

Kremenchuk, Ukraine

Newsletter

Hello from ½ Way Around the World

Greetings in the Lord from my home on Lenin Street in Kremenchuk! Nearly every day, I have someone ask me from here if I like living in Ukraine. Of course my truthful answer is that I really do like living here! There are things that I miss (like American Football, some foods, etc.) and there are most definitely many people that I miss very much! I get frustrated over how things operate here sometimes (like I am very mad at the public mail system) but then I remember that I need to be aware of what culture shock is trying to do to me and it helps to know that I have a God that is greater than MINOR problems. God is blessing His work here very much and I want to spend the rest of this letter telling you about His work!

Prison Work

Nearly right away I started going to work with the boys prison work on Sunday afternoons. Gregory, the local minister that works with this work, also goes on Wed. and Sat. We have been having between 75 and a 105 in attendance on Sundays. We sing and teach for two hours on Sunday. We were able to get song books from Eastern European Mission for this work and the boys absolutely **LOVE** to sing! Their favorite song is "Wonderful Words of Life." I understand the food needs of the boys better than before. Three weeks ago we started making ham, cheese and bread sandwiches for the boys that come regularly to classes. Three weeks ago we made 70 and last week Sunday I made 100 sandwiches, slicing every piece of meat and cheese by hand. The cost is a little over 1 grievnas per sandwich or about 25 cents or about \$25 a week. This has not been in our budget, but I believe that God will provide. There are many clothing needs for these boys as well. There are many boys who are orphans or whose parents have abandoned them because they have gone to prison. These are the boys who are in the most desperate needs for it is the family that provides most food. Right now, Gregory is studying with several boys who are considering baptism. Gregory is very careful that their hearts and motives are right in this.

Teaching at School #11

There are many good and positive things happening at School #11! However, our numbers are down some from when we first started. There were many curious lookers that have not stayed with us. However, it does seem that those that have continued to come do have a sincere interest in learning more

about God. For many, there are time conflicts that keep them away as well. At my classes from 5th through 11th forms (grades) we probably average between 50 and 60 in attendance. For the 5-7th forms, we are studying through the Old Testament and now teaching about the life of Joseph. For the older classes we are doing topical studies like: Promises of God, The Love of God and Sin Against God the last three weeks. These studies seem to be going real well.



10th & 11th Form Students from 4 Schools
in my flat for the Teen Bible Club

New Studies

For several weeks, we had talked about starting some Bible studies in my home where we would use English as the drawing card. First, we were going to just do it for school age, but then we started having several people that asked if I could also do a study for adults as well. So on Saturday, November 9 we started what we are calling our Bible Clubs. We have the Adult Bible Club for two hours from Noon to 2pm where we have a Bible/English lesson starting in Luke 1. I tell our students there are two reasons for this class: 1) is to teach them English from the Bible and 2) is to teach them the Bible with English! After an hour of study, we have refreshments. Then we sing for about a half hour as singing is a helpful way to learn a language I tell them. Then I try to come up with a Bible Game to help reinforce the lesson we just had and still have some fun together. In the adult class, we have had 4, 5 and 6 the last three weeks. Then on November 16 (my birthday!) we started the Teen Bible Club and we had 17 in attendance with the same format. Then last Saturday we had 9 come. I really believe that God is blessing these efforts!

Devotionals

Nearly right away, I started having a singing devotional at my flat. At first, as in other things, we had higher numbers. Then for a few weeks we had 3 or 4 come. Now our numbers are back to around 10 for these times and the students do like to sing! I am in the process of trying to put together a song book that has songs in it that the students know and like. I am putting it all in English for now, except the song "God Is So Good," which I have learned in Russian!



I want you to meet Zhenya & Zhenya!

Private Bible Studies

The girl, Zhenya, in the picture above was one of the students that I was close friends with when I was here before. (The cat, Zhenya was a gift from the girl for my birthday, so I have a new wonderful little friend in my house! Right now, the cat is sleeping on my foot! Zhenya and I had lost contact with each other, but through the Lord's grace we have been able to renew our friendship. I have started a very wonderful study with Zhenya and her parents Victor and Luda. We are studying in the gospel of John together. They are very hungry and curious to know about God. Zhenya told me that when I was here before, that she really wasn't that interested in God, but since I have come back, she so badly wants to know more and more about God and that she is so thankful that I am here. She is 17 and a first year University student here in Kremenchuk. She interprets for us when we study with her parents and also interprets for our Adult Bible Club.

I have not had any other on going personal studies, even though I have had many opportunities to talk to many about their spiritual walk with God. Uri, who I have asked you to pray for, and I have stayed in contact with each other, but it is hard to get together with him because he is so busy.

Some Observations

I still believe that many hearts are very open to the message of Jesus Christ here in Ukraine. One thing that I didn't take into

account is how far the people have to come to really be ready to give their lives to Jesus. I know that I probably could baptize several – maybe tomorrow, but that wouldn't be right because they would do it because I say they should. They need to obey God because they know and understand His Word, have true faith in Jesus and are willing to completely give Him their lives as they die to themselves to live for God. It is very important that they choose for themselves to follow God.

I realize that God is making our work stronger and more secure all the time at School #11. One of the co-directors (assistants) is coming to my Adult Bible Club! The Director continues to be very supportive and encouraging. I may soon come to a point where I will be able to have classes that students are required to attend.

I believe that the Russian language is the greatest strain on my brain that has happened in a very long time! Twice I have changed words (accidentally!) to embarrassing, bad words. I am learning just enough to be really dangerous. I am taking 5 hours a week in lessons. My Russian teacher is very patient with me. She knows no English, but I think this is good for both of us. Every day I realize more and more how much I don't know, but need to know. I could give you examples that happen every day how I embarrass myself of not knowing or of poor use of the Russian language!

I am becoming more aware all the time of the stunning poverty! The figures say that there is 35% unemployment. It is said that 10% of the people make 40% of the income. A beginning teacher makes 135 Grievnas or \$25 a month and a teacher of 22 years makes 200 Grievnas or \$37 a month. I saw that the figures for the **average** monthly income is 400 Grievnas a month or \$74 a month. That has to include the 10% making the 40%! Everyday I see people going through the trash bins searching for I don't know what! Things like food can cost 5 to 10 times cheaper here. Rent is much less. Clothes on the other hand are some what less expensive, but not very much! People on the whole are neat, clean and do have some nice clothes that they take good care of.

Prayer Requests: I ask for prayers for myself for strength, faith, love and determination. I need prayers to recognize cultural stress in my life and to constantly and freely give it over to God. Please pray for my children and Mother.

Please pray for Zhenya's family as we study, for my classes at school and at my home! Please pray for the openness of the Ukrainian government for greater efforts in the school. There is rumor that we may have open access to all schools and we need to be ready to meet this when it comes.

Please pray for our prison work. We are having between 75 and 100 boys each week involved in this work. We have been feeding them meat and cheese sandwiches for 3 weeks now.

Please pray for the churches here to grow in spirit & numbers.