowing there were 60 hour-long lines at the Polish border, friends drove Regina and daughters to the Romanian border. They were only able to drive to within six miles of the border, where Regina and daughters walked to the border crossing. After waiting several hours, they were able to cross around midnight into Romania, where they were met by friends, and then flew on to Mississippi. Regina, Emily, and Evelyn are staying in Hattiesburg, with our daughter Rena. Sasha remains in the basement in Odessa and is unable to leave Ukraine. Each day he is involved in ministry and humanitarian assistance. As we continue to receive financial assistance for the Christians in Ukraine, Sasha continues to distribute this assistance to those in need.



Sasha and friends sheltering in basement
Humanitarian aid being purchased
Church services continue
Ray and Pam in the States helping to raise support for ministry partners in Ukraine



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