AUGUST 2021

A LETTER TO PRAYER SUPPORTERS

This was sent to those who visited the virtual Triennial booth:

Dear NABC Prayer Supporters,

I am Gary Clatterbuck, the coordinator of the Russia–Ukraine Ministry. I noticed that you had visited the booth, and I wanted to update you about this exciting teaching ministry that helps prepare new Christian leaders for churches and missions in a very changing part of the world.

Our teachers are having an impact in the lives of Christians in Russia and Ukraine. The impact goes beyond those specific countries, extending to places we cannot go. . . including North Korea. Our partnership with Odessa Seminary and Moscow Seminary is continuing as COVID subsides. Each year we find pastors and teachers who are academically qualified to teach in the seminaries and their extensions. We do it to minister to the students in these schools and for our pastors or teachers who are qualified to share of their lives with the students. Our teachers bring a fresh point of view to the students. Those who go are personally challenged by the dedication of the students and are able to use their gifts in this unique ministry.

In Russia, of the 140 million residents, only about 4% are evangelical Christians. In Ukraine, the percent is closer to 10%. I have found the students are anxious to grow in their knowledge and in their personal faith.

Each teacher is selected based upon their specific passion and training for the subject. European schools demand qualified teachers so they remain recognized educationally. Doctorates are needed for masters-level classes; holders of master degrees can teach in bachelor-level classes. We teach with superb translators.

There are times when the subject matter narrows the person we need. For example, this year they needed a class in addiction ministries. You might not be aware that addiction ministries are the biggest source of new converts in both Russia and Ukraine.

A person going pays for their own travel expenses; as well, we ask their churches to send. The schools provide the housing and meals for the teachers.

Teaching in these settings is a very fulfilling experience. Classes are for one week.

How did this all begin? Right after the fall of communism, one of our teachers, Harold Dressler, saw the need for trained pastors and church leaders. He developed a program where we would send teachers to Russia to teach for two weeks, then followed by another teacher. In communist countries, training of pastors was not allowed. Pastors were basically self-taught. In those early years, we trained close to 600 new pastors. Now with the schools, we help assist to train strong

leaders and pastors. Of the graduates from Odessa Seminary, 96% are still in ministry! Nearly 2,600 have graduated from the seminary. Moscow seminary had 1,200 students around the home campus and the learning centers around Russia in this pandemic year.

Odessa has a great missionary training program that sends out trained missionaries to places we cannot go for a cost of less than $400 a month. A student I taught in Khabaravsk, in eastern Russia, goes to a place we cannot go and shares the gospel in the public schools of North Korea.

We have an impact beyond our normal ministries. A pastor friend who I encouraged to go with me to Russia changed his whole career path and is leaving an impact on many lives in Russia and Ukraine. Here is a testimony from a student he taught in Ukraine who just graduated:

"I was especially inspired by the Spiritual Formation course that was taught by Dr. Kirk Mackie. It was hard for him to make his mind to travel to Ukraine, as his father was terminally ill and had very little time left. However, he gave his blessing to Kirk to go to OTS. It was a really excellent course. The last day was the best of the whole week, a real blessing. He talked about joy and grace we have in Christ regardless of our context and circumstances. Those were very powerful lectures. We were overwhelmed and inspired with the message.

"It was only later that we found out that just before his final lectures Dr. Mackie learned that his dad had passed away. I will never forget Kirk's lesson that he so beautifully demonstrated with his own life. This is what has been shaping us – academic excellence and deep faith of the people who taught us, their convictions, and their commitment."

So, how can you assist this ministry?

1. Pray for us as we move ahead at the end of 2021 and for 2022.

2. If you or someone you know should be added to our available teachers, send me a note.

3. We are always in need of regular gifts to keep this moving forward.

4. Pray these countries remain open to the gospel.

5. Invite me to visit your church this coming year. I'd be glad to share or even give the pastor a weekend away and then to share the story of what God is doing in these countries.

Feel free to contact me.

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