

# PARTNERS IN MISSIONS

Training National Leaders for "Ministry"

Ray and Pam Trantham

2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2024



Odessa Missions

Training National Leaders for "Missions"

**The next generation:** For the past 29 years, we have worked to develop a system of effectively training national leaders for ministry. Many of the strategies and skills that we have developed are no longer useable because of the changes brought about because of the war. In some ways we feel as we did thirty years ago, when we arrived as new missionaries. The Bible college president and many church leaders are my former students. One thing that we realized is that our current ministry, is that of passing our work on to the next generation. Paul said, *"And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others."* 2 Timothy 2:2 This is our work today. Pam and I wish that we were in Ukraine doing what we were doing 10 years ago. But we have a greater task. And that task is passing this same responsibility on to the next generation. Our main ministry has shifted from just teaching in a college, to teaching in a decentralized format. We still need you to be "Partners" with us in this ministry. We are continuing to work as full-time Ukrainian missionaries, even when we are not always physically present in the country. We continue to work to train national leaders for ministry in Ukraine.



**Trucks:** We live at the northern edge of the city of Odessa, and there is a major highway nearby. We have always had a large number of trucks in our area. One thing that stood out when I arrived in November was that the number of large trucks had doubled or tripled. How does the war effect traffic? The operation of the seaport is now severely limited, so most goods need to be transported in and out by truck. The Odessa port, is actually three ports in the Odessa region. One is in the city of Odessa, another about 20 minutes away in a place called "the South," and a third a couple of hours down the coastline. Odessa is a major conduit of cargo in and out of Ukraine. With the ports operating at a low capacity, trucks



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must make up the difference. A second factor is that Russia recently blew up one of the two major bridges connecting the northern and southern parts of the Odessa region. This means the movement of goods is through the city of Odessa. I passed across the good bridge a couple of days ago and it is heavily guarded and patrolled. A third factor is "curfew". There is no traffic allowed anywhere, between midnight and 5:00 AM.



This is a time when many large trucks traveled. In addition to the increase in the number of trucks, there is a significant decrease in the number of cars. There are fewer people, fewer men, and fewer people traveling, ... thus, fewer cars on the road. Sasha always feels a level of discomfort when passing through checkpoints because of the possibility of being stopped and enlisted in the army. This is a big problem for our college students as well. Many people feel uncertain about traveling to a different area. The cost of transportation is also higher. Remember our students as they travel for classes.



**Humanitarian aid:** Over the past two years, we have undertaken several special projects to meet urgent needs for heating supplies, electrical supplies, evacuation assistance, cold weather supplies, and other projects associated with the war. While in America, people have often asked us "what is needed?" I have often said, "I don't know until I am in Ukraine and can see the situation first-hand." Because my return to the States was delayed due to additional medical procedures, I was able to engage in several new humanitarian projects. Regina explained that rural life has been especially difficult during the war. In a rural village you may be safer and less likely to be hit by a missile, but the overall economic and social hardship of the war is often greater. Humanitarian aid continues to be distributed through area churches. We helped provide resources to a rural church that distributed them to the elderly and other needy individuals.

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**Preaching:** The war in Ukraine takes men out of the church. I was asked on several occasions to preach. Sasha has also begun preaching regularly in the church near our house in Odessa. He says that he is not a "preacher", but he is in high demand as a speaker and conference leader. Sasha continues to travel to different areas and lead youth training workshops on the weekend. Over the past 29 years, we have helped to prepare many national leaders for ministry, and part of our task today is to do all we can to help these leaders continue in ministry.

**Sleeping bags and Snickers bars:** Ukraine remains under martial law, curfews remain in place, travel restrictions remain, ... and all of this makes life difficult. Civilians interact with soldiers every day. The resources to provide for those in the military are stretched very thin, so life for those in the military is often difficult. The church takes an active role in trying to minister to those who serve in the military. Our Bible college's academic dean is a military chaplain. I asked him what could be done to minister to the needs of local soldiers. He replied that he had groups of soldiers that he regularly worked with, and he would ask them. The answer was, "It is getting winter, and we need 35 cold-weather sleeping bags." They said they would take anything, but they had rather them not be "pink." I asked if we could just pay for them, but they said we would need to find them. Sasha managed to locate a store in Kiev and was able to purchase 35, identical, green, heavy sleeping bags. The chaplain was overjoyed, took a picture, and sent it to his local contacts. After several security precautions, Sasha, the chaplain named Vitali, and I were able to deliver the sleeping bags. They couldn't believe that we had managed to come up with exactly what they wanted. I was surprised, and a little uneasy, when the commander grabbed me and hugged me. They were truly thankful and a door had been opened for our college academic dean to minister to area soldiers. We also took Snickers, milk, jelly, coffee, tea, olives, canned peaches, corn, and fruit.



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In Luke 16:9 Jesus tells us to "use worldly wealth" to open the door for spiritual results.

The church in Ukraine has historically stayed away from the military, but they have realized that by ministering to the needs of those serving in difficult situations, they have an opportunity to share the gospel.

Because of holiday snacks and sleeping bags, the people of our Bible college are able to proclaim the gospel in new areas.

\* We minister to those in the army, in order to share the gospel with them.



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