



A Ministry in support of the Nikopol Church of Christ

Nikopol Evangelism
1200 E Moreland Blvd.
Waukesha, WI 53186

Our personal History in Ukraine

The anniversary of the launch of the war in Ukraine is coming up in February. Many of you have followed our ministry in Ukraine before then, but for some just joining us, I would like to familiarize you with our personal connection to Ukraine. And the events prior to the invasion.



My husband and I moved to Ukraine in 2004 to work with a fledgling congregation of three people, who had been converted through family by the Merrills, who were missionaries in Belarus. It was Stuart Merrill who invited us to come and help this small group of Christians. We moved over with our oldest and returned in 2015 with four children.

Transition

This congregation grew to about 15-20, and in 2013 we began looking for a Ukrainian preacher to replace ourselves. While we worked in Nikopol, God was preparing a young man and his wife to fill our roll. Through friends, we met Slavik Kreshnevski, who came to Christ out of drug and alcohol addiction in 2004. He attended the Ukrainian Bible Institute located in Donetsk at the time. In 2012 He married Katya, just before we contacted him.

After an interview, we began the transition with Slavik sharing the duties and beginning several ministries which quickly grew the church and youth group. Our little church was so full, we only had standing room available. We began an addition to address our need, and in 2015, we left the ministry in Slavik's hands.

Ministries

Slavik had the drug epidemic in his heart because of his own past. He had inherited a house from his grandmother 5 years earlier. He had not particularly known what to do with it since it was located in a small village 3 hours away. At that point, he realized it would be the perfect location to help others escape their own addictions. His parents, who weren't Christian at the time, were so pleased to see the place get some use, they set off to help him repair the old house and plant a garden. In the fall of 2007, he took in three alcoholic men, and stayed there for a year building the ministry and training a supervisor for the facility and returned to work in a church in Kyiv.

Several situations necessitated a move of the center. First, the success of the center grew it to about 30 men who shared a 400 square foot home. Also, in 2014, Russia invaded Eastern Ukraine, coming within an hour or two of the area before their progress was halted. Third, having the charge of a congregation made it difficult to make trips to the center, so in 2016 He sold the property and bought a property with two buildings in a village closer to Nikopol. There was now an opportunity to add a home for women dealing with drugs, alcohol, or abuse. Over the course of 15 years, they have rehabilitated more than 2,000 people through this program, many are still faithful Christians serving other Churches of Christ throughout Ukraine.



Both Katya and Slavic are devoted to the children in the neighborhood, and a thriving youth group quickly began meeting every Saturday. One of the success stories of the ministry has been their public evangelism. Setting up a table several times a week, they display free bibles and literature produced and paid for by Eastern European Missions. After chatting for a while, people are invited to come and have tea where they can ask questions and discuss various religious topics. Most religious leaders are not comfortable enough in their knowledge of scripture, and so this ministry has been very attractive. Although military aggression has made this ministry impossible.

More Changes!

One year after our departure, the church had grown to over 50 people. We had just finished a building project, and it was already time for another. Through generous donations, another building was built, housing a larger auditorium, several classrooms and a baptistry. The old auditorium was then converted to a youth hall and serves as a 'coffee club' where neighborhood residents can come and comfortably learn about Christ.



Several months into the war, Nikopol saw its first artillery strikes, and it was deemed wise to use the rehab center for a refugee center for Christians from Nikopol. As people began to respond to the gospel the church began to grow and the opportunity for a church plant in the nearby village became a possibility. Through fundraising efforts of Mark Posey, who has been connected with Ukraine for many years, enough money was raised to buy a third building in the village as people fled the country. This is currently being converted into a church building.

Current Circumstances

Nikopol sits on the north bank of the Dniepr River, with Energodar, Europe's largest nuclear power plant, opposite. Russia has taken such aggressive measures against this small community, because of the plant as well as military bases in the area. Nikopol has endured heavy shelling since July of 2022. Electricity and water are turned off at frequent intervals. Sometimes four hours a day, sometimes six. winter is a challenge for Ukraine as Russia has targeted infrastructure. Most Ukrainians think of winter as a number of days which they have to

survive. We were recently able to get them a generator with some generous donations. They have also purchased livestock and maintained a garden to can food prior to winter.



Before the war, we always joked that Nikopol is a 'big village' of 140,000 people. That number has shrunk to 50,000. Which also reflects a similar percentage of Christians who have fled. As it stands, now, there are as many or more Christians between the two locations as there had been prior to the war.

Though Slavic and his family now live in the village, He continues to travel in to Nikopol for Sunday Services where 40-50 assemble, and almost two-thirds of those are non-Christians. A group of 15-20 assembles in the village. In all, since the beginning of the war, there have been about 20 baptisms. Thirty to forty children attend the youth programs, and about 15 women attend the ladies' group, which was started in October. Currently we can support the ministry with \$1300 a month. This includes \$700 salary for Slavic's family of 4, as well as physical needs of the rehab facility, and then benevolence for those who need food. However, with

inflation, repairs on the new church building, and the growing need to provide benevolence, we would like to increase our monthly budget to \$2000. We have been sending them the larger sum because of the extra funds that we received during the first part of the year.

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. – Ac 2:46-47

Thank you for your continued prayers and support of this ministry.

The Greens

Our website www.nikopolchurch.com is currently being updated. Donations can be made by check or Paypal, found on the website.