

Ukraine Mission Trip ReUkraine Mission Trip Report

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 August 2013

Preacher: Ukraine Team

[0 : 00] I'm not going to spend a lot of time with any kind of introduction.

You know that what we're going to be doing tonight is sharing, every team member is going to be sharing about their experience in Ukraine.

And we've kind of divided it up into about four segments. And so you'll see some pictures and some video and some sound. And then various ones of our team will get up and kind of speak to that particular segment as well as sharing whatever else God wants them to share.

We had a great time, great time, rich time, blessed time. And I think you're going to discover that from the members of the team. Now, the team has the schedule, so you know who goes first.

In fact, I think it's me. But let's begin with the church. The first segment, of course, is about the church itself. And I really am quite at a loss just what to say about Pastor Vladimir and the church at Camino Ternovo.

[1 : 19] In the first place, I guess I would say to you that our experience there with Pastor Vladimir was unlike any previous experience I've had in Ukraine working with a pastor.

Vladimir, very organized and had everything ready for us. We didn't have to worry very much about our schedule.

In fact, he knew the schedule better than I knew it. And I kept finding myself asking him, now, what are we doing tomorrow and when? And he would just have it right on his head.

He knew just when everything had been scheduled. And, you know, that may not seem like an important thing. But believe me, very important for a mission team who's in a country unfamiliar to them.

And we've got to kind of be told when to do things and what to do and when we need to eat breakfast, when we need to be ready to get in the van and travel.

[2 : 27] And he had all that mapped out for us. And that tells me something. It tells me that he cared about us being there. We weren't there because, you know, we're forcing ourselves on him and kind of imposing and causing him, you know, more work.

He was ready for us, prepared for us, wanted us to be there. And was very excited about us being there. Pastor Vladimir shared with us that at the end of the week that the community had so responded to the various ministries that we were allowed to do that week that he was even amazed. He said that there were a number of high officials who, prior to us coming, were, he called them, enemies of his church.

High officials there in that small community. And he said that many of them showed up for the eyeglass, reading glasses ministry. He saw many of them come into the church where before they would not ever set foot on the premises.

And he was able to speak to a number of them. And so the relationships were kind of mended and softened.

[3 : 58] And this was one of his prayers and our prayers initially in the week. You may have noticed, I don't know if you remember in that clip of pictures, a bunch of us, all of us in a circle holding hands.

Did you see that one? Remember seeing that one? Pastor Vladimir had scheduled a time of prayer walking. And I don't know if you've done any prayer walking before.

This was done different, I think, than any that I have heard of. Instead of just kind of walking through the, you know, down the streets and through the community and praying, he had mapped out strategic places in the city where we would go.

We would travel by our vans and go and get out and form a circle and pray. We prayed at the government offices and both the local as well as what I guess we would call our state offices, government offices.

And we stood there in an area right outside these buildings and prayed specifically for the officials, the governing officials of that community to give freedom to the church so that it could flourish and so that there would be good relationships with them.

[5 : 21] And we prayed for their salvation. We traveled then over to, and this was the picture that you saw, though you would not be able to tell, went to the hospital and to some of the other medical facilities.

And we, again, formed a circle and prayed specifically for that segment of the community and several others, I think about four maybe specific places in the community.

And this, I thought, was really a very smart move led by the Holy Spirit, I know, to be very specific about praying for the church, for the community, for the various segments of that community, praying for the powers that be in Cominac Renov.

And it was just an incredible experience. So we were just standing there holding hands with one another and praying and knowing that we're praying specifically for these things.

And then to have at the end of the week his report that many of the high officials of the community actually came to the church and were friendly toward him.

[6 : 31] Just an answer to prayer. And you don't know how important that is, not just with the government, but with the established church in Ukraine, the Russian Orthodox Church.

Probably the church in Ukraine receives more persecution from the Russian Orthodox Church and the priests than from any other segment in Ukraine.

They've kind of taken on the place of communism. They are lying about what the evangelical churches are saying and preaching and they are persecuting their members and causing all kinds of troubles toward those in the community if they visit the Baptist Church or any of those churches. We just had a tremendous time with the church itself, worshiping with them. I was able to preach. You saw that picture. And Chris also brought a message.

And I don't know if Mike's going to say something about it. Mike, you know, Mike's a pretty good preacher. Did you know that? And he, what was this?

[7 : 44] Wait, you'll have to take that up with Wade back there. Okay. I guess Mike agrees with you, Wade. But not so. A little bit of his dad in him, I think. And he brought a Bible study.

And it was just excellent. And the people really responded to it. I think it was the Delaware Indian version of a Bible study.

By the way, they did, they were quite enthralled about some of the American Indian roots that we had on our team. Mike and Amy and Jerry, I think.

And was there someone else on our team? I think that was Patsy. And so it was just really, they really enjoyed that part of it. And from time to time throughout the week, there'd be little comments about that, Cherokee, Delaware.

And they were interested in the history of that. And Mike and Amy both shared a little bit about that. I wanted to share about the church itself and the thing that impressed me so.

[8 : 48] And I do so to encourage you to pray for Pastor Vladimir. And his kind of, I guess you would call him his assistant pastor.

Works there with him, Sergei. Sergei was one of our drivers for the week as well. And has been just a tremendous addition to the ministry there at Cominac Nova Church.

And pray for these two, Vladimir and Sergei. Very common names in the Russian-speaking world. But if you could remember them.

And you saw pictures of both of them there. So, Chris or Tony, you're up next. Hey.

So, as you can see in the pictures, I spent the majority of my time with the students there. Like the younger kids. I kind of distracted them while they were giving out the eyeglasses and stuff.

[9 : 50] So, you didn't have kids running everywhere. And, you know, it was just such a blessing for me to be able to spend time with, you know, students. You know, in another country. You know, a different language. Different culture and everything.

And I just loved it. I ate it up. And, you know, they taught me a lot of Russian and Ukrainian. And I don't remember a lot of it. But, I mean, I remember some of the important ones.

Like Krolik. I have one of those at home. That's a little rabbit. And in the picture, you can see me playing with a, it's a gazga. And that's a goat. Huh? And so, you know, I'm sorry.

I went against what my dear mother-in-law said about playing with animals. And now she has proof that I did it. But I couldn't help it. They were there. But, yeah, so I just, you know, really love being able to be there with their students.

And just kind of be a part of their lives for such a, you know, short little period. But this mission trip was probably one of the smoothest and just most organized trips I've ever been on.

[10 : 49] Like all the other trips were, I wouldn't say chaotic, but they weren't near as just planned out. And part of that was because of Pastor Philodemer and then just the way their church took care of us.

I mean, they just completely opened their doors and did everything they could to help us feel comfortable. And you could see in a lot of the dinners that they went out of their way and they got us Coke. And, like, during different little breaks, they'd go and buy us Coke.

And they started calling it American juice because we drank it so much. And we got so excited when they would bring it to us. But I've never, like, just been so, you know, just poured upon, you know, on a mission trip.

I mean, I felt like we were supposed to be the ones roughing it, and they're just throwing food and they're baking stuff for us and giving us, you know, Cokes and everything. And so it was just, you know, really, they just totally went out of their way to make us feel welcome.

And just being in their church was just something else. Because I love, that's one of my favorite things, being able to go to other countries and being able to worship with other people, like, in their, like, see them in their element.

[11 : 56] And you get to see them worship in their own language and pray in their language. But then we also, you know, could, we recognize some of the songs that we were able to sing with them. And so it's just both of them going together.

And it's just such a beautiful thing to be able to worship God together in a different country with both languages going together. So, but I also want to thank y'all because we got a lot of encouraging notes from y'all.

And people, you know, tell us that they're praying for us. And it's just such a blessing to be able to go there but have such a support system here and know that y'all are praying for us and thinking of us.

So, thank you. We had the honor of going over and teaching the children in the Ukraine about Jesus. And kids that are here, I want you to listen to me right this second.

Do not take for granted your Sunday school. Do not take for granted your Awanas and your youth leaders because those kids didn't have that.

[12 : 57] You are blessed to have a Sunday school teacher who will teach you. They told us when we went into this that, or Vladimir asked us to teach Bible stories.

And after we got there, we understood why the children don't have Sunday school. If they haven't heard it in church or if their parents don't read to them, they don't get it. And so we started the Bible school with creation.

With who was God and who made the world. And then we had other stories. We did Daniel in the lion's den. And we did Jonah and Zacchaeus.

And we had crafts and things like that for each one of them that backed up what we were doing with the kids. So they had something to take home with them that they could remember. Just like we have our papers here at our Sunday school and stuff.

But the Bible school, we had two days in Kerminz-Kronowsko. And then we had one day in Kalinowka.

[14 : 10] And the two days in the first village was really interesting. We had 17 kids the first day.

They told us that we're going to have a lot more. And the second day we had 24. And we were excited about it. The kids were great. Good teachers.

Good teachers. And you'd be proud of them and the things that were done. And then we went to the second village and only had the one day there. And they had told us that we were going to have around 24, 25, maybe 30 kids.

And because we weren't expecting all of the other kids to come. Because there are 64 kids in the whole village. And 48 of them came. Praise God.

But we didn't have enough supplies. And the Lord did a punt. Because Marsha's been a teacher. Barbara's been a teacher.

[15:10] And we were able to divide and conquer those kids into age groups and get the message across. They all got the same message, but they got it at their own age level in that village.

And that was an awesome and wonderful thing to watch happen. And I had one incident that I really wanted to tell about, if you can't tell.

There was in that Kalinivka. I think that was the one that struck me the most because they had a building that was not as big as this room. I mean, I don't think it was as big as one of our children's Sunday school room.

And that was their church. And so we did everything outside. And so there were times when we could take some of the kids in the building and let them do their crafts in there.

And I was doing the wordless Bible, the wordless book. And if you don't know what that is, ask me.

[16:14] But it follows that same bracelet thing that the kids make, you know, the black, the red, the white, stuff like that. The black being sin, the white being, no, the red being the blood of Jesus washes you white as snow.

Then you have baptism and growing a grace, and then you go to heaven, you know. Are you with God for eternal life? And I was teaching that with the kids.

And I just kept reiterating that first three part because in their culture, they don't get it. They don't get that in church.

If you go to church, if you go to temple, then you pay your money, and you say something to the priest, and he puts or does something here, and whoo, you're all good. They're not saved.

But they've done their ritual. And so I was talking to those kids, and they were early junior high in that group. And so I was there, and I had gone through sin, blood, white as snow.

[17:14] I said, okay, how do you go to heaven? And one little boy said, you got to say your prayers. And I thought, oh, baby. Baby, baby.

And so we went over it again. And we went over it again. Trust Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. Our theme was John 3, 16.

Our main song was Jesus Loves Me. And we did sing hallelujah. They thought that was great because they didn't know it. And we even got Jerry to do it. And that's good.

But awesome time. Wouldn't trade it for anything. Best trip I've been on. Changed me. Changed me.

And I thank you, church, for your support because we couldn't have done it without your prayers and your support. I have notes because I'm scared.

[18:15] I'm going to not start on vacation Bible school. I'm going to start with what I wrote in my paper was. It's been a long time since I have flown. And this was a long trip for me, quite an experience.

And the last time I flew, you did not have security. It was very challenging to be patted down, take your shoes off, have them look at you like you're carrying in something weird.

And that was a challenge, the first challenge. After the long trip, we got to Odessa. Odessa is a big town of a million plus people.

There's cars everywhere. There's people everywhere. A lot of people on the streets. A lot of cars. A lot of traffic. Very few traffic lights. The driving is a challenge.

We'll all attest to that. We were split up in two groups. And the van that six of us rode in, the driver's name was Victor 2. Now, I've got to explain.

[19:15] Victor 1 was an interpreter. So, Victor 2 was the driver. We really felt like he knew more English than he put on. But he took us on a ride. They do not mess around.

They get in the traffic. They don't care where it is. They get in the traffic. And there were some scary moments. Victor's van had two seats facing this way, two seats facing that way.

I rode this way the first time and said, uh-uh, I want to see what's coming. So, I rode this way the rest of the time and it was less scary. He gave us a thrill, though.

He was very good. And I did tell him that I enjoyed the trip when we got ready to leave. In contrast, the first town that we went to, Amy's already said, I can't pronounce it real well.

So, I called the first one Como and the first one Colleen. That's easier for me. It is a small town in contrast to Odessa. And it's like a village.

[20 : 18] And they have beautiful gardens, which I don't want to talk about too much because I think someone else is. They grow everything. Okay. Now we get to Vacation Bible School.

Amy pretty much covered most of it. We did six Bible stories and we did six crafts. One of the crafts that she mentioned was the wordless book.

Now we did it much bigger, but here it is with the different colors inside. And then we also did a bracelet, which the kids really liked.

And here's our bracelet right here. With the black standing for sin, the red for the blood of Christ, the white for being cleansed from your sins, the blue for being baptism, the green for spiritual growth, and then the gold is the streets of heaven.

And the kids really liked making these. And hopefully they pretty much got the message between that and this book that Jesus loves them and what they need to do.

[21 : 22] The other thing was she mentioned that John 3, 16 was the overall birth. Unlike her, Vacation Bible School was an experience. I really, really enjoyed teaching the kids.

I got to do Moses in the Red Sea. And I got to do Zacchaeus. When I did Zacchaeus, I taught them a song. I'm not going to sing it for you. Trust me. But y'all do remember that Zacchaeus was a wee little man.

A wee little man was he. He climbed up in a sycamore tree for the Lord he wanted to see. And as the Savior passed him by, he looked up in the sky and he said, Zacchaeus, you come down for I'm going to your house today.

The kids really liked those songs. And in this particular case, I wanted them with this story to understand that Jesus loves even the ones that are downtrodden.

He loves everybody. And in the story, the Pharisees are very angry because he went to the house of Zacchaeus.

[22 : 24] But that was the type of person Jesus was. He always went for the ones that were downtrodden. And that was the whole gist of the story. But I think they really enjoyed that particular story.

We did that one at the second church. Like she said, we had so many kids that day. I think that that helped brighten up the day because we stuck in a story from the New Testament rather than the Old Testament at the second place where we went.

The only other thing that was we went to on Thursday night, we had some of us had mentioned the first of the week that we'd like to see the Black Sea.

And so that we could put either our feet or our hands in there to say that we had seen another sea. So on Thursday night, they took us.

Trust our driver. It was a bumpy road. He gave us a challenging ride. And we went out to an inlet of the Black Sea. And we had a picnic.

[23 : 28] And they did a barbecue. And you would have been impressed. It tasted just like an American barbecue. Very, very good. And so we got to put, I put my hands in the Black Sea. Amy put her feet.

But I put my hands. And so I can at least say that I have seen the Black Sea. And we enjoyed that very much. The only downside, and I wasn't going to say this, but I'm going to say this.

You ought to be grateful that you have, that you live in America. Even with all of its problems. The bathrooms. I have to say this.

It was a challenge. And when you got to the picnic, it was even more of a challenge because you had to go behind a tree. Now, that brought back memories for me when I was a little girl. Because when I used to go to my grandparents' house, it was either the outhouse or the tree.

So that was nothing new. But it's just that I'm much, much older now. And it's a lot more challenging. Yeah, so that's true.

[24 : 28] Trying to find a spot that hadn't been used was a challenge. Okay, I'm going to end this with saying that the, what in, I'm going to say this by, as we were going out to this church, and we made two or three trips a day, there were fields and fields of sunflowers.

And they used the sunflowers to make oil. And that's what they cook with. And these are beautiful sunflowers. They're about this high. I have some at home that are about six feet tall.

Well, they were about, they just, well, the ones, they weren't as tall as mine. So mine is up all the way to the fence. But a sunflower in the sun looks up to the sun.

And, of course, when it's not sunny, it bends its head down. And I think of Jesus. I think when I have times of troubles and things bother me, I need to remember to put my head up and look to God for the strength that he will give me and not look down to the ground.

And thank you for letting me go. And I would like to go again someday. Hopefully, I will know some Ukrainians by then. Jenny was talking about the night we went on the picnic.

[25 : 44] And they had to make a trip into the bushes. I went along, but I was the lookout person. I didn't go to the bushes. But I had a minor role in the Bible school.

I did tell the story about Daniel. And, you know, being a teacher, these children were not understanding anything we were saying.

And we were trying to say, be quiet. And we didn't have any idea what be quiet was in their language. But we got through it. And it was a very good experience. And it was the – Jenny mentioned the cookout.

And that was – and as Tony said, they went out of their way. We were eating all the time, whether it was in a restaurant or whether it was – and we'd think, okay, that's enough for today.

We'd get back to the church. And they had the table spread with cookies. And they just were so gracious to us. I do thank you very much for getting – having this opportunity because one of the most precious times was when we were singing these hymns.

[27 : 00] They were singing in their language. We were singing English. And if it was a tune we knew, we could sing along. Blessed Assurance comes to mind.

And I couldn't think of the second verse, so they sang four verses and I sang the first verse four times because they didn't know what I was saying and I didn't know what they were saying.

But it's – and we have talked since then. If those people of Babel had not started that tower, we wouldn't have been going through that. We would have all had the same language. But it was a very good experience and, as the pastor mentioned, very well organized.

And we didn't have to think we had the – we knew from day to day what we would be doing. And the people we – the first meeting we had there together, and some of you have heard this story, the interpreters were great.

They were always at hand. And there were two men and a young lady, probably in her 20s, I would assume. But they were just great, and they had quite a chore, you know, interpreting both ways.

[28 : 12] But the first night we were to go around the table, the team was, and to tell something about our lives. And I mentioned that I'd been a teacher, and I had lost my husband nine years ago.

And then I thought, well, I'll mention about the Salvation Army. I said, I do volunteer with the Salvation Army, and I'm the chairman of the canned food drive.

Well, the fellow, Shasha, who was interpreting, apparently I didn't speak so distinctly. And he thought I said the Kung Fu drive.

So from then on, that was kind of a bond between us. But they were always at hand. You'd start to say something to a person, and you'd realize, no, they can't understand what I'm saying.

So we would motion to an interpreter, and he would be there. The Bible school experience was great. Everything about the trip was just great. And thank you so much for the opportunity to get out of our comfort zone and to see what others do.

[29 : 17] We still worship the same God. Even though we were singing in two different languages, God could understand both of them. And thank you again. Well, this is a way we had to dress when we went to church.

We had to have our head covered. We had to have a dress on. So I thought that was very nice that we got, us ladies got to wear dresses.

Anyway, the first thing I want to say to you is parvitsu. That's hello. That's one word I learned in Russia.

When we left here Thursday the 18th to go over there, I knew I was going on a mission trip. But I didn't have any idea what it was going to be like.

I'd never been on one. And when they say this was planned, it was planned. Very organized. And God had to have a hand in it.

[30 : 28] Everything went so smooth. Our airplanes were on time. We got to the airports. They left on time. Everything. The weather was beautiful.

No really bad, you know, bumps or anything. Once in a while there would be. But it had to be the hand of God to have this go so smoothly.

All the organizing of the Bible school was done right here with the crafts. I thank Amy. I thank Amy. I thank Jeannie for scheduling all the things, all the crafts she had.

Got them all. They got them run off. We cut them out. We took them with us. Things that we did not have, we bought over there. But not many did we need.

It went so smoothly. And the day that there was 44 kids and we had 25 craft things, that went smoothly too.

[31 : 37] There was just a plan there and it went just like it was supposed to. Now, we had 17 kids the first day, 28 kids the second day, and 44 kids the third day.

And they were precious little kids, children. They're just like our kids. They do. They like to play. They like to eat candy. They like to just do the things your kids like to do.

And that's a lot. It's just like walking into our country here, except, you know, the people are, the language is different, the people is different, and the land is a little different.

I was surprised about the land. The land to me is a lot like Oklahoma. The rolling hills, the pastures. It's an open range over there.

They stake their cows out. They stake their animals out. No fences. They have fences around their homes. And it felt like I was in Kansas when I seen all the sunflowers.

[32 : 51] Kansas is a sunflower state. They grow them there. I'm from Kansas. I know that. So it just made me feel like we were still in the United States sometimes. Anyway, we did get out of our comfort zone.

That's good to do once in a while. It makes you appreciate what you have. All the simple things you have. It made me go home and just be thankful for my bathroom.

So you think that's, you know, when they don't have what we've got over there, we are so blessed in this country of the things that we have.

Just like when we left one time over there, I think pastor asked the other pastor about, they talked about how will the people take this from us being over there in the other church.

And they said, well, at one time, one church got burned out when the Americans came and left. And so we want you to pray for this church that nothing comes bad to them since we've been there.

[34 : 10] There are people that are. There are people that's trying to change things over there in the love of God and to come to Christ over there for what they have right now.

And there was one more thing that when I got back home and went through my mail, I had a letter from the First Baptist Church in Walters, Oklahoma.

I don't even know where Walters is, but I know it's down there. I had 27 prayer cards in them. I know the pastor and his family.

I had talked to them in July about we were taking a trip there. And they, their people signed prayer cards saying that they would pray for me and the team over there.

And it just, it just, everything, I just can't get over, everything just went so smoothly that a trip back, the weather over there was great.

[35 : 32] It was cool in the morning. We didn't have air conditioning, but it was cool at night to sleep. And in the mornings it was cool and we always had a breeze when we was playing, when we had vacation Bible school outside.

It was awesome trip, a very awesome trip. I'm very blessed from going. I thank you. I appreciate all your prayers that you had for us over there.

And just to get to go was a blessing in itself. And I would go again. And I hope that some of you will think about it the next time.

And I would like to say, Placeb, Siba, that is thank you. I helped both with Bible school and the eyeglass dispensing.

When I heard that we were going to be dispensing glasses, it was interesting to me because I presently work for an optometrist after I retired from teaching. So this is what I do.

[36 : 44] And it was really a blessing. The people would come and they would usually be waiting outside for us. And they would first get to hear the gospel message.

There were four of our men that would do that. They would take turns doing that. And then we had two tables set up for the eyeglasses. And you could see the ladies that were manning those.

And we each had an interpreter. Now, the interpreter that I had was Victor. Victor I, I guess we would say. And he was quite knowledgeable because he had done some study in optometry in the United States.

So he helped out quite a lot. And most of the people would come and they would have an idea of what power they thought that they needed in eyeglasses, which really kind of surprised me. And so we would try what they said first. And then, you know, we'd kind of adjust either way, either up or down. And Victor was, of course, speaking in his language and their language.

[37 : 47] And I could just tell by body language and facial expression whether it was working or not. And then he would always, when we were finished with it, he would always point to the Bible because to test whether it was working or not, we had them read out of their language Bible, which was pretty cool.

And then they got to take the Bible with them. And you could tell he was almost giving the gospel message again as he was telling them they needed to use their eyeglasses to read their scripture, to read the Bible.

And that was really cool. And he was very good at this. And I didn't really have to do a whole lot except open the packages and peel off the little plastic sticker on them and everything.

But it was fun to see their faces. And every now and then he would tell me what they said. And this one lady, she got the biggest smile on her face when she got her glasses.

And what he said that she said is, it's a miracle. She hadn't been able to see up close for a long time. And I would like to thank you as a church for providing the eyeglasses through your gospel debt.

[39 : 02] And there are now 374 people that are seeing up close that couldn't. And they're reading now that they couldn't. And you've truly been a blessing to them.

Well, I also took part in the eyeglass distribution. I didn't actually give away eyeglasses. I actually got to be involved. Each group that would come up to receive eyeglasses, we would set them down and give them a gospel presentation before they went in to receive their eyeglasses.

And that was a really neat thing for me to do because I don't often, being in youth ministry, you don't often present the gospel to adults. It's just, you know, you're a youth pastor.

And so you present the gospel to students. And so it was interesting to present the gospel to an adult mindset. I did tell the students to pray for me before I left because I was going to spend the whole 10 days with nothing but adults.

And I didn't know how that was going to go because I hadn't done that in a long time. But it did go very well except for one issue on the first day.

[40 : 18] I was excited. Well, first I was disappointed. I should say that. There are very few bearded men in the Ukraine. I don't know why.

I don't, I guess, well, I don't know. Maybe there's a negative connotation attached to it. But the pastor of Ledemer, he does have a beard and I appreciated that. But as I stood there, a new group walked up and I said to myself, I said, this is perfect.

I am going to minister to this group because there is a bearded man in this group. And I said, who better than Chris Coleman and his beard to minister to this man, to present the gospel? And so I will admit, shamefully, that I was probably a little arrogant in thinking that.

And so we brought them in and sat them down and I began to present the gospel starting in Genesis. And this guy, I wasn't maybe two sentences into my presentation and he stops me.

And he's like, well, what, who did Adam's kids marry? I'm like, well, it doesn't matter. Let's talk about something else. And so, you know, I started answering the question and then he would ask another question, another question.

[41 : 34] And soon I figured out what this guy was doing. He was misdirecting me. He was not respecting the fact that both he and I were bearded. And that we should have some sort of connection beyond whatever we were having.

And come to find out, this guy was part of a sect, a group there called the Old Believers. I think Lipovani is what they were called in their language.

And these guys are similar to the Amish in their lifestyle. They all have beards, all the men. And I don't know, women may have beards too. I don't know.

So we did see two of them, but they were from a distance. And the women were actually like building a house. So pretty strong. But anyway, they're generally builders by trade.

And so they do a lot of contract work. And then they live in their own communities in the villages. And they'll help each other by building each other's houses. And I guess giving grooming tips for their beards.

[42 : 36] But this guy and I, we did not see eye to eye at all. I was very disappointed in that. I did eventually finish my gospel presentation. And he did eventually thank me for presenting the gospel. But he made sure that I knew that he disagreed with everything I said. But later that week, Jerry had the privilege of presenting the gospel to a bearded man. And he too was an ornery fellow. And so I've come to the conclusion that bearded men are different in other countries.

So I was glad to be back to the American culture of beards and their trustworthiness. And I'm just kidding. Anyway, it was great.

A great opportunity to share the gospel, to minister over there in another country. I am a student of culture.

[43 : 44] I love culture. It doesn't matter if it's ancient culture, modern culture, youth culture. I love to see it. And so it was interesting to see how much their culture played a part in the way that they thought and acted.

And even listened to the gospel presentation and reacted to that. So it was a great ten days overall. And we thank you for the opportunity to go.

And that's all I have to say. I want to say thank you for allowing me to go along on that mission trip. There was one thing I noticed.

That was a small church. But the love for Jesus and their community would put a lot of churches here to shame. I want to share with you something that as I was preparing to go on this trip, I spent several hours praying and asking God's leadership.

And several times I asked him if I was to go, use me in some way to bring honor and glory to your name.

[45 : 03] You know, he did that. And I thank God and I praise him for that. So what I'm going to share with you is all him, not me.

Because at the time that I was praying and asking God to prepare me, he was preparing a young lady who was a student at the seminary, preparing her heart for a, what I would say may be a possibility, a divine appointment, which I was not aware of.

But the Sunday night that there were several of us gave our testimonies. Amy did. And Tony did. And so did I. Now, this young lady, whose name was Lillia.

I don't know what her last name was. But she was a student there. And I think she was asked to be an interpreter for us.

[46 : 14] And only because she was asked that she was willing to do that. But when I got up to give my testimony, she was my interpreter. And I made a comment to the group, the church, that actually this was a testimony of God's amazing grace.

And I made a comment to him that I was a, had joined a church at the age of 10, but there was a great difference between being a church member and being a Christian.

And as I was sharing my testimony, Lillia was standing at my side, interpreting for me. And I looked at her somewhere along there, and her eyes were red, and tears were running down her face, and she was gone.

And I thought to myself, what did I do? Did I say something that she wasn't able to interpret? And so I can't remember who came up, and one of the other interpreters come up and finished out my testimony.

And when I sat down, I think Victor told the church what had happened.

[47 : 43] This young lady, like myself, who had spent many years trying to work their way to heaven, God put her under conviction, and she accepted Christ that evening.

And man, I'll tell you what, God blessed us, and we could have come home because that made the trip, made my trip worthwhile. And I thank God that he used me in a small way.

Now, I was helped, involved in the, in sharing the gospel.

And I met the perfect man. He told me he'd never sinned. It was kind of funny. It was a lady sitting behind him.

She said, we've all sinned. But anyway, he said he had never seen it. And after I finished sharing the gospel, I prayed with him, and he left.

[48 : 54] He didn't get his glasses. He just left. So it has been an interesting mission trip. God bless. We did have good weather.

Had a safe trip. The, the, the facilities, have already been interesting. You know, some wasn't the greatest, but, I, I enjoyed the whole trip.

The food was great. And I was concerned about that. But, I was able to, to handle what was up called, Borscht, Borscht, Borscht soup. Wasn't, wasn't too bad at that 34 times.

But anyway, thank you for allowing me to go. Jerry, I think one thing that I noticed that, you know, it was one of those things, I think afterwards, that was the first night that we got to be there in the church service and all.

And I, in my mind, it was just like when the Jews went to the Gentiles, and the Gentiles went up on conversion.

[50 : 00] God gave them the evidence of being associated with the Jewish church with the speaking of tongues. And, in my mind, that was the Ukrainians being able to accept your testimony, working on Lillia's heart.

And that seemingly does, I think, with that group, to say, these people are just like us. We're serving the same God. That's the way I thought of that. And it was, it was a neat time. Like I say, from that time on, not that it was not before, but I felt like we were not only on the same page, but God had blended us together to a point where I don't think it could have been done otherwise.

And so, I praise God for doing that early in the week. And like I say, it really, really put us together there. For those of you who have never been on a mission trip, let me recommend next year that you seriously consider this mission trip.

Everybody has told you it was well organized. We were pampered. When I hear mission trips, Sherry had told us of the times out in the country, the second little church we went to.

If we would have been staying in the houses there, we could have shared exactly what you told us about. I'm confident. We stayed at the seminary. Best case scenario, we'd have bathrooms down the hall where we'd all go.

[51 : 19] I don't know if it'd been a guy time and a girl time in there or what it was going to be like. We got there. We had bathrooms in our own rooms. Marsha and I didn't have to share with anybody, although she did hog it most of the time.

But, you know, you could not ask for any better than what we had. And like everybody else, thank you, church. If it were not for your support, financial as well as prayer, we could not have gone.

And so, thank you so much for that. The gospel suppers. If you notice the pictures, there were tables lined with food. Every time we went to eat, that's the way it was.

I was a little concerned. My wife is not real adventurous when it comes to eating. On the way over, I heard that Jeannie and Jerry were not real adventurous.

Once we got there, I learned that Chris was probably less adventurous than any of them. But we all found something to eat. And matter of fact, I thought it was very good. Of course, Tom will tell you that I'm a Delawareer, and it's, my aunt would say, we're dog eating Delaware, so we'll eat just about anything.

[52 : 26] But we did have a great time. And I found out from Sasha, one of our interpreters, why there was so much food. It is their culture that they put out a lot of food, and they always want to put out more than you could possibly eat.

But that way, you would not go home hungry, and they would not be embarrassed that they did not feed you well. I hope that catches on here. Just a thought.

Just a thought. But, you know, it was a great time. The Gospel Suppers was a time, we were in two different groups. We got to go to Sergey's house, and his wife, Nadia.

And one thing I'm surprised that Chris did not tell you about, is he has a lady in waiting. Tony, I hope that you hang on for a long time, but he had a five-year-old that was clamped to his leg, or, you know, right there with him the whole time.

And we went to their home for our Gospel Supper. And the idea was to, for the couple in the church, in this case it was Sergey and Nadia, to invite their neighbors and their friends who did not go to church to come and see the Americans.

[53 : 39] We were the drawing card. And it's amazing. I got asked, you know, oh, you're Native American, you're Delaware, you know, and a few questions about that. One of the children asked, did you practice cannibalism?

I didn't know I ate that much. But no, I assured them that was not the case. But our Gospel Suppers, we had probably 20 to 25 at our Gospel Supper.

There was a role of a grandmother, a daughter, and a great-grandmother, or three generations there anyway, that were neighbors. And I think it was basically, Victor was our interpreter there, and he said, be sure and mention not only about Jesus, but also about how salvation happens. He says, because these people are members of the church, they maybe go to the Orthodox Church, but they don't know about this man named Jesus. And so I was privileged to be able to give my testimony and do a little bit of a talk there.

But it was so good. Let me warn you, if you go, there's two things you will experience. Number one is the frustration of not being able to communicate. That was my biggest frustration, is I could not just talk to them.

[55 : 00] I had to have somebody interpret, and not that they, you know, something's lost in the interpretation. It would just be so neat to be able to sit down and talk with them. That's number one. Number two, if you go, get ready to fall in love with the people.

You will. And they'll become an important part of your life, and I think it's something that you'll always remember. So let me recommend, if you've never gone, seriously consider this trip next year.

If you want to go next year, start studying up or taking a little class on Russian or Ukrainian. I'm not sure if we have anybody who teaches Romanian or anything like that, but I would love to learn the language.

Matter of fact, I told them. I said, if I come back in two years, which would be my plan, if God agrees, I'm going to know enough to be able to converse just a little bit. So anybody out there who teaches Russian, let me know.

I'm interested. All right, I think that's everyone got to share, and you know there's just loads of things that could be said, hundreds of pictures that you could look at.

[56 : 07] We'd be here all night, and hopefully you kind of saw a cross-section of the pictures and the various ministries. I think it was, I don't know who, Marsha, I guess, mentioned 374 pairs of reading glasses were given out.

Few cases where two were given to a person because of a spouse at home or something, but, and maybe we missed a handful of people, but that's over 300, probably more like 350 or 60 that heard the gospel in groups ranging from two or three people to, you know, as many as maybe a dozen or more, and everyone heard the gospel of Jesus Christ that came through there.

Did they all receive it? No. Some seemed put out that they had to spend that time, and, you know, they were anxious to get their glasses, just give me my glasses.

Some walked out without getting any glasses because I think they were a little peeved by it. Lilia Shamsishin is her name, if you can remember that, and little did we even imagine that because of a testimony came to Christ.

and there was one other older lady that I was able to pray with, and she too repented and was saved, and so two that we know about, but many, many more that we don't know about, and so we want to pray for Vladimir and for the church as they continue to minister.

[57 : 56] I did get an email from Vladimir, by the way, and I hadn't even shared this with the team after I got home. In fact, I think it was yesterday, and he said that they had quite a few visitors to their church Sunday, Sunday morning.

No, it was, yeah, it was last Sunday, and some of those had come for the reading glasses, so we invited them to come, and many of them, some of them did, and so that's real success.

next year, maybe some of you will go, maybe some of the same ones. You might have to, you know, push some of them out of the way.

I think they're ready to go back. The bathroom facility is notwithstanding. It's manageable, and so pray about that, would you? When that will be, I don't know, but we'll be planning to try to take at least a trip every year, as long as God wants us to be a part of the church at Cominatronovo, and kind of, what is it?

Kalinovka. Kalinovka. All right. Well, let's just do pray as we kind of close this segment. We are going to have a really quick business meeting.

[59 : 15] No business that I know of that we're going to have to conduct, but we want to do that, and so let's go to the Lord in prayer. Father, thank you so much for the testimonies tonight, the sharing, the pictures, and Father, mostly we're just grateful for what all of these testimonies represent, and that is a mission trip, ministry, the sharing of the gospel in Ukraine to somewhere over 300 people, and Father, we planted seed, the church there is watering, and we're trusting you

to give the increase for your glory, for your kingdom.

We pray for Vladimir, the pastor, and we just continually lift him up in our prayers. He's a good pastor, Lord, good preacher, loves his people, loves the community, wants to see the community come to Christ.

Help him and his church with that desire, the desire that you have placed in his heart. Father, bless the church.

Bless us, Father. Give us direction in the months and year to come as we plan yet again to go and serve there, to serve with this church.

Raise up others who might be willing to go and be a part of what you're doing there. and we ask for your provision to provide all that is needed to do it.

[60 : 56] We trust you with that. Father, thank you. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.