

# PARTNERS IN MISSIONS

Training National Leaders for "Ministry"

Ray and Pam  
Trantham



Odessa Missions

Training National Leaders for "Missions"



## Ray and Regina travel to Ukraine for two weeks

In our last newsletter we said, "On October 4th, Ray and Regina will make a two-week trip to Odessa, Ukraine to evaluate the situation first-hand and explore when it may be possible to return on a more permanent basis."



This involved flying to the neighboring country of Moldova, then driving to the Ukrainian border, walking across the border, and having Sasha meet us on the other side to take us to Odessa. We had a good flight into Moldova, and with minor delays arrived in Odessa. When we crossed into Ukraine, it was immediately different than the country we had left eight months earlier. There are curfews, restrictions, armed soldiers at checkpoints, as well as fortified artillery positions along the roads. Several miles outside of Odessa we began to see trucks lined up, waiting to deliver their loads of grain to the port in Odessa. Traffic was not heavy, but moved slowly because of the waiting trucks and military checkpoints.

**First day back at Bible college:** Our college conducts a prayer and worship time on Monday and Friday mornings. Only part of the faculty were present, but it was still good to be back. We plan to have some students visit the campus next week, and it will be important to see how many are able to attend. Our meeting time ended with us gathering in groups of three people, for prayer. The first prayed in Ukrainian, the next prayed in Russian, and I prayed in English. When the worship time was over, it was time for me to head to the dentist. I had put this off until I got to Ukraine, because the savings in cost, was half the cost of the flight.



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**Children and toys:** As we went into the store, the first thing we saw was children's toys. Beside the cuddly stuffed military "drones" were Javelin anti-tank missiles. These are the toys Ukrainian children are learning to play with. It is no wonder that a child's drawing is of a tank with a Ukrainian flag.

**Travel Advisory:** We take security and government warning seriously. In Matthew 4, Satan tempts Jesus to jump from the top of the temple, and test God's care. We recognize God's work always has risk, and we trust in God's care, but we also try to use the wisdom he has given us to avoid unnecessary risk. I spent my first day back in Odessa, working around the house and resting. At the end of the day, I sat down to check my email. The American Embassy had just sent me the latest update. Following are excerpts from their email; *"Last Update: Do not travel to Ukraine due to Russian military invasion. U.S. citizens in Ukraine should depart immediately if it is safe to do so, ... If you are not currently in Ukraine but choose to disregard the travel advisory not to enter Ukraine, you should consider taking the following steps prior to travel: Draft a will and designate appropriate insurance beneficiaries and/or power of attorney. Discuss a plan with loved ones regarding funeral wishes, etc. ... Leave DNA samples with your medical provider. ... Have a contingency plan in place that does not rely on U.S. government assistance."*

Regina delivered medical supplies to an area church which collects and distributes materials to area hospitals. Sasha shows a piece of melted aluminum from a Soviet era MiG-21 fighter jet, which he keeps as a souvenir.







**"Welcome to Ukraine:"** As I was reading through the email from the American Embassy, I heard a sound like the roar of a low flying jet. I went outside to look up to the sky. There are no jets. Just missiles. We live at the edge of the city, and the sound starts at the front of the house, then shifts to the back, and changes pitch as it flies overhead and on towards the center of the city. By this time, you know it has already missed you, ... so you just wait for the explosion. It shakes the house and the windows. There is a young family staying in our house: They said, "Welcome to Ukraine, ... we usually sleep through it." --- The next morning I learned it was a drone that Russia had purchased from Iran, and the sound I heard was the Ukrainian missile defense system shooting down three drones.

**The sun is shining:** The Ukrainian president began his daily video address on Saturday by saying it was "a warm sunny day," ... *except for the clouds over Russian areas.* It was indeed a sunny day and we celebrated Sasha's brother's birthday at Regina and Sasha's house.

**Church:** We were especially glad to be back at church on Sunday. I spoke at the end of the service and explained that we were only back for two weeks. The minister responded by saying, "We know things are getting better when the Americans are willing to come back." Following the service he asked me to preach the next Sunday. During the congregational prayer time, the woman behind me prays on her knees that the missiles would stop. After the services were over Regina and I had a time to catch up with friends.

