

Our January 2016 Prayer Letter

Dear Brethren,

We ended last year with evangelization during the Christmas celebration and continued it up until just a couple of days ago with the same Christmas-themed evangelization, since Ukraine celebrates Christmas on the seventh of January. We gave some gifts, sang Christmas carols, had a Christmas theatre and explained why Jesus was born. We went to children's homes and a couple of schools.

We have been praying for a while, now, about where God would have us to work in Ukraine and are still praying. We moved mid-December to the village where some saved folks had expressed interest in having me pastor. Well, I found out that some are still members of another church, so I contacted the pastor and we talked for a while about the situation. He is a Ukrainian pastor of a church which, in the states, would most likely refer to as Arminian or Free Will Baptist. Misha, the pastor, expressed desire that if we were to work there he would prefer that we go under him and that we would become members of their church and work together—mostly evangelizing in their city and in the surrounding villages. We prayed about it and didn't have peace about the issue. We had a good talk with the folks here as they "hashed it out" with one another (coming to understand the true thoughts and desires of each other). It was good for them to do that since they've obviously had some issues within themselves. They're almost all somehow related, except for a couple close to my and Joanna's age that also have two children. We have gotten to know them better as they are our neighbors. All of them are very evangelistic minded, but now that the situation has become clearer, we just don't have peace about it. The Lord would have to perform some serious changes for it to be an option in the future (I'm not counting on it, but I don't want to rule it out either). A brother in the capital of Ukraine has the ability and desire to help us get a religious visa and their church voted to give us an invitation to enter the country on that type of visa. I came to Ukraine with him the first time in 2004. Maybe God would have us to work in the capital again for a season...it has a larger population than some *countries* with nearly 4 million souls. The Lord will be our Guide.

According to Ukrainian law, we have to leave the country so that we can be able to receive the religious invitation and we have to wait three months to expire until we can start the process. We will be traveling west—probably to Moldova. It gets a little more complicated being that Moldova also has the same law (which states that U.S. citizens can be in the country for only three months without a visa and, once the three months expire, they have to leave for another three months until they can come back). Thus, we'll probably have to leave Moldova, too, for at least a few weeks before the three months' end so that after we do have the necessary documents, we can cross back into Moldova and finish the process. (It would have to be another country besides Ukraine.) I think we might be looking at about four months total (desirably less)—out of Ukraine—so we can get visas.

We are very grateful for your prayers concerning these matters. The governments of both countries are experiencing upheaval and being manipulated by the powers that be. Maybe God is directing us somewhere different or just allowing this to bring about more patience in us.

Thankfully Yours,

Rick, Joanna, Silas and Paul