

PARTNERS IN MISSIONS

Training National Leaders for "Ministry"

Ray and Pam
Trantham

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



Drones: I woke up at 3:00 AM to go to the bathroom, when I realized something was shaking the house. I opened my iPad to see that all regions of Ukraine were under air-raid warnings. The city of Odessa has been spared from most drone attacks, but not on May 4th. Not sure what was happening, I stuck my head out the door to hear anti-aircraft fire and see tracer rounds lighting up the sky. In the background of the night, was the humming of an Iranian drone. On this night, fifteen were launched against Odessa. Twelve were shot down, while three found their targets. The debris from one landed in a field near our house.



Red Cross warehouse

Three nights later, there were more attacks in Odessa. These were not in our area, and I slept through these events, but saw the news report the next morning. The report said:

Red Cross warehouse full of humanitarian aid "entirely destroyed" - More details have emerged about a fire at a warehouse after missile strikes in the Ukrainian port city of Odesa this morning. The storage facility housed humanitarian aid donated and organized by the Red Cross. The building and all the aid was "entirely destroyed" by the fire, the Ukrainian branch of the charity said. Yesterday, a missile attack damaged a mobile Red Cross hospital in Mykolaiv. Medical equipment, hardware and furniture became "unsuitable for further use", they said.

Fire trucks: A few days earlier, as class was getting started, suddenly it was disrupted as three fire trucks drove past our window. I wondered why there were fire trucks on our campus at 8:00 AM. As soon as I had a chance, I asked if we had a fire. I was told that the three shiny new fire trucks were "humanitarian aid." Wow! They were from somewhere in Europe and they had been parked overnight, right outside my office. I know that a lot of people have given a lot to assist Ukraine in this time of need. I can tell you that the average Ukrainian citizen is aware of what the West is doing, and is thankful. Pam and I are thankful for your continuing support of us and the ministry in Ukraine.



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Youth meeting: Church workers are busy and some have left Ukraine, so I have been asked to preach in church as well as in our college worship services. I was recently asked to lead several young adult meetings on Thursday evening. One meeting was the day after a drone was shot down near the church. The week before the attendance had been small, but following the attack people were back at church. They laughed and joked as they discussed what had happened the night before. --- If you are a visitor from another church, you give greetings on Sunday morning. This past Sunday, I was surprised at the large number of people in our church, who were not residents in this area.

Classes: Our Bible college has switched most of its classes to week-long intensive classes, with students staying on our campus only during class time. Safety is one of the main concerns. I just finished a class in Church Growth for students preparing to be local preachers. This was followed by a class in World Missions for students in our Master's degree program. In all of our classes only part of the students are able to attend. Students often have other obligations because of the conflict, or they are afraid to travel to Odessa. Many people who live in a different region, make the assumption that the situation in another region is more dangerous. People also fear the act of traveling. I have not travelled outside the city of Odessa since I arrived in Ukraine, and most people feel that travel is unsafe. It has become necessary to provide on-line materials for the students who are unable to attend in person. Enrolment is down this year and is expected to decrease even more next year. We are continuing to work on developing on-line course materials.



Return: I will be returning to the States next month, at the end of the school year. This is the time Ukraine is expected to launch a Spring offensive to try to take back part of the territory occupied by Russia. It is probably a good idea for me to be out of the country. I am planning to return to Ukraine in the Fall, for both on-line and in-person classes.

