



Manna Messenger

**Missionary Appointees to Ukraine as
Youth Ministry Trainers with Youth Ministry International**

Introduction Letter
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God's Leading Us To The Other Side Of The World ... To Live!

My deep thanks goes to many of you, who supported me this summer on our missions trip to Ukraine. It was an incredible trip resulting in salvation for many people, spiritual growth in all that went from our church, the formation of very special friendships, a new youth group planted in Sumi, and a full-time missionary to Ukraine – that is what I need to explain.



I cannot begin to express the ways that each of our lives were changed by being exposed to people in a different culture, yet seeing how *our* God is *their* God, their joy, their hope. God touched my heart to the point where I didn't want to leave, and later I longed to go back ! As I saw the needs in Ukraine and added my experiences in the past 12 years of youth, education, and camping ministry, it was easy to understand the tug on my heart.

Gennady Lutsenko, the Ukrainian youth pastor we ministered with, is supported by Youth Ministry International (YMI) and works with training leaders to reach youth in 2,300 Baptist Union Churches. He found out in conversation with Jamie Jockwig (YMI's executive director

that traveled to Ukraine with us) that my college training is in Christian camping. He came to me immediately, wondering if I would come back in the spring to lead a camping seminar. The churches want to begin using the avenue of Christian camping to reach their youth for Christ. He told me that he had prayed for over a year that the Lord would send someone to him that had camping training. His last words to me before I left for home were, "Mike, our greatest need in ministry is not for finances. Our greatest need is for training. We have volunteers to reach our youth, but they need training." Little did Gennady know that these words

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Ukraine Facts:

- Population: 52 million
- Area: Roughly the size of Texas
- Religious Groups allowed under the Soviet Union: Russian Orthodox Church and the Baptist Union
- Number of Baptist Union Church churches: 2,300
- Number of organized youth groups in Baptist Union: 50 (?)
- Number of student leadership teams in Baptist Union: 3 (?)
- Average Wage: \$75 per month

"It was he who gave some to be . . . pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up." (Eph. 4:11-12)

- Verses that express Mike's purpose in training Ukrainian youth pastors

Report of this past summer's ministry in Ukraine

Lance Finkbeiner, one of our adult team members, wrote an excellent report to his supporting church in Colorado. Since it states so well the feelings of each member of the Quest team, I am going to borrow it to share with you:
"Our team of 11 from Christian Life Center in Belle Fourche joined 15 members from a youth group in Kiev, Ukraine. Together our team,

sponsored by Youth Ministry International (YMI) and supported by you and others, was known as the QUEST team. We had 2 primary goals that were met during our mission trip.

"One of our major goals was to encourage and support the Ukrainian Quest team. Actually our US Quest team was probably more encouraged

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Oksana, Mike, Megan, and Clay smile for the camera on the bus ride to Sumi, Ukraine.

God's Leading – continued

would go straight to my heart!

It would take pages to expound on all that has happened since then, but the bottom line is that the Lord's direction has become clear to us, and we are prepared to follow in obedience. We are going to pursue becoming missionaries to Kiev, Ukraine. My greatest personal confirmation was in having the Lord lay this calling on my wife's heart while I was gone. In her loneliness for me, Judy spent a great deal of time in the Word and in prayer, and the Lord placed a passion for the people of Ukraine in her heart. Overseas missions has never been one of her desires (to state it mildly) and I was humbled to see the Lord handle that area without a word from me. After several weeks of prayer, we both wrote letters to Jamie Jockwig of YMI telling him of what the Lord had done in our hearts. I would like to share a part of Judy's letter with you:

"When Mike got home, he felt as if God had ripped out his heart and left it in Ukraine. He told me that there was something he wanted to talk to me about, but he didn't think he should

"Our greatest need is for training. We have volunteers to reach our youth, but they need training."
- Gennady

Ukraine Summer Report – continued

by them. They are amazing--talented in music, mime, gymnastics, and possessing an unwavering faith. We were honored and blessed to be able to work side by side with this Ukrainian team. They were an inspiration to us and their devoted lives to Christ were quite an example for us to follow. They are very committed in sharing Christ with others as they meet twice per week for planning and practice, and do as many mission programs as time and money allow.

"The other goal we had was to minister specifically to the people of Ukraine. Together our US/Ukraine Quest team put on over a dozen performances in parks or parking lots with a total of over 1000 people attending one or more of the programs. Over 150 known decisions were made to invite Christ into their life or to seek out a relationship with Jesus Christ

mention it for about a year. He wanted to bathe it in prayer first. I looked at him and said, 'Mike, if you are thinking about becoming missionaries to Ukraine, I want you to know that God has already done a work in my heart. I'd move there tomorrow if He would prepare the way.'

"Mike was definitely surprised, excited, and relieved. I felt a great sense of peace and release in just saying those words. Since then, we have spent many hours talking, reading scripture, and praying. We have both been amazed by some of the things the Lord has brought to us in our personal devotions during this time of searching for His will. We have continuously prayed that if going to Ukraine is not God's will for us, the desire to go would diminish. It has not diminished, only increased to the point where Mike and I are compelled to write these letters, asking to be directly involved in your ministry to Ukraine."

through the help of a local church or youth group. Seeds were planted in individuals that did not make a decision for Christ and that, too, is important in the process of making the ultimate decision. The Christians that saw our programs were encouraged and were given new hope to witness to their fellow Ukrainians.

"Our trip was in every aspect a success! Thank you once again for supporting what resulted in an incredibly powerful mission trip. When you invest in God, it's not very risky. I challenge you to be a missionary in your everyday life, for we are all full-time missionaries. It can be done in very simple ways. Plant the seeds, and God can and will do the rest of the work."



Marina (Ukrainian), Eric (American), and Julia (Ukrainian) practice a mime

Our next step to Ukraine

We have been in close contact with Youth Ministry International, located in Louisville, KY. We have been interviewed by our new board, and they have given us the status as their "Youth Ministry Trainer Appointee" to Ukraine. My main responsibility will be to train youth leaders. As long as we complete all the steps, YMI's intent is to place us in Ukraine as soon as possible. Some of the steps include getting the necessary missionary training (12 weeks), raising the support needed to sustain our family and ministry in Ukraine, and taking a "field inspection" trip to Ukraine in April or May .

We have announced our intentions to our church body and have been truly blessed by their response. They have expressed to us their love and sadness to see us go; however, our church body was heavily involved in sending

The need for our new Ukrainian ministry

We will keep you informed as things progress over the next few months. YMI will be providing a budget for us soon as to what we will need in way of outgoing expenses, personal expenses, travel expenses, and ministry expenses. We will do what we can ourselves, but we are in need of partners to both pray and provide monthly financial support for our ministry. Typically in faith-missions, those whom God has led will pledge a monthly dollar amount to support the missionary overseas. This gift is mailed each month to the sending mission, who in turn is responsible for getting the funds to the missionary.

We are also available to share our ministry with churches and individuals. We hope you will begin your prayer support immediately, as well as praying for a replacement for Mike to

This is the first of many letters ...

A friend recently joked to Judy who is forever ashamed of her lack of communication (a nice way to say that she hasn't written letters), "I guess we'll be hearing from you now!" We will do our best! Judy and I are better at email, so if

our Quest team to the Ukraine. Therefore, they are very sensitive and understanding about the needs and opportunities for ministry there. They have come behind us with loving encouragement and support. This has been the response of our families, as well. We often think about the fact that because our families and closest friends are believers, we will have eternity to spend with them. Therefore, we are free to use our lives to share the message of Christ and train leaders wherever the Lord leads! The only place we want to stay is in the center of God's will. Please read the reading from Judy's favorite devotional, "Joy and Strength" on the last page of this newsletter. It will be a steadfast reminder to follow the Lord, no matter where He leads or what He asks us to do for His sake!

work with the youth here in Belle Fourche. "Our kids" have become extremely dear to us, and we want to leave this ministry in faithful hands.

If God leads you to support our new ministry, you can send the enclosed card with this letter. Gifts can be sent any time to help cover training expenses and outgoing expenses which will probably total at least \$——. Gifts can be sent to our home address and we will forward them to YMI this month. We will give you YMI's address in our next letter.

Upcoming Schedule:

Dec. 31 – Mike's last "New Year's Eve Teen Blast" in Belle Fourche

Jan. 4-10 – Mike at Sonlife Advanced Youth Training in Denver

you would like more frequent communication, let us know your email address and we'll keep in touch that way. We also have a website and an egroup (an email group) created for our new Ukrainian ministry at www.lifehouse.com/ manna. Please take a look.



We would like to share what God is doing with Youth Ministry in Ukraine in several churches! Let us know if we can share with you!



City of Kiev, Ukraine
Population: 3 million



Mandie – 12 years old
 “I want to help in an orphanage as well as learn and do many new things.”



Luke – 8 years old
 “I’m excited to tell people about Jesus in Ukraine and play soccer, my best sport.”



Samantha – 6 years old
 “I’m excited to go on the plane. I’m glad to go to Ukraine.”

Judy’s Devotional

As a background to this devotional and what it meant to me, I need to tell you that the date was August 29. Mike and I had been praying for weeks, asking God to reveal His will to us by keeping the desire strong if we were to go, or helping that desire diminish if we were to stay. We had finally decided to take the step of writing letters to YMI asking if we could become missionaries to Ukraine under their organization. We were sending the letters by e-mail, so our family gathered around the computer and prayed that YMI's response would be led from the Lord. Then Mike clicked the "send" button. Jamie Jockwig (YMI director) called within 3 hours. Both he and Randy Smith (YMI founder & president) were excited and encouraging. Suddenly, we had an open door, but after our initial excitement the reality of leaving set in and I experienced doubt and fear. I struggled with it for the rest of that day and part of the next. "Lord, how can we leave our home? How can we leave our families and our friends? How can we leave our ministry here? We love it here!"

Finally, I sat down to have my quiet time with the Lord. I prayed earnestly that He would provide direction through my Bible or devotional readings. It is an enormous thing to think of moving half-way around the world from everything and everyone that is dear to you! I prayed for the Lord to deal with my feelings and give me something solid to hold on to--a verse or some encouragement that I could remember in times of struggle...something to remind me that this was His plan and not something we had conjured up! I told the Lord that I would follow Him anywhere, if I was only sure it was He who was leading! I read my daily Bible reading, and nothing really popped out at me. But then I opened my treasured devotional "Joy and Strength" to August 30. My tears began to flow as I read, and my heart melted at the incredibly personal way in which the Lord answered my prayer:

I am the Lord your God who teaches you to profit, who leads you in the way you should go. Isaiah 48:17

Just as God leads me I would go;
 I would not ask to choose my way;
 Content with what He will bestow,
 Assured He will not let me stray.
 So as He leads, my path I make,
 And step by step I gladly take,
 A child in Him confiding.

Lampertus Gedicke (1683-1735)

He has not made us for naught. He has brought us this far, in order to bring us further, in order to bring us on to the end. He will never leave us nor forsake us; so that we may boldly say, "The Lord is my Helper; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me." We "may cast all our care upon Him who careth for us." What is it to us how our future path lies, if it be but His path? What is it to us where it leads us, if but in the end it leads to Him? What is it to us what He puts upon us, if He but enables us to undergo it with a pure conscience, a true heart, not desiring anything of this world in comparison of Him? What is it to us what terror befalls us, if He be but a hand to protect and strengthen us?

John Henry Newman (1801-1890)

We can trust the Lord with our future no matter where it leads, even half-way around the world to Ukraine! I will treasure this gift from the Lord whenever the pain of leaving causes discouragement. I can see myself reading this in my little Ukrainian apartment on a day darkened by loneliness for home and family... a reminder that my Lord understands and cares, but still has a plan to be followed with willingness and joy. May each of us daily follow the Lord with simple trust and obedience. Judy