



SPRING 2019

READ Ministries

Taking Truth to Tough Places

Resources for Evangelism And Discipleship in Ukraine and other parts of the Former Soviet Union



Forsaken... but not Forgotten

By Sharon Sheppard

When it comes to public speaking, few things faze Bill Arvan. Delivering graduation addresses, speaking at training conferences for pastors, lecturing to seminary students, teaching librarians, being called to the pulpit to preach with little or no notice . . . these have all played a part in Bill's varied experiences during his time with READ Ministries.

But the agenda for his latest trip to Ukraine included one commitment that actually scared him. He'd been asked to speak to kids at a Rescue Shelter for Children. Not unlike an animal shelter that takes in mistreated cats and dogs, this shelter provides temporary housing and assessments for children who have suffered flagrant abuse at the hands of

their parents, and they have nowhere else to go.

The 30 boys and girls in this shelter, aged 3 to 18, have been abandoned or extricated from the only homes they had ever known because their wellbeing, and in some cases, their very lives are at stake. What do you say to kids who have suffered the whole spectrum of devastating abuse from the people they had trusted the most?

Before he ever left home for this trip, Bill had wrestled with the dilemma: The age spread of the audience. The pain and intensity of their past experiences. The hurdle of a stigma that often clouds Ukrainians' stereotyped

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perception of foreigners: What could this older preacher man who comes from “rich America,” (where he probably never suffered a day in his life, they might think), have to say to us?

Bill was pretty sure that this wasn't the right audience for addressing the theological issue of The Problem of Pain. Nor did he want to offer phony platitudes or make promises that God would make them happy. Yet, how could he possibly engage their young minds and hearts? Blessedly, the children quickly engaged Bill's heart before he ever met them, because as he and Pastor Viktor Doroshenko approached the outside of the shelter and looked up at the large windows on the second floor of the building, thirty smiling faces were pressed against the window panes, and sixty enthusiastic hands waved a hearty welcome.

Along with Pastor Viktor, from Central Baptist Church in Kropyvntsiy (formerly called Kirovograd), the two of them were greeted by the director of this secular shelter, a warm and competent-appearing man who obviously cared about the children. Pastor Viktor and Central Baptist live out the mandate given in the book of James: “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress...” (James 1:27, NIV). And in keeping with this commitment, Pastor Viktor makes weekly visits to speak to the children, each time bringing treats: fresh fruits, candy, clothing, and small gifts. The church delivers illustrated children's Bibles and Bible story books provided by READ Ministries.

On this particular Saturday, the pastor gave a brief talk where, without any embarrassment, he openly acknowledged their past suffering. And when he asked who would

like to pray, several children volunteered.

So, when Bill stepped up to speak, he began with one of his strongest speaking skills. He told a story. It was his own story of being sent away from his family by his missionary parents for a while to a place where he had, unknown to his parents, been abused. These children connected with Bill when he described how lonely and scared he had felt, because they knew that he could identify with their pain.

What do you say to kids who have suffered the whole spectrum of devastating abuse from the people they had trusted the most?

He told the children how God had taken care of him during that scary time, and he assured them that they too could survive without a mom and dad. After sharing Psalm 27:10 (NKJ): “When my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will take care of me,” he helped them to memorize this verse as they practiced out loud together, phrase by phrase.

Bill says, “I am so glad that READ has been able to supply these dear children with resources through the ministry of Pastor Viktor and Central Baptist Church. And on the day I was with them, I was especially pleased to be able to give each of them a copy of *The Easter Sparrows*, a delightful children's book by Midwest author Michael Larson. This beautifully illustrated book shares the Good News about the death and resurrection of a Jesus who loved them enough to die for them. Now they can read it in their own language and talk to Him whenever they want.”



When God Turned on the Lights ...



By Bill Arvan as told to Sharon Sheppard

I will never forget a trip Alexander Zigalenko and I made to Kropyvntskiy, back in November 2005, to speak at a conference for 25 pastors. As soon as we had arrived in the city, I had experienced a distinct heaviness, a strong sense of evil oppression more powerful than I think I had ever felt before in my life. This was a place of spiritual darkness. When I commented on it, the pastor said that the city had a history of satanic worship, even to the point of practicing child sacrifices. Like a cloud of darkness, this sense seemed to cling persistently to the atmosphere of the city.

After the last session on the day of that first conference, we sat down to have a supper together. It was a dark night, and suddenly everything was black. The lights in the city were out. Someone scurried around and brought out candles, and we visited by candlelight. Then we prayed together and asked God to raise up a powerful work for His Kingdom in this city.

Last month, as Alexander and I drove toward this city once more, I began to recall that previous encounter. As we neared our destination again after all these years, I wondered what it would be like this time. Fortunately, the con-

trast was palpable. This time I was blessed to be a part of a joyful kid-centered activity. School-aged children from 5 to 17 had gathered to participate in A Festival of Creativity.

Alexander Zigalenko and I had been asked to bring a brief “Word from the Word” to close the event, and I focused on Psalm 33: “Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy.” (Psalm 33:3, NIV)

In honor of God, the Creator, this day was filled with wonderful presentations as these children exhibited their creative talents ranging from art work to building projects, musical performances, poetry recitations, and baking projects. And at the end, I was privileged to give away 120 copies of “The Easter Sparrows,” one to each participant.

Fortunately, on this visit to the city, God had turned on the lights—in a big way. The city now has a totally different feeling—a delightful contrast to the heaviness of my earlier visit. I thanked God for answering those prayers back in the mid-2000’s. God is pushing back the darkness as believers are being salt and light in this city. And that’s made all the difference. ■

READ'S SPRING SUMMIT

Ministry partners from three Eastern European countries joined READ's staff and board members to pray and strategize together in Kremenchug, Ukraine during March 26-27, 2019. A summit with our partners in Georgia and Central Asia is scheduled for later this spring.

BELARUS

- ♦ Minsk Theological Seminary

MOLDOVA

- ♦ University of Divine Grace, Chisinau

UKRAINE

- ♦ Rivne Regional Bible College
- ♦ Khmelnytsky Regional Bible College
- ♦ Kyiv Regional Bible College
- ♦ Tavrisky Christian Institute, Kherson
- ♦ Kremenchug Evangelical Seminary
- ♦ Zaporizhzhya Bible Seminary
- ♦ Kharkov Regional Bible College
- ♦ Jesus Christ's Church, Dnipro

MINISTRY GOALS for 2019

- ⇒ Train 55 Church Librarians
- ⇒ Resource 55 Church Libraries
- ⇒ Train 12 Cross-Cultural Servants
- ⇒ Resource 50 Church Leaders
- ⇒ Fund Theological Journal Publications
- ⇒ Sponsor Conferences for Librarians
- ⇒ Resource 250 Theological Students
- ⇒ Fund Library Development in Moldova

Minsk
Мінск

Vitawka
Вітаўка

Belarus

Babruysk
Бабруйск

Rivne
Рівне

Zhytomyr
Житомир

Kyiv
Київ

Bila Tserkva
Біла Церква

Khmelnytskyi
Хмельницький

Vinnytsia
Вінниця

Ukraine

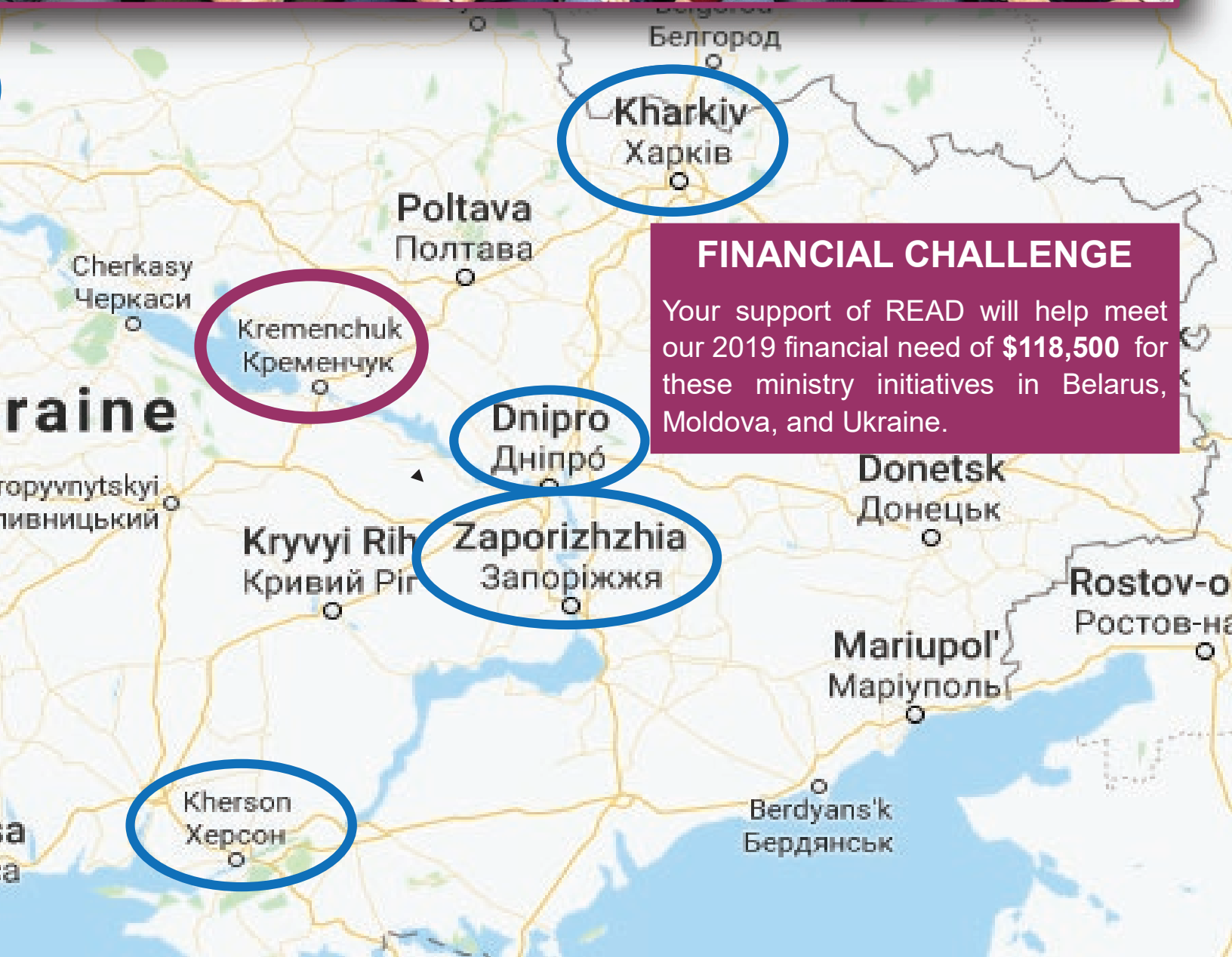
Moldova

Iași

Chisinau

Odesa
Одеса





Kharkiv
Харків

Poltava
Полтава

Kremenchuk
Кременчук

Dnipro
Дніпро

Kryvyi Rih
Кривий Ріг

Zaporizhzhia
Запоріжжя

Kherson
Херсон

FINANCIAL CHALLENGE

Your support of READ will help meet our 2019 financial need of **\$118,500** for these ministry initiatives in Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine.



IVANKA THE LIBRARIAN REPORTS ON READ'S CONFERENCE

An international conference for librarians from Christian higher educational institutions was held on March 19-22, 2019, at the Kremenchug Evangelical Seminary in Kremenchug, Ukraine. The conference was jointly organized and supported by READ Ministries and its ministry partner, the Euro-Asian Accreditation Association. Participating in this four-day gathering were 39 librarians and staff, from 27 schools and institutions, serving in 10 countries which span the region from the Netherlands in Western Europe to Kazakhstan in Central Asia.

Ivanka, the head librarian at the Ukrainian Theological Seminary in L'viv, Ukraine, shared about her experience at the conference: Why did I attend? I wanted to upgrade my qualifications as a librarian of a theological school. I wanted to learn about the experience of my colleagues from different theological schools of Eastern Europe. And it's much easier to work when you know what people of the same sphere of interests think and what challenges they face.

What will I take home? First, a wide circle of new acquaintances. Now I know who is strong in which area and who I can contact if I need help. Second, I received a lot of practical resources. We were given a lot of Internet references, search resources. And it's very useful for my work. And third, maybe... people again. Good memories, of course!

The literature that the organizers of the conference provided for our Seminary is very useful, because it will be a good resource for the students. Thank you!



Note from the Chair,

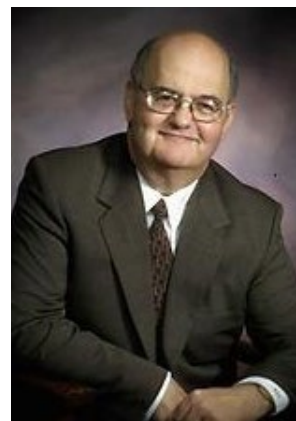
We reported to you at our events last fall that Bill Arvan has announced his desire to step down from a full time ministry position with READ and move into a different position with us effective October 1, 2019.

In this regard, a Search Committee has been appointed and is carefully and prayerfully considering applications for the position. The next few weeks will be especially important as we have chosen the candidates with whom we wish to move into the interviewing and conversation process. Please continue to pray with us that we would experience God's presence and leadership as we go through this challenging task.

Your prayerful support is critical to READ Ministries at this important juncture in our history.

We remain confident in the promise of the Apostle Paul to the Ephesian Church when he said "He is able to do abundantly more than all we ask or imagine...".

To God be the glory!



Paul S. Sanders

Paul S. Sanders
for the READ Board and Staff

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Doris Eastlund

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"As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work." John 9:4 (NIV)



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Religion that God our Father
accepts as pure and faultless is this:

to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to
keep oneself from being polluted by the world. — JAMES 1:27



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Check out our website at
www.readministries.org
for details about READ Ministries and
online giving.



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