

PARTNERS IN MISSIONS

Training National Leaders for "Ministry"

Ray and Pam Trantham

1st Quarter 2024



Odessa Missions

Training National Leaders for "Missions"



To the doctor instead of the airport: During our 29 years in Ukraine, I have repeatedly had difficulties with kidney stones. Fortunately, this has rarely required hospitalization. That was not the case this past week. Following a visit to the hospital and test, a hospital removal procedure was scheduled for the following morning. This went well and after one night in the hospital I returned to the Bible college and was able to teach my classes that afternoon and then preach the following morning. This procedure was more involved than we expected, and it will require some follow-up treatment. My return flight was scheduled a couple of days following the procedure, but it was recommended that I avoid the stress of the flight and deal with follow-up with the same doctor in Ukraine. Because of the holiday season, the next available flight was in early January. I feel fine, have some restrictions, but can work in my office and take advantage of the extra time in Ukraine.



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Tax-deductible contributions:

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Winter is coming: The last time I was in Ukraine, Winter was turning to Spring. Now, Fall is turning to Winter, and that is different. The attitude on the street is different as winter approaches. The Spring military offensive did not produce the results that were hoped, and there is a dread of another cold winter. It is anticipated that Russia will again target the electrical and heating grid. There is worry and uneasiness about supplies through the winter as prices rise. I asked Regina and Sasha what they saw as the greatest needs that the church could meet? We went over a list of people, situations, and needs. It is not that everyone needs a heater, ... but that there are people who cannot afford fuel for the heater that they have. Some vulnerable people and communities have suffered disproportionately because of the war. In some cases, family members have left the country, or a single mother is left with young children, or people live in a rural area that has been devastated by the war. Regina and Sasha have asked two churches for a list of especially needy families in a rural village. This is Sasha's home village, that he has not been able to visit in two years because of travel restrictions. Regina explained that there is little work in these small villages, so many of the people work outside in larger towns. The war, curfew, and travel restrictions has caused most of these people to lose their outside job and only source of cash income. The church leaders provided 45 names of seriously needy families. Each family received two grocery sacks of food items such as: canned corn, olives, canned milk, buckwheat, rice, macaroni, tea, cookies, canned fish, cooking oil, and chocolate. Coal for heating was provided to the church and to some other families.



Lady receives heating fuel.



A reminder to pray: As I sit down to write, the air-raid siren begins to sound. I looked on my phone to see that it is quickly expanding to cover all the regions of Ukraine. This usually means that it is a cruise missile, instead of drones. The past several nights they have come about 7:00 PM and lasted an hour or so, but now it is middle of the morning. Last night the air-raid warning continued from 7:30 PM till 2:30 AM. At first, I opened my window to better hear the explosions rumbling in the distance, then I closed it and turned on a fan to cover up the noise. The port and the center of town are ten miles away, so we are relatively safe on the edge of town. Six months ago, most air-raids occurred at the beginning of a workday to disrupt daily life, but now they occur after dark, because the darkness makes drones more difficult to shoot down. Defense against cruise missiles requires high-tech anti-aircraft defenses from the west.

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Iranian drones are shot down by soldiers firing into the air, until they hit it. Regina likes to remind me that "whatever goes up - has to come down." We are aware of our situation and take this situation seriously. My office is in the basement and the few windows that I have, remain boarded up for the past two years. In the Islamic religion, there are calls that remind people to pray five times a day. The sound of the air-raid siren is a reminder for us to pray.

Children's prayers: In Ukraine, our worship services are normally two hours long, but children under the age of 12, attend the first part of the service and then go for a children's program in another location. Before the children are dismissed, there is usually a "children's sermon," followed by a

prayer. There is something about a six-year-old boy standing in front of the church praying for peace in his country. --- I ate breakfast at Sasha and Regina's house and our granddaughter prayed, "Thank you God for protecting our lives and country through the night." Sasha and Regina still sleep upstairs, but they have moved their children's rooms to the basement as a safety precaution.

Christmas candy: In America, we have an abundance of candy. There is a lot of candy in Ukraine as well, but it plays a special role during holidays. Regina and Sasha discovered that it was a real need to provide a box of Christmas candy for every student and employee in the school in the village. (All 254 of them.) Regina and Sasha went to pick up the Christmas packages, and Regina and I delivered them. The week before our local church had taken up money for a similar project in our area



Rural school



Main street of rural village

and one of my students asked me for help in doing a similar thing in the Donetsk region. This is a region of intense fighting, and she said it is not possible to get certain items in her area. The rural village is also cut off from many supplies available in Odessa. People are very thankful and appreciative of the fact that you show compassion on them in this time of difficulty. The church uses these as opportunities to share the love of Christ.

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Reflecting over the past year: It is now two years following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The war shows no signs of ending, ... only the news coverage has diminished. We continue to be asked by supporters, what will happen and when will this end. We certainly do not know the answer, ... but as the war continues, some things become more obvious. Ukraine continues to fight for its existence. Putin continues to fight for his personal existence and ambitions. Both sides seem determined to fight on as long as possible. In recent months Russia has been making some gains over Ukraine. We anticipate a time in the future when they will reach a stalemate. 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 in our area.

<i>Average Monthly Expenses</i> <i>January 2023 – December 2023</i>	
Salary	2,225
Missionary care (including health)	642
Housing	717
Fees, postage, documents	495
Office operations and equipment	1,098
Travel – internal and external	569
Projects (Crisis fund / mission students)	4,150



We continue as full-time Ukrainian missionaries:

The events of the past two years have required that we make significant adjustments to how we function as missionaries. The first year was all about helping our Ukrainians church workers "survive." We continue to be very active in this area, but we are also trying to adapt to new ways of doing ministry. Our goal in ministry has remained the same over the past 30 years: "Training National Leaders for Ministry." Given the current situation, and the anticipated situation over the next couple of years, we expect that I will continue to make regular trips to Odessa to teach face-to-face classes and conduct other in-person ministry. Whenever possible, I will remain outside of Ukraine and work on-line. This is just safer and more practical. You have been faithful in sharing with us in this work and we feel that mission work is needed more than ever in Ukraine. We want to thank you for continued support during 2023. Average monthly income was \$9,842 while average monthly expense was \$9,896.

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