



WINTER 2018

READ Ministries

Taking Truth to Tough Places

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

A RIDE ON THE WILD SIDE



By Sharon Sheppard

When three Central Minnesota men signed on for a late October trip to Ukraine with Bill Arvan, they probably didn't have a clue about what they were really getting into. Dr. Todd Magnuson, an ENT surgeon; Guy Magno, CEO of Switchboard Advertising (both from Calvary Community Church in St. Cloud), and Kevin Grinnell, a retired Army musician (from Country Roads Church in Stacy, Minnesota) were about to have an experience that was probably a little more exciting than they had bargained for.

Though all three men give rave reviews for most of their trip, their praise doesn't extend to the hair-raising van ride into Central Asia with a local daredevil driver at the wheel. As the van's speed on narrow, two-lane roads reached more than 100 miles an hour, you can bet that all of the passengers were praying hard.

And when they began to ascend a still-narrower snow-

packed mountain road featuring hairpin turns and steep embankments just off the non-existent shoulders, they weren't able to focus on the majestic mountain scenery as much as they might have liked.

But God, in His mercy, granted to them everything and more than they had asked for during devotional times together prior to entering Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia. One morning Bill had read to the team a passage from Romans 15 where Paul was about to leave on his missionary journey to Rome:

"I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me. Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers . . . and that my service . . . may be acceptable to the saints there . . ."
Romans 15:30-32 (NIV)

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Bill says, “As we prayed together that morning, we asked God to protect our team (not expecting how truly dangerous the ride would be, but probably thinking more about doing ministry in a country that is 80 percent Islamic), and we asked that our service would be acceptable to the saints there, realizing that the hurdles of different languages and a drastically different culture might be difficult to surmount.”

When they arrived at the venue in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan’s capital, Bill didn’t know who the translator would be. But ten minutes before they were to begin, a young woman of Central Asian and Korean descent named Al, who spoke several languages, introduced herself as the translator. Bill says, “We worked seamlessly, as though we had done this together many times.”

Fifty evangelical Kyrgyz ministry leaders from United Spiritual Seminary (USS)—male and female—had gathered for a day-long conference in late October focusing on “Books in the Life of God’s Servant.” Bill Arvan and Alexander Zigalenko, READ’s Ukrainian liaison, each lectured at two sessions, and Bill says, “Any concerns about cultural barriers vanished, and we felt totally accepted from the moment we stood up to speak.”

At the end of the conference, Bill presented READ’s gift of a collection of books to every one of the participants. Each collection included 27 books—25 of them in Russian and two of them which had been translated into their native Kyrgyz language.

“ I have got to see many ministries all over the world, but I have never been impacted by one like I was by READ”

—Guy Magno

Guy Magno said his best memory from the trip was “seeing Bill hand out those books after the conference,” as each attendee received this gift of resources with such great joy.

Todd Magnuson said, “Seeing those smiles made the whole trip worth it!”

As the men reflected on the trip, Guy said, “Everywhere we went, Bill was received well. It is easy to see that for the last 20 years he has been faithfully serving this ministry.”

As Guy commented further, “By God’s grace I have got to see many ministries all over the world, but I have never been impacted by one like I was by READ. I think the Lord is leading me and my wife to be long-term supporters (and possibly go-ers) of READ Ministries.

In addition to gaining new insights about Christianity in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, one of the things that most impressed Kevin Grinnell was “seeing the simple joy of Christ in the people we visited.”

Bill says, “The current window of opportunity in this country, where no visa is required if people aren’t planning to stay, will probably not be open for very long. But on this trip we got even more than we asked for. God kept us safe, blessed our ministry, and filled us with the joy of the Lord.”

And who could ask for anything better than that? ➡





Kyrgyzstan,

one of the five Central Asian republics, is a ruggedly beautiful, landlocked, mountainous country whose highest peak soars to 24,406 feet.

Its history goes back more than 2,000 years.

In the past, people living there were called Scythians, mentioned in the Bible.

Kyrgyzstan is the second poorest country in Central Asia.

The average annual income is \$750 per person.

Traditionally, many of its people lived in yurts.

Of its 6 million+ people, 800,000 of them work outside the country, many of them in Russia, and they send money home to their families.

Long absences on the part of husbands who work in other countries contribute to such prevalent problems as adultery, alcoholism, children born out of wedlock, and depression.



Keeping Hope Alive in Moldova

Earlier this year, Bill Arvan, representing READ Ministries, spent three days in Moldova at the invitation of Dumitry Sevastian, the current acting Academic Dean of the University of Divine Grace (UDG) in Chisinau, Moldova. Bill's visit was coordinated with one made at the same time by Paul Beech, Director of Development for Keys Ministries, a Pennsylvania-based ministry that advocates for and supports this leading theological school in Moldova.

Beginning with a handful of students in 1998, UDG has grown into a four-year college with over 500 students, 1200 graduates, and several extension campuses in Central Asia. The foci of their training are Theology, Social Work, and Missions. Many of their students come from the poorest countries in Eurasia and from countries where religious persecution is strong. As a result of this initial visit, READ has accepted UDG's request to partner in equipping church leaders and theological students with ministry tools and training.

Areas of future cooperation between READ and UDG may include:

- An equipping conference for leaders of Moldovan churches
- The training of church librarians in Moldova
- esourcing students at extension training sites in Central Asia
- Equipping a library at Hope Bible Institute in Moldova

When Bill visited Hope Bible Institute earlier this year, he shared: *"The sign at the entrance to the property in rural Moldova said Speranza, which is the Romanian word for hope. It was a fitting word to describe the place, because most who enter there do not have any hope. The ministry of this three-year Bible school targets teenage Moldovan orphans who have been discharged from their orphanages, or teens who come from dysfunctional families where parents or relatives no longer care for them. Without the necessary life-skills, most such teens will end up selling their bodies on the streets or trying to make a living at the end of a gun or knife. They really have no hope."*

This school year, Hope Bible Institute has become an oasis of Christian compassion, care, and training for 36 at-risk Moldovan teens. Here the Bible is taught, life-skills are developed, and all students are taught a trade. But their small library is totally inadequate. Most of the books are in English (thanks to a well-intentioned, but misguided American donor). These teens do not function in En-

glish, but Romanian! So, READ has made a commitment to provide \$3,000 to this ministry for much needed text books and other resources to assist in the evangelism and discipleship of these hungry-for-hope Moldovan young people. And, the leadership of Hope Bible Institute will choose the titles that will best meet the needs of their Romanian and Russian speaking young students.

“The ministry of this three-year Bible school targets teenage Moldovan orphans who have been discharged from their orphanages”



After spending three days together, Paul Beech wrote to Bill and mentioned the need for Christians to have spiritual literature in their native languages (Romanian and Russian), not Western languages. "READ Ministries is a real solution. I also really appreciate the balanced approach and national approval of books." ≡

Please share a year-end gift with READ to help us meet our \$3,000 pledge to help keep hope alive in Moldova, READ's 8th ministry field.



Seeds Planted a Century and a Half Ago Now Ripe for Harvest

A Minnesota-Ukraine Connection Bears Fruit

ODESSA Township in western Minnesota, first settled in June 1870, was named for the city of Odessa in southern Russia (today's Ukraine), from which the wheat-seed used in this vicinity was purchased. Ukraine supplied the first wheat-seed planted by western Minnesota's first Scandinavian immigrant farmers almost 150 years ago! And those who farm these fields, as did their parents and grandparents, have not forgotten their debt to southern Ukraine.

Earlier this year, several churches in nearby Ortonville, Minnesota, and citizens of this agricultural community learned of the opportunity to place Christian literature in 1,000 public elementary schools in the Dnipro region of southern Ukraine. Viktor Nikonenko, one of READ's minis-

try partners and pastor of "Jesus Christ's Church" in the city of Dnipro, was asked by the Department of Education for this region to place copies of "The Camel Story-A Trilogy" in each elementary (grades 1-5) classroom reading center. Do the math. There are 5,000 classrooms where the story of Jesus birth, death, and resurrection is wanted and welcomed by public school officials in southern Ukraine!

When brother Viktor asked READ for help in responding to this open door for the gospel and READ shared this gospel-seed sowing opportunity in western Minnesota, the response was overwhelming! "Ukrainians helped our ancestors get their start in farming. Now it's our time to return this favor and help their Ukrainian children hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." By the grace of God and generosity of the good people of western Minnesota, Viktor will have the resources he needs to plant gospel-seeds in 5,000 classrooms in southern Ukraine.



“Ukrainians helped our ancestors get their start in farming. Now it's our time to return this favor”



Since Pastor Viktor has begun placing Christian literature in the public-school classrooms, the word has spread. Other opportunities are opening for gospel literature to be distributed in churches, summer camps, and to public school teachers of the Christian ethics, not only in the Dnipro region, but surrounding ones as well. ≡

Please share a year-end gift with READ so we can support Pastor Viktor's unique opportunities to sow seeds of the gospel in the fertile soil of Ukraine. Pray that these seeds will yield a spiritual harvest in the hearts of Ukraine's children and their families.



Dear Friends,

"It's the most wonderful time of the year...!"

At READ Ministries we approach this greatest of "holy days" with profound appreciation for your support. Thank you:

Your persistent prayerful and financial support allows us to honor our commitments to the many students, pastors, librarians, churches, colleges and seminaries with whom we are engaged.

Because of you, we continue our work in Belarus (Minsk), Ukraine (Kyiv, Tavrisky Christian Institute, Rivne, Zaporizhzhya) and with the Kremenchug Evangelical Seminary and Missionary Training Center!

Because of you, we boldly move into Leadership Training and Printed and Digital Library Distribution in Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Uzbekistan!

Because of you, a small training and library distribution center in one Ukraine oblast has now led to our entry into our eighth post-soviet country!

Because of you, God continues to bless READ greatly and we are deeply grateful!

We approach the end of this year with budget planning and strategic development because of our confidence in your continued support. Thank you!

We approach the most wonderful season of the year together as we celebrate the continued realization that "when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth HIS SON...!"

Thank you for your continued prayers and your financial support!



Merry Christmas,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul S. Sanders".

Paul S. Sanders
for the READ Board and Staff



Gifts Given in Memory of

Art Bruns

Hugo and Elaine Strike

Carl David Bergstrom

Bruce and Bev Haan

Darlene Pfouts

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Bruce and Bev Haan*

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Mark Pound

*Ray and Marie Ann
Magnuson*

Paul Sanders

*James Carey
Paul and Becky Carlson*

*"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)*



Celebration of a carol and a Christmas star in the Ukrainian city of Chortkiv, January 15, 2017

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

ISAIAH 9:6

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www.readministries.org
for details about READ Ministries and
online giving.



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