

# 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*

## International Women's Day

The eighth day of March has long been celebrated as "International Women's Day" in the former Soviet Union. This dates back to a women's demonstration for "bread and peace" begun on March 8, 1917. This was the beginning of the Russian Revolution and the overthrow of the Russian Czar. When we arrived in Ukraine twenty-one years ago, we had never heard of this holiday.

Mother's Day and Valentine's Day were absent from Ukrainian culture, so we thought this was just the Soviet version of our western holidays. It is true that "March Eighth," as is commonly called, was predominantly celebrated within communist countries until it was adopted in 1975 by the United Nations as a way to focus on women's equality. But this holiday has a very different meaning today in Ukraine, than it did in a revolutionary Russia a hundred years ago. While "Mother's Day" and "St. Valentine's Day" have historically found a place in the western church, these holidays have been completely absent in Ukrainian and Russian churches. Because of the modern commercialization of Valentine's Day, most



Ukrainian Christians reject this holiday as promiscuous and lustful. But on "Women's Day," it is the duty of every man to honor all important women in his life. This includes daughters, mothers, and all female workers. On the day before, all men are out buying flowers and candy. Then, on the afternoon of March 8, women are coming home from school and work carrying huge bouquets of flowers. On the morning of March 8<sup>th</sup>, our Bible college gathered for a special worship service where the noble character of women was the topic. After flowers and a group picture, it was announced that "women" had the day off: except for students. The topic of the

worship service the following Sunday, focused on the value of women in the church.

### Return from the States:

Pam and I were certainly glad to get back home after visiting and updating churches in the States. We have recently switched to visiting supporters during shorter winter breaks, instead of longer summer trips. We apologize that we were not able to see everyone over the winter holidays, but look forward to seeing those we missed next winter.

Take a look at look at our  
simplified web site and view  
the options for on-line giving.



## Summer Camp

Summer church camp was something I looked forward to when I was growing up in the American church. The church camp program was an important part of ministry when we served the church in Mississippi. For the past twenty years, being "the missionaries" at camp has been an important part of our partnership with the American church. Church camp plays a major role in shaping young people into Christian adults and is an important missionary activity of the local church. This is also true in Ukraine. During the Soviet period, churches were forbidden from conducting summer youth camps. (This is still true in some parts of the former Soviet Union, but not Ukraine.) Our Bible college has long played a major role in the creation of curriculum for both Sunday School and Summer Camp.



Participants pass through airport security as they prepare to go to the ends of the earth.

We do not normally make a distinction between Vacation Bible School and summer camp in Ukraine. In America, if it happens at the local church we call it VBS, but if it is overnight, then we call it church camp. In Ukraine it is often the same all-day, week-long program, with youth sometimes spending the night and in other cases going home each night.

What excites us is the theme of the curriculum for the 2017 summer programs.

### *"To the ends of the earth..."*

The new summer youth curriculum was just printed and previewed at our Bible college and focuses on Jesus's command in the "Great Commission" to go and make disciples, ... *"To the ends of the earth."*

Our task as missionaries in Ukraine has always been, *"To train national leaders for ministry."* This continues to include the preparing of Ukrainians to serve in the Ukrainian church. But over the past couple of years the Ukrainian church has begun to awaken to its responsibility to take the gospel outside its borders; ... *to the ends of the earth.* Over the past couple of years we have devoted more attention to the training of Ukrainians as missionaries. One of the greatest needs that we have identified is the need to develop the idea of World Missions among the next generation. A hundred page study book in both Russian and Ukrainian has been developed to support a six day summer camp program to be used all over Ukraine. This summer thousands of Ukrainian children will spend a week at "camp" studying how they can participate in the "Great Commission."



Tax-deductible contributions:

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