

# PARTNERS IN MISSIONS

*Training National Leaders for "Ministry"*

*Supporting and Developing National Leaders in "Ministry"*

Ray and Pam Trantham ... missionaries to Ukraine since 1995.



**Before the war in 2022, Dmytro Semko taught Greek and New Testament subjects at the Bible college and was the college librarian. Now Dmytro serves in the army as a brigade chaplain.**

*(he is on the left in the picture)*

Dmytro is also one of my former students, and we have worked closely together on many projects. Dmytro was recently at the Bible college and was interviewed about his current service.

**- Dmytro, we know that the war has made many Christians to go to the front. Some are on the front line, some are working as medics, some are volunteering. What prompted you to become a chaplain?**



The fact is that chaplaincy has become a natural result of my life experience. I served in the army, received a higher secular education, and also graduated from the Bible college. When the war broke out, I was still working at the college, but I was sure that sooner or later I would be drafted into the army. Several times I met with active volunteer chaplains and thought about becoming a chaplain myself. When I was drafted into the army, I first served as an ordinary soldier, but when the commanders realized I had a technical education and previous military training, they offered me an officer position. I said that chaplaincy service was closer to my heart, because that's what I had studied for and what I would like to do in life. They agreed, and my home church gave its blessing to this ministry. I really like my job: I serve God - and at the same time, this is exactly what my country and military unit expect from me.

**- Could you tell us about your work, challenges, joys and sorrows.** As for my duties, the army expects four elements from me: 1) meeting the spiritual and religious needs of the personnel, and this may include me either conducting or organizing religious events that would meet the different needs of soldiers who worship God regardless of tradition or perhaps even religion. 2) religious educational activities, which means that from time to time I conduct seminars or discussions with them on various topics; 3) thirdly, advising our command on issues in which I can be an advisor, for example, how certain religious factors can affect our combat operations; 4) and lastly, social activities. Sometimes local churches help military units. For example, last year a church from the Odesa region sent New Year's gifts to the soldiers. One of the soldiers still tells me of a flashlight that was given to him last year and which he still uses. Yes, I realize that these are small things, but for some people such help is a language of love and understanding that others think of them.

As for regrets: loss is becoming commonplace. In the past death came when a person's life was naturally coming to an end due to age or illness. But when a young man dies of wounds in the war in front of your eyes, you realize that he has a family, a wife and children who will now live without him. An hour ago, there was a healthy person, and now he is gone. You begin to realize that your life may be shorter than you think. And this changes your view of life and your relationship with God.

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**- Do soldiers look for God?** Yes, the guys say that when they sit in the trench, they pray in a way that none of them have ever prayed before. And I ask them: "Why do you have great faith in the trenches, but when you come back from the trenches, this faith remains behind?" Of course, there are some who have questions and my job is to guide people to God, to tell them about Him. Faith is formed in soldiers like in all people. It's just that war is a stressful factor that can accelerate the process of a person's conversion to God.

A different situation: I remember, when we entered the territory of the newly liberated Kherson region, and strangers ran up to us, hugging us like family and crying on our shoulders, I could not react calmly. Because I understand that if people were so happy when they met us, then they had something to compare their lives with before we arrived, and I could only imagine how they lived under occupation.

**- How has your Bible college education helped you in your work and ministry? What has been most helpful or meaningful to you?** First of all, I want to say thanks for that education, I can officially serve as a chaplain, because my diploma was officially recognized by the government. If I were to say what was most useful, then I can say that I perceive education as a whole package. It is like a military first aid kit: it contains many things, but they may all be needed at one time or another. The same is true of education. I am very grateful to God that I had the opportunity to study, and that God taught me very different things through different people and different subjects, which I use now.

**- You have a wife and a son. How are they going with you on your journey?** I thank God very much for my family. My son was born during the war. Unfortunately, he has been growing up without me for most of his life, and I have some pain and sadness from this. I thank God very much for my wife, who is an incredible support for me. She tries to be there whenever possible and comes to me when she can. This is very inspiring, but at the same time, I see that it is very difficult for her, because for the third year now she has had to take on the role of both mother and father, be strong for the two of us, and do many of the things that I should have done.

Dmytro is pictured on the first page. The pictures below, show Vitaly, who is the academic dean at the Bible college and serves as a "Volunteer" chaplain. He serves in many of the same ways as Dmytro, but lives at home and focuses on Odessa.



### Graduation 2025



August 11<sup>th</sup> 2025

An update from Ray and Pam:

We are now three and a half years into a global conflict that was expected to be over in a few days. If you had asked our family on February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022, what we expected our family would be doing today, we would have told you that our plans had always been to continue as full-time missionaries in Ukraine, ... and eventually live out our days in Ukraine. Three and a half years of war has brought on many changes. The Book of James says, *"Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes."* We all know this is a true statement, ... our lives are unpredictable. But we do make plans to try to serve God in the best way possible. At the beginning of this year, we announced that we would continue to do mission work in Ukraine, but that we were currently "residing" in Corinth, Mississippi. I have a mission trip planned to Kenya next month where I hope to visit with one of our former Ukrainian mission students, who is now a full-time missionary in Kenya. I will also be returning to Ukraine to teach in December. The work of ["Supporting and Developing National Leaders in Ministry"](#) continues, and we thank you for your partnership.

**A health issue:** Pam recently went to the doctor for her annual checkup. We thought everything was fine, but test soon revealed esophageal cancer. This was completely unexpected. She has just finished chemotherapy and immunotherapy. This aggressive treatment has been difficult, and the doctors want to give her a few weeks to recover, before a very involved surgery. The surgery is tentatively planned for September and will involve a lengthy stay in the hospital in Memphis. There may be additional procedures after the surgery, but this was diagnosed early, and we are hopeful. Regina was planning to visit the States this summer, so she came early and will remain until December. Ray and Regina plan to return to Ukraine in December.

Because of the war, Sasha remains unable to leave Ukraine, so his summer has been with church camps and ministry. The war changes many things, but there is certainly no shortage of ministry opportunities. When Ray is not teaching in Odessa, all mission support for Partners In Missions goes to fund ministry projects in Ukraine. You are helping to ["Support and Develop National Leaders in Ministry"](#). This includes to work of our mission students and graduates. It includes humanitarian projects. It includes the support of voluntary military chaplains to share the gospel with soldiers. It includes the youth, college students, and church groups that continue to meet at our house beside the college. We are grateful for your prayers and continued support for the work in Ukraine. (Below are pictures from our house with church and college students.)

Today is Monday, and this Friday President Trump is planning to meet with President Putin in Alaska. By the time you receive this newsletter, this meeting should be history. We pray for a good outcome. We do not know how God will work – but this is certainly a problem that only God can solve. Pray.

