

PARTNERS IN MISSIONS

WHITE as SNOW: As I walked out of the main classroom building yesterday evening, to my surprise it was snowing. This was the first snow of the season. It has been unusually warm and dry this Fall, so the snow was welcomed. I always like it when the weather drops below freezing and especially when it snows. Snow is clean. When you live in a country where people spend a lot of time walking, frozen ground and snow is preferable to rain and mud. Matthew tells us that the angel which rolled the stone away from the grave of our risen Lord, wore clothes that were "white as snow." In Isaiah 1:8 the Lord says, "Come now, let us reason together," ... "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool." Our God wants to clean the "mud" from our life and make us presentable to himself. This is the task of the church and of missionaries throughout the world.



snow in our yard



mission students



sunset behind the college



Students talk with youth after church service



Part of a class included a meal and meeting in Arabic restaurant and cultural discussion with owner.

Ray and Pam Trantham: *"Training National Leaders for Ministry"* in Odessa, Ukraine for the past 24 years.

BROTHERS, SIDE-by-SIDE: A new group of students began studying in our Master's program last week. I was part of the admission committee. The first applicant was named Sergei and was from the Donetsk region along the disputed border with Russia. He was already a minister and had receive his education from our sister Seminary located in Donetsk. This Bible college was forcibly taken in 2014 by Russian troops and converted into army barracks. As Russia has solidified its grip on this region of Ukraine, they have introduced restrictions to close all churches, except the Russian Orthodox. We asked him about his church and he said that they were a church of 130 members, but now they we down to only 9. He said that all of our churches in the region are currently unrecognized by the government and church property is being seized. He went on to explain that Christians meet in homes and that people are still being baptized. Sergei has an eight-year-old daughter, the age of our granddaughter. He said the reason he wanted to continue his education was so that he could do more work. --- I thought it ironic that the next applicant came from just across the border on the Russian side and is ethnic Russian. It is Jesus that brings the two together for His purpose. The "peace" of God is certainly something that the politicians in our own country could use.



A BETTER LIFE: The Republic of Georgia is a small country that was part of the former Soviet Union. It is located on the other side of the Black Sea from Odessa. We took our mission students there for a week of cross-cultural training because they are ethnically different from Ukrainians and speak both Russian and Georgian. We stayed in a local church in the port city of Batumi. As we were returning from a nearby town, a lady named "Nino" mistook our van for public transportation and got in by mistake. She seemed nice and this looked like an opportunity to talk to her about Jesus. We didn't have an extra seat, so one of the guys sat in the floor and gave her a seat beside me. It was a 45-minute ride back to where we were going and she did not say much at first. I told her who we were and she seemed uninterested. (She did want me to know she was divorced.) We talked a little more and then students began to sing. Soon she had her phone out videoing this van load of college kids singing Christian songs. She told me about her two children and her lazy ex-husband and explained how she was searching for a better life. She knew we had something that she wanted. The minister was in the front and he turned around to talk to her and gave her his phone number and the church address. She agreed to get in touch with him later. We gave her a Bible and had prayer with her before we drove her to her apartment. Jesus offers a better life.



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