

PARTNERS IN MISSIONS

Ray and Pam Trantham
Training National Leaders for Ministry
in Odessa, Ukraine

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"In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now." Philipians 1:4-5

New School Year

September is the beginning of a new school year and new students. We are always glad to hear the reports of our students' ministries when they return after the summer. The mission students that I went to Armenia with and have been teaching all summer will finish their own-campus studies at the end of September and then depart for six months of mission service in Kirgizstan. Even before they depart from Ukraine, a completely new group of mission students will begin studying in October. From now on, our mission program will be offered alongside of our regular courses. This means we have a new dedicated classroom devoted to the study of world missions.

It has long been our tradition to invite students and teachers to our house for a cookout at the start of the school year. Sadly, Pam's father passed away the first week of school. Pam returned to the States, while Ray stayed for classes. Pam had already purchased chicken and other supplies for the picnic which was held on our college campus instead of at our house.



Four stories of seeing the "Hand of God"

It is often not possible to directly identify the hand of God at work in our world, but I do believe God uses situations to call our attention to himself. It is sometimes not possible to say God "caused" an event, but we can certainly say he used an event to draw our attention to himself.

In 1988 a devastating earthquake struck northern Armenia, killing over 25,000 and leaving hundreds of thousands homeless. The short-term housing solution was to house people in temporary metal shipping containers while reconstruction got underway. The breakup of the Soviet Union put an end to reconstruction plans and even today many people still live in temporary housing in northern Armenia. Stephan's home was destroyed and his family lived for ten years in a temporary shelter. Then Stephan became a Christian, and three days later was given a free apartment by a humanitarian aid agency. The aid agency did not give him an apartment because he became a Christian, but Stephan realized that it was the hand of God who was now caring for his family. He is one of my former students and the minister of a church working among people still suffering from a disaster that occurred more than 25 years ago. He invited us to his apartment for a meal and fellowship. *(pictured on the next page)*

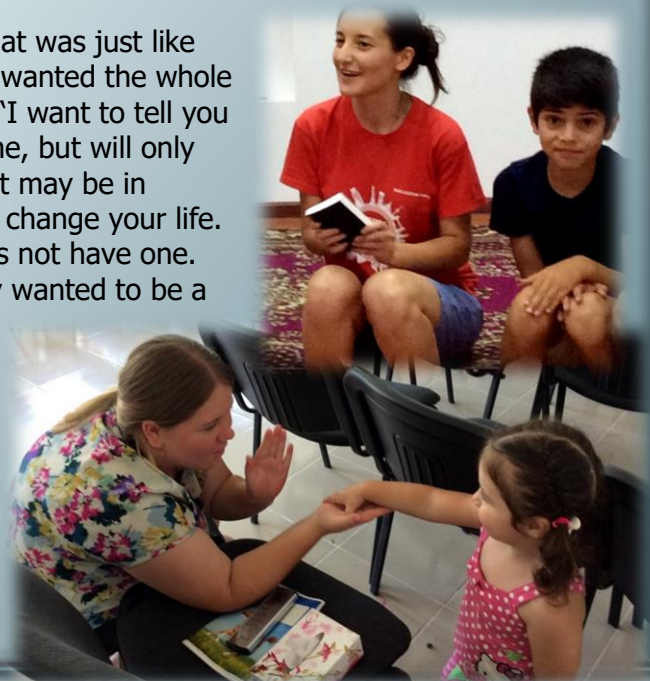
"Hand of God" *continued ...*

Another of my students is involved in a church planting project in an area where there had previously been no church. They purchased a piece of property and constructed a small church building in a residential neighborhood. At first, relations with the neighbors were tense. The neighbor behind the church claimed the building was being constructed on the edge of their property and insisted they move the wall over a few feet. The church decided it was best to move the partially build wall of the church. As they began to take down the concrete block wall, the neighbor suddenly became very sick and took this as a "sign" that God was happy with the wall where it was. The neighbor then insisted that the wall stay where it was. You might say that the neighbor's sudden illness was just a "coincidence," but even the neighbor saw this as the hand of God.



Anastasia told how her father left their family when she was very young and how she ended up selling vegetables on the street to help make ends meet. She explained that at age twelve when her mother was in the hospital and expected to die, the social worker told her that she and her sister would soon be going to an orphanage. Instead, a missionary visiting the hospital told her mother about the One who could give eternal life. Her mother recovered and took Anastasia to church for the first time at age twelve, where she soon became a Christian. Before entering the mission program, part of Anastasia's ministry was to work with disabled children. She said she was able to clearly see the hand of God working in the difficulties of her past.

Lisa talked about how a stranger gave her a Gideon NT, that was just like the one she was holding, but white. Later she read it and wanted the whole Bible but it was expensive for her as a student. She said, "I want to tell you about this gift. I do not know the person who gave it to me, but will only meet him one day in heaven." What Bible do you have? It may be in Russian or in Armenia, but the book is the same and it will change your life. If you have more than one, give one to someone who does not have one. Lisa asked people what they wanted to do in life. One boy wanted to be a dentist. She said, "Well then, you want to be the best dentist possible, and that can only happen when you know the One who made your teeth. He can give you the commitment to study and become the best you possibly can. Lisa could see how God had worked through unknown strangers to bring her a Bible and to open her eyes to His light.



Tax-deductible contributions:

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