

PARTNERS IN MISSIONS

Training National Leaders for "Ministry"

Ray and Pam
Trantham

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

Mission conference: The war has had significant impact upon Ukrainian Christians doing foreign missionary work. Because of martial law, most men are not allowed to leave the country. Much of the financial support Ukrainian churches were sending to support their own missionaries has been devoted to internal needs. A number of Ukrainians serving outside of Ukraine, have returned to minister to the overwhelming needs inside of Ukraine. ... There has been an annual mission conference held in Odessa for the past several years. It was canceled last year when the Russians invaded, but was held this past month in Odessa. The conference began with these words, "We are gathering here for the mission conference, because this is what is important."

- One said, "The government officials came to us and asked us to take charge of distributing the international aid."
- Another said, "In the early days of the war, people came to us instead of local stores, because they knew we had supplies."
- One church leader said, "We helped people get to safety and find places to stay in other regions. The people we helped asked, "What kind of people do this for free?"
- Another church leader said, "We provide free meals and have a worship service, and although people are free to leave, they choose to stay to hear the sermon."
- One non-Christian said, "I want to say thank-you. You are doing what you do in a way others do not. I do not believe in God but I am thankful for you."

The illustration was given, where in the Book of Acts, deacons were involved in caring for people's needs, and it says, "the word of God spread." As I listened to five area church leaders being interviewed about their ministries, I realized that four of the five were people I had worked with or taught. Even though we have been absent from Odessa, our ministry continues through our students. We thank you.



The focus of this year's conference was significantly different than in the past. Much less attention was placed on cross-cultural missions, and there were fewer missionaries who were able to return from foreign lands for the conference. The focus instead was upon local ministries and humanitarian assistance. One of the most interesting parts was presentations from local church leaders about new outreach ministries they have begun in response to the war.

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Picture: As I talked and met with people at the mission conference, I saw former students and church leaders. One of the most moving was the father of one of my former students, who wanted a picture of the two of us together. He had sent his daughter to our mission program in 2016. After an internship in central Asia, she then went full-time to Uganda. I had visited her while in Uganda and you have helped support her work. What you have done, and continue to do, ... makes a difference in our world.



Above is Tya's father.

To the left is Katya who lives in Uganda, and stopped by the college for a visit.

Resurrection gives hope: The puppies are growing. I preached just before Easter at our church, and during the sermon I slipped in a video clip of the puppies as a sermon illustration. (I was also trying to tell people the puppies are ready for a new home.) I also used a video clip from the recent tornados in Mississippi, as an illustration of the frailty of life. Through the resurrection we have hope to overcome.

To the doctor: Well, I have been to the doctor this week. About six months ago, I injured my back while carrying some heavy items. This slowly got better over several months, ... until just before coming to Ukraine. I have had an annoying numbness in my right arm for six months, but last month some sharp pains begin to occur in my upper back. I first visited a general practitioner. I was told that if I wanted a "good" scan, I would need to pay, but if I wanted the "free" scan, ... well, you get what you pay for. Sasha asked which hospital had the best MRI imaging machine. I was able to get an MRI in the morning, get the results before lunch, and see a specialist for a follow-up in the afternoon, and pick up a prescription on the way home. I have 3-4 herniated disk in my neck, and we are working on treatment options.



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