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NEWSITEMS

Winter Edition

ORANGE REVOLUTION IN LIGHT OF CHRISTIAN FAITH IN UKRAINE

By Andre Bouravnev, ITEM
Director of Publications

Recent presidential elections in Ukraine stress the urgency and the need for prayer and supplication before our Lord for the people of Ukraine, and for its Christians in particular. The country faces the choice of openness and democracy (which includes freedom of speech and freedom of faith) on the one hand, and corruption on all levels on the other. For these reasons many Ukrainian Christians gathered in the capital city of Kiev to voice their beliefs. They invited all people, regardless of their political affiliation, to strive for what is fair for all. Not all Christians support Yuschenko, the opposition leader, but if he lost because the process of the elections was unfair then the results were unfair also and this is what all of the Ukrainian voters believe.

Many different Christian missions have gathered in the streets of Kiev. Every day they are having regular prayers and inviting people to the main square to hear the Good News. Now is the best time for evangelism. Many people compare this year with 1988 when people were coming and asking for booklets and New Testaments. And it seems that in these days God is telling all of us, "Look, you have this time to tell as many people as possible about Me."

Whether people support opposition leader Yuschenko, who has survived a recent political assassination attempt and whose face now drastically shows the cruelty of Ukrainian shadowy



Kiev, Ukraine, December 2004 Presidential Elections - This tent on the main square of Kiev is being used as a hospital and place of worship by Christians who came to defend their faith and freedom.

reactionary forces; or, whether people support the Prime Minister Yanukovich, as millions do in Eastern Ukraine, the real question, regardless of the new re-election outcome, is this, "What guarantees do the people of Ukraine have to freedoms of faith and speech, religion and democracy?" That was the message that many Ukrainian Christians took to the streets of Kiev this month.

They gathered in this time of trials to tell others what was really going on in Kiev as the media is biased toward one side. When something is happening here as we see it, and others in Ukraine see something absolutely different, we know for sure that people in different regions of Ukraine see unfair and biased news reports. Many pastors from Crimean peninsula and from Eastern Ukraine are asking, "What is going on?"

Christians also gathered to do mercy missions. They walked through their city from tent to tent, met with people, praying with them. When people heard a Christian song "Here are your friends, here's your family," they were deeply touched.

They call it the Orange Revolution, because Ukraine's national flag has orange and blue colors. It means that people of Ukraine want to be part of its life. And for those who want to see Ukraine free from restrictions on faith and other intrinsic freedoms, it means that we must pray for Ukraine as never before, and that the doors of opportunity stay open for Christian missions because the harvest is plentiful but the workers are still few. **AVB, Dec. 2004**

NEWS FROM MARANATHA (CAMPINA, ROMANIA)

By pastor Ion Vasile, President of Maranatha Bible College, and his daughter Iona, MBC Secretary

Visiting our neighbors abroad.....

We've been praying about a mission trip to Bulgaria for a long time, especially now that our friend Jonathan Taylor (former missions pastor at Kirk of the Hills Presbyterian Church, St Louis, MO) and his family moved to Sophia.

The trip was nice, and passing the border in 45 minutes was an answer to our prayers. The closer we got to Sophia we were preparing ourselves for 2 days that are hard to forget. We wanted to surprise Jonathan (our host) so we bought a map of Sophia from a gas station and started the big adventure of finding his street and house number. After "enjoying" the city for an hour and a half we got to his place.

It was a great joy to see him after such a long time and to finally meet his family. The team left to have supper at a restaurant and Pastor Ion and his daughter, Ioana, had supper with the President of the Congregational Evangelical Church in Bulgaria pastor Daniel Ignatov and a local pastor Dancho. We shared a lot of the wonderful things God is doing in our church in Campina, hoping that they would get a vision for the ministry in Sophia.

On Saturday morning we visited an orphanage where we presented a puppet show and songs with our group for about 30 children, who haven't seen something like this before, so you can imagine their reaction, which also brought joy into our hearts. We also shared with them the presentation of the bracelet.

In the afternoon we went to the Congregational Evangelical Church in Sophia and presented a sample of the ministry we do in our area in Campina. We did songs with the puppets, some "surprises" for their eyes, and short testimonies about the follow-up in the villages around Campina. On Sunday morning we went to Mladost church in Sophia and in the afternoon to a church in Hristo Botev (in one of the Roma quarters of Sophia) with the same program.

In the morning pastor Ion preached, and the experience was unforgettable and unique for most of us: the pastor preached in Romanian, his son, Andrei, translated into English and a young man translated

Bulgarian. It sounds funny, but the most important thing is that the message of God was spoken and it surely touched many hearts.

We left for Romania Monday morning and again the trip was nice and safe.

Our special thanks go to our hosts and to all those who were with us those days, for providing everything we needed,

for taking such good care of us, for making us feel like part of the family and for the words of encouragement. Special thanks go to all those who supported us financially for this trip. You are indeed God's answer to our prayers!

When we left Campina we knew that our purpose was to share the gospel. That's true, but in Sophia learned that the real need of the church is encouragement. So, that is what we did. We let the Holy Spirit work through us and many people were strengthened by our programs. Many people came at the end of each service and invited us to come again, because our presence there brought freshness in the church and in their lives. It is only by His grace that we could do all things! Praise the Lord! We felt God's hand upon us and though we went to be a blessing for others, we were blessed by them as well.

Here's our schedule, some recent things that happened in our church and in the area and the mission trips for Nov and Dec.

November:

(20-21) Mission trip to Alexandria, Teleorman (in the South of Romania). Same program as in Bulgaria. (27) ECM Conference (European Christian Mission). Our main subject is based upon Thanksgiving Day. This is especially for young people from Prahova, Bucharest, Sibiu



(27) Special prayer evening for Campina, with all the local evangelical churches.

December

(3-5) Mission trip to Cahul, Moldova. Same program as in Bulgaria. (11) Youth meeting in Filipestii de Padure. (13) Conference with all the brothers and sisters from the Campina area. (18) Again, special prayer evening for Campina, with all the local evangelical churches.

After many, many months of waiting, we finally received one of the authorizations needed for the Medical Cabinet. It is not the case with the project for expanding the garage though. It's been over 10 months since we have been working on the documentation and the papers are not ready yet. God surely taught us to be patient! We bought some of the materials and we are ready to start the work, but we can't do too much now. So, please continue to pray for us.

In Comanic the brothers are working on finishing the first floor of the building. Pray that things will come to an end soon.

The ministry in the mission points around Campina is going very slowly. All our resources for the transportation costs are gone and our churches can barely pay for 2 of the mission points. Please pray together with us for this.

Thank you all for supporting us in your prayers. It is so great to see God working among us and through us. May God bless you and give you victory in every work you are doing!

With Love in Christ from Campina, Romania.

December 2004



Romanian Christians from Maranatha on mission trip to Sophia.

By Rev. D. B. Cummings, ITEM professor
to Kiev Christian Bible College

Day 1 – 11/03/2004

I am sitting at the St. Louis Lambert airport. I am overcautious. I will fly to Kiev, Ukraine in 3 hours!

Both traveling alone and going to a foreign culture are exciting and frightening. However, as usual, I continue to leave God out of the equation. The purpose of this trip is teaching the Scripture. Knowing that Scripture teaches His sovereign grace over all of my life is alone the reason I would make a trip like this. But I am still scared.

The 2004 Presidential election results are flashing on TV near me. But this trip reminds me that I am a citizen of a greater kingdom and those I am going to meet in the Ukraine are closer kin by the Spirit than any citizen of my own country who doesn't know Christ. So though I am far away, I will be home in the Church.

This trip is a gift to me from God and my congregation. I feel a responsibility to experience it with my eyes wide open.

Day 2 – 11/04/2004

I am currently in Frankfurt, Germany. It is a bit unnerving being in a place where English isn't the first language.

Day 3 – 11/05/2004

I arrived in Kiev yesterday at 1:00pm. My hosts are very gracious and kind people.

There is a simplicity and thankfulness here, but there is also an animosity toward those with wealth.

Day 5 11/07/2004

This morning we went to Central Church which is their biggest church: it has 2000 members. The worship was more like our own: with an atmosphere of reverence, worship and joy. The service opened with a song, a melody I recognized but could not place. The first prayer was from one who I think was the senior pastor. He has one of the most pleasant voices I have ever heard. I think that he is well educated by the way he speaks. The prayer was then opened to the congregation, I think; one woman prayed for a considerable time, the pastor closed and we were seated.

There were three different brief sermons. One by the senior pastor, one by the President of the Ukrainian Baptist Union, who is also President of the European Baptist Union and Vice President of one of the World Baptist Unions. When he preached, Vitalik briefly translated his sermon's theme. Vitalik said "he preach about how God plan salvation before the world was made." His text was John 1:20.

It shows a tendency toward a more Reformed and Biblical understanding of the history of redemption than perhaps their American counterparts.

The worship was structured, and organized. They have an excellent choir which sang three or four "traditional" pieces. The choir's closing piece was the contemporary song, "Majesty."

Being a poor country, whatever is important is cared for. There was care given to their church, their worship and to the sacrament. The elements seemed to be treated with a certain reverence. The bread is a whole loaf broken into pieces.

After it is served it is brought back and collected into single container. I don't know if this is pragmatic or for other reasons. I found the whole communion very worshipful. I believe even many of our Reformed

congregations could learn from this reverence.

This evening Vitalik and Helen took me for a walk around Vishnova (the small town where I am staying) which translated means "Cherry Town." It's simply a poor community. The people here seem very nice, but like home wherever there is poverty, there is often alcoholism.

Tomorrow is my first day of class. I need to review and prepare.

Day 6 11/08/2004

Today was our first day of class. Pastor Vitaliy, Vice President of the Baptist Union, was there to present me with my class schedule. Monday and Tuesday I teach four hours in the morning; Wednesday and Thursday four in the morning and two in the afternoon; Friday, four in the morning. I will give my test on Friday in the last hour.

My translator is Andrew and he is very good. His English is excellent and he is working toward a Master's degree at a local seminary. He not only knows English but is able to translate the theological words and concepts. He tends to occasionally explain things too much but he tells me what he said so I can correct him if I need to. Hopefully, there will be less of this tomorrow as I am more comfortable with using a translator. As always, there is one in class who asks a lot of questions and makes a lot of statements. But pastor Vitaliy put an end to this today. The questions are fewer, but there are still many good ones. I like the questions, because they give me an opportunity to springboard to other topics of importance. My class is loosely organized, and they have many relevant questions that I prefer to answer. May God use me despite my inadequacies.

Day 7 11/09/2004

The teaching went well today. We covered more ground than I expected and I was caught off guard by this. However, I can lecture on any passage so I just moved forward in Genesis. Tomorrow is a six hour day, and I can't say that I am looking forward to that much teaching. However, we will survive. Tomorrow is the last day for Genesis, and I will be glad. Thursday will be two texts from Exodus as well as my two sermons on Psalm 1 and "Jesus, Fulfillment of the Law."

I hope the classes are of some use. I feel as if sometimes, I am not making things clear. My interpreter is good, but sometimes I have to rein him in if discussion gets started. But it is really going fine. I feel a mixture of being tired and homesick. My body is adjusting to the food and environment so sometimes I am uncomfortable. I also miss my home, my church, my work, but most especially my wife.

My hosts try to leave me alone at night. I think they think I need time alone for study and rest. But in reality, I could use more social time. I try to sit in the hallway to make myself available for conversation, but only Helen and Vitaliy speak English and it is difficult for them to hold a long conversation with me.

Sometimes I feel like I am in a box. I try to interact with anyone I can communicate with. If someone were to read this they might think that I am not enjoying my teaching term, but that is not true. It's different from any vacation or teaching opportunity because I have become immersed in the culture. I am proud because I have stepped out of my comfort zone and challenged myself and I will be the better for it.

Day 7 11/09/2004

The strangest thing happened today. We were discussing the command in Genesis 9 about refraining from eating blood. A student had a question about this command which later was connected with the decision

of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15). I treated the question lightly because I didn't realize that the Baptists here found this issue relevant to our context. It bothers me because I did not clarify the issue the way I would like. But it is such a strange and peripheral issue that I am going to move beyond it tomorrow.

My country has always been important to me, but now more than ever I have come to appreciate it even more. And I love being a Presbyterian where the doctrines of grace are not forgotten. I hope that in my teaching I can pass these things on to my students. I hope that they can understand the majesty of His Word. I think that I forget this lesson. No matter where I am, God is present with me and His grace is on me. Perhaps now, I will learn to trust Him more.

Day 8 11/10/2004

I have just completed my third day of class. I only have two more days to go. Friday will be a short day because the test will take an entire hour. There are times, I genuinely enjoy this experience but there are times when I cannot wait to get home. I don't know whether I will do this again.

Pastor Vitaliy is sitting a few feet away from me in the church office. It would be nice to have a conversation with him, but it is impossible. How I hate the Fall.

Day 10 11/12/2004

Yesterday was the only day in which I did not journal. Two days ago I was feeling overwhelmed by the isolation of the language and by being so far from home. The night before last two things relieved my state of mind.

First, on Wednesday afternoon after I finished journaling I chose to revisit the issue of Lot's unrighteousness. My greatest concern was that I should admit my error to the students. 2 Peter 2 says that Lot was a righteous man. Therefore, he was. But I wanted to also emphasize the contrast that is made by the positioning of the text of the events of Abraham and Lot.

I wrote out a series of points and in doing so I also included my confession of pride over the issue of this. I repented publicly. I did all this in class the next day. After writing these things on paper, I felt a tremendous burden lifted. That evening Dima came home with Helen and me from the church. I should mention here that the college is held in the church of my host Vitaliy, the younger. On Wednesday, there was a prayer service held in the evening. Each day we have class. In the morning there is a break from teaching, lunch at 1:00pm, and tea after class. For those of us staying Wednesday night, we also had dinner.

Vitaliy, the younger, told me that we would be attending the service on Wednesday evening at breakfast. He said I might preach, if I liked. I was nervous about doing this, but did not want to refuse such a kind offer. I had already dressed that morning and more casually without a coat and tie. I didn't even consider that I needed to change. Between my embarrassing and obvious error on Lot and my forgetting to dress appropriately, I was tremendously down.

But Vitaliy, the senior, said my appearance was fine and being a prayer service it was more relaxed. Normally, in such a service, three or four men would speak for perhaps 15-20 minutes. However, there was a (perhaps) deaconate meeting following the service. Therefore, they wished to shorten the service and only I preached. My sermon was probably no longer than 10-12 minutes with the translation.

Continued on page 4

Dima did the translation and did well. My text was Mat. 6:33 and I spoke of our riches being in the things of God. It was a basic message of the Gospel. After the service was over, I felt more at ease. With my preaching done and a course of direction for dealing with my error and pride I felt better about my day.

The next day the exam was given. One girl said that it was the easiest thing she had taken. But given the nature of the school, it is what I chose to do. Let God judge me on this, whether it would have been better to make it more difficult. In the final hour, the exam took only 15 minutes. This was probably far too easy, but from the beginning they were nervous about the test. I remember as a student being more concerned about a test or grade than mastering the content. I didn't want this to be true for them.

Day 11 11/13/2004

I think to have an American Christian with an education in their home was an honor for them. And because I am only 30, they felt a friendship for me as well. And, both Vitaliy and Helen enjoyed practicing their English. I made some good friends. There is no doubt in my mind of their deep and genuine faith in Christ.

I have also learned that no matter what culture or language you are in, there is no good way to say "goodbye" or "Dah Svee Dahnya."

The trip really pulled together in the last two or three days. I should say that God pulled the trip together. The students were always wonderful, but we drew closer the last couple of days. There is a certain respect that I was given, that I am not sure I would receive from a similar group in America. Yesterday, the students gave me a ceramic "Kozak" bank. The "Kozak" who I have heard of, was some kind of Ukrainian or Russian soldier or warrior. They gave it to me so I could save my money for the next trip. Pastor Vitaliy asked if I would continue teaching on the Old Testament in January. He thought I might return for their second term. I had to explain that it might be two years before I took another trip.

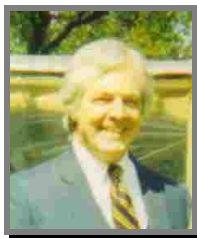
Reflection on my class:

(1) I think I have potential as a teacher, applying myself to studies and preparation. (2) I must begin working on another course regardless of whether I decide to do this again. (3) I must begin a systematic study of basic Reformed theology. (4) I need to study and master more of the Bible.

Reflections on this trip:

(1) I was challenged spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually. (2) Spiritually: I was forced to depend on God for my care, and to understand my faith in the context of the whole world and not only as an American. (3) Emotionally: The real isolation was similar to the imagined one that occurred during my depression. It was difficult, but I dealt with it much better and felt God's grace in it. (4) Intellectually: I faced three difficult issues in class: the Sabbath, the eating of blood and the righteousness of Lot. Each pushed me to struggle with the Scriptures, in my communication with the students. Also, because of my knowledge of Hebrew, the students were curious about the readings in the original text. It stretched me to work in the text and it showed me that I have a certain competency in Hebrew. This pleases me. (5) Will I do this again? Only the Lord can know. Some days, I have actually hated the experience and others loved it. Whatever I decide, I hope that it honors God. (6) Was it good decision to come? Absolutely! **DBC**

URGING PRAYERS FOR THE PEOPLE OF UKRAINE



By Dr. R. David Ludwick, ITEM President

Dear fellow co-laborers,

I am taking the liberty of writing you to urge your prayers for the people of Ukraine and particularly the students, staff, faculty, and supporters of our works in Ukraine.

As I am sure you may be aware, the last political election has created turmoil throughout the country and primarily in the capital city Kiev. At times, there have been more than 250-300,000 people in the streets stalling traffic, travel, commerce, and virtually every aspect of city life.

Some of the institutions in major cities, in particular, have not been able to conduct their 'business' of theological education, while others seem to be unbothered. Most of our contacts tell us that these aspects of this 'new experience' for us are believed to be temporary.

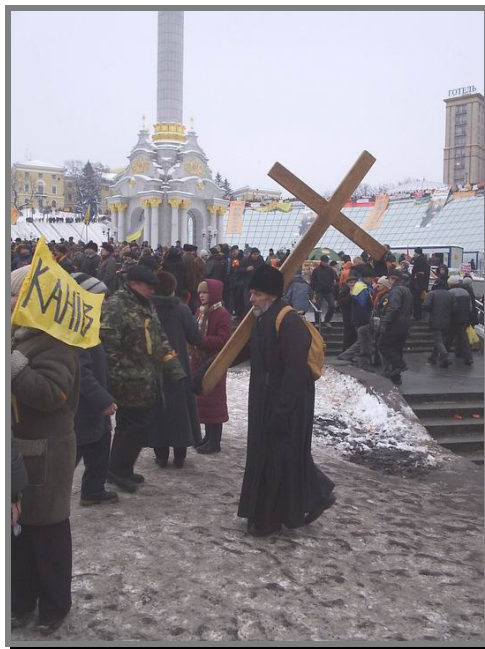
They and we believe that there are other powers both of an earthly/political/economic nature on the one hand [particularly from Russia per se] and the powers and principalities of darkness on the other. In either and in both events, we are earnestly soliciting your prayers for the liberation of the church and for the blessing of being able to teach pastors, teachers, and lay leaders of the future as we have done for the past several years through this window of opportunity WHICH MAY NOW BE CLOSING, AT LEAST IN PART.

As you may recall, ITEM was asked to participate in the planting or activating and/or peopling the faculty of some 41 different institutions throughout the country of Ukraine. As recently as 6 weeks ago, we opened the first new Bible College just outside the city of Kiev – 37 new students training to be pastors teachers, and lay leaders in the very heart of the country. We must be ready to confront new impediments and overcome them or, if the window does remain open, be prepared to act quickly with our vision of planting seminaries in order that churches and God's people might rise up and take hold of their country. The absence of a Christian world and life view is one of the primary obstacles preventing the people of Ukraine from laying hold of what is justifiably theirs! Our co-laboring to bring the Word of God to men and women who will preach and teach it respectively, in a country of the former Soviet Union, is a blessing unparalleled in Church history!

Our efforts, if they are to be redoubled, will require your prayer and your financial support. It is anticipatable that we could triple or quadruple our opportunities should He lead and provide.

Prayerfully consider sending your pastor, an elder, going yourself, organizing a prayer group, helping us organize a presentation to your church, business organization, prayer group; Bible Study and contributing financially to the needs which are surely there, and all as He leads.

Slava boga – glory to God (alone)!
Dr. R. David Ludwick, December 2004
 Joshua 1:6-9



A lonely pilgrim on the Main Square in Kiev

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