

PARTNERS IN MISSIONS

Training National Leaders for "Ministry"

Ray and Pam
Trantham

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



February 24th, 2022

Reflecting back over the past year:

February 24th, 2023

We are now a year into a war, that was only expected to last a week. A year ago, during the last days of February, entire news broadcasts were devoted exclusively to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. A year later, the war shows no signs of diminishing, ... only the news coverage has diminished. Over the past year, I have often been asked, "What does Putin want?" and "What do you think will happen?" I certainly do not know the answer to these questions, but over the past year several things have become obvious.

- There was a time, when Russia had political influence over Ukraine, and when Ukraine mirrored the anti-European policies of Russia. Putin would like a regime change that would return Ukraine to this pro-Russian stance.
- There was a time, when Russia was allowed to base part of its navy in Crimea and to influence Ukraine's international military alliances. Putin now seeks these military advantages by force.

Because Ukraine is not willing to concede either of these desires to Putin, ... neither side is likely to seek a negotiated solution. It is my opinion, that both sides will fight on, as long as they are able. It is my opinion, that the conflict is likely to intensify in the spring, and then eventually reach a stalemate. This "stalemate" could last for years. (This was the case in the Donbas, from 2014 until the recent invasion.)

What does this mean for us as missionaries? We anticipate a time in the future when there will be a "stalemate", and we are able to do ministry on the Ukrainian controlled side. It is important to remember that we have been serving in Ukraine as missionaries, during a "stalemated" conflict between Russia and Ukraine, since 2014. The Bible college, our house, and the city of Odessa has been mostly spared from direct fighting. Missiles, drones, and bombs have hit the airport, seaport, train station, and power supply, ... but most other infrastructure has been spared.

There are opportunities for ministry: Our Bible college recently hosted a seminar for aid workers and those dealing with trauma counseling. Others from our college are involved in chaplaincy ministry and various forms of aid assistance. I have spent the past several weeks developing a new on-line class that is now available for students in isolated locations. I continue to work with our mission students and provide assistance for them. We continue to look at the best time for a visit to Armenia or Uganda to assist the work in those areas. Even though we have not returned to regular living in Ukraine, we remain busy as full-time missionaries.

A return to Odessa: On March 2nd, I will be returning to the Bible college in Odessa and stay until the end of the school year. I am scheduled to have in-person classes starting the week that I arrive. Our goal is that many students will be able to attend in-person, but on-line classes will be available for others. Pam will remain in Mississippi while I am in Ukraine. This will also be a time for me to assess the situation and make plans before we are able to return on a permanent basis.



Ray and Pam Trantham
Missionaries in Odessa, Ukraine since 1995.
ray@partnersinmissions.org <http://partnersinmissions.org>
Phone: 662-872-0748 662-286-2502

Tax-deductible contributions:
PARTNERS IN MISSIONS
P.O. Box 212
Fulton, MS 38843



Sasha able to visit: A few days before the war began, Regina and children, evacuated to western Ukraine and eventually to the US, while Sasha stayed behind in Odessa. Because men of age 18-60 have not been allowed to leave the country, Sasha has been separated from family for almost a year. Sasha received permission for a 30-day trip to the US to update churches and raise humanitarian assistance. He and Ray will be flying back to Ukraine on March 2nd. Sasha received permission just two days before his planned trip. He drove across the border and then flew out of Moldova.

Moldovia: Moldova is the small country that borders Ukraine and is beside Odessa. The country of Moldova is in a similar situation to Ukraine, ... it sits in the shadow of Russia and wishes stronger ties with Europe. Moldova also has a disputed territory that has been occupied by Russian troops for almost 30 years. A lingering fear is that Russia may attempt to take Odessa and draw the country of Moldova into the conflict. Last week, Ukraine reported Russian plans to overthrow the government of Moldova. Yesterday, Moldova's President Maia Sandu, accused Russia of planning to use "saboteurs" to destabilize the country. On February 14th Moldova temporarily closed its air space for undisclosed safety reasons, after accusing Russia of plotting to bring down its government. This is important: Sasha and Ray are flying into Moldova on March 2nd and Ray will return through Moldova at the end of May. This is also important because anything happening in Moldova would bring Russian troops into Odessa. Bordering Moldova on the other side is the NATO country of Romania. This is an area of great concern and prayer need.

Corona had Puppies: On a lighter note, our dog in Odessa, had puppies. We have two Labradors, and the female was bought during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, so we named her "Corona." The family staying in our house, moved the puppies into the house, because of the extreme cold.

Electricity remains a problem in Odessa, as it does in much of Ukraine. When the electricity is off for an extended period of time, you also lose water and heat.

A British military analyst recently said, "It is more dangerous to 'appease' Putin, than to 'oppose' Putin."

People have asked about news reports on Ukraine restricting church activity: As far as we are aware there are no "religious" restrictions on any churches. Some Russian Orthodox churches have been told that they cannot engage in political or military activity.

We are sincerely grateful for your continuing support of our family and ministry during these turbulent times.



Ray and Pam Trantham
Missionaries in Odessa, Ukraine since 1995.

ray@partnersinmissions.org <http://partnersinmissions.org>
Phone: 662-872-0748 662-286-2502

Tax-deductible contributions:
PARTNERS IN MISSIONS
P.O. Box 212
Fulton, MS 38843

