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# UKRAINE NEWS

Newsletter № 73

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## Dear friends

Since the last newsletter a few months have gone by. We have sent several emails since then, informing about the current situation in Ukraine. Most of it you know also from the mass media. It would exceed the size of this newsletter, if I wanted to write more than a few words. Here only as much, as is of concern to us.

## Changes in Ukraine

After many months of demonstrations in Kiev and the fall of Yanukovich, the Crimean crisis followed, and now there is chaos in Eastern Ukraine. Opinions about the EU and the USA may vary, but in this case it is obvious, that the Russian side is the aggressor. Ukraine has plenty of problems, but none of them justify in the least the use of Russian tanks and the use of weapons by separatists.

We could now have an endless political discussion. However, with that we will not be able to influence what is going on. The biggest influence we have is by prayer. It is obvious, that certain groups are heavily influenced by the evil one. Sometimes it seems, that aggression and hatred are literally being fuelled.

Apart from prayer we influence by spreading the news about the peace of God's Kingdom. Every individual changed by this message also means a change in the country. Where we can, we help in practical ways, supporting people in their various life situations.

## House group ministry

Both house groups, the one at our home and the one at Volodya's apartment, take place every Saturday, resp. Sunday. It is a learning process for us. In the beginning we thought about how these groups could grow, how to organise things, who should lead, etc. Since most attendees have made negative experiences with Christian churches in their past, we soon realised, that attempts to use "classical principles" about church planting and church growth would simply not work. That was not always easy for us. We wanted to develop a vision, build something. Because of that, we at times were frustrated. During the last months God taught us, that in the great commandment he said "make disciples" and not "make churches". In another verse Jesus said to Peter: "**I** will build my church." I needed some time to swallow that. It means to let go, to understand, that I am not building my own kingdom here, but rather participate in building the Kingdom of God. I don't have to control everything. Instead I can trust, that Jesus builds His church. My job is, to invest into those people, which God brings across our path. When thinking more about this, I got a deep inner peace, even joy. There are quite a few people, which we have been allowed to accompany on their path. There are those who are forming the heart of our house group. The changes in their hearts are obvious. Then there are various

youth. The daughter of Grisha said: "I can no longer imagine, to return to the previous Christian religion. The God of love, whom we got to know through the sermon series, has totally changed me." The daughter of Ivan is now studying in Kiev. Thanks to the possibility of accessing the sermon translations online, she can keep on listening to them. Occasionally she shares about how God uses her among other students. Great stuff. Or there is Andrei, one of the music students, who now continues his studies in Poland. He also stays in touch over the internet. He too is passing on things he has learned to his fellow students. And there are people from other countries we have never even met, who regularly download the sermons. Or then we have Volodya, the guy who produces the video bible for deaf people. I am always fascinated, when I see older people who change their mind, take in new stuff and are being changed by it.

## Studio recordings and translations

The work on the video bible keeps on going on. I especially like this project. What better is there, than to give the Word of God to people? One can have differing opinions about doctrines and practical application in Christian life, but the Bible remains the Bible.

Right now there are 12 sermons in the pipeline for recording, which I have already translated into Russian. Because of that, I am now taking a break from the Russian translations. Instead, I will translate several sermons into German. There are several reasons behind this. First of all, I have been asked about this more than once. Secondly, several interesting doors have opened. One of them is a three-day seminar by Greg Boyd, held from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> of August at the theological seminary St. Chrischona in Basel, Switzerland. I am invited to assist as a translator there. Those will be three very intense days, because Greg speaks very fast and the translation will be done simultaneously. By the way, the seminar is open to non-students. I really recommend this seminar to you. (<http://tsc.chrischona.ch/weiterbildung/summer-school/greg-boyd>) Another door that opened is through several contacts to people in Switzerland and Germany. These are people interested in the German translations and also able and willing to assist as editors. The first two sermons are translated and one recording is already made. Soon more will follow, and as soon as they are ready, we will make them available on our website. Apart from the topic "Love" we will also address the topic "Suffering", or in other words the questions "Is God to blame?" At the same time, the translating and recording of sermons to German will serve as a preparation time for the live translation in August.

For all these translations we will soon have our own separate website in Russian. The programmers are busy finalising the new website. It is our desire, to see many more people get a new passion for God.

A German version will possibly follow a little bit later.

## An old oak and an orthodox priest



A little while back I got to know the orthodox priest of our area. Our neighbour had recommended him, to turn to me concern-

ing a very old oak tree. I was able to cut the hollow and rotten tree on his field. In between work, we had some interesting talks. He is not only priest, but also historian. He wanted to know my view on all kinds of issues, mainly Christian and biblical in nature.

Some time later, I got an invitation to visit him at his home. He had invited another priest for the occasion. Again, we had a very interesting talk. We touched on issues such as icons (pictures of holy people or biblical figures), miracle-performing priests, or miracles around some of their holy places or in connection with certain icons. I was able, to always direct the focus of the conversation towards the meaning and content. Instead of talking about the aspects I don't like about these things, I pointed out, that the meaning and content was the main thing. If any of these things brings the people really closer to God, then why not. But if the people start to worship the picture or the miracle, then it loses its value. Again and again the two priests agreed with me. I was able to emphasise the main thing, our relationship with God, and the fact, that He is love in His very essence. All of a sudden, one of the priests said to the other one: "When did you preach the last time about God's love? I have told you already more than once, that you should preach more about His love." I have given to both a copy of the book "God of the Possible", which we just recently published. Now I am waiting to hear their feedbacks.

## Health stuff

Last time I wrote about my herniated disk. Just two weeks ago the problem reoccurred in a very strong manner. For two days I was hardly able to move. Meanwhile I am doing much better again. Tetyana too is still struggling with health issues. At times we really long for a break from all these problems, that keep on hindering us.

## How to go on

Considering the situation in Ukraine, our health problems and the question concerning the education of our children, we are often being asked questions about our future. We ourselves are asking such questions too.

Up until now, the situation here in Rivne was in no way threatening. It cannot be excluded though, that this might change.

Clearly more questions surround our health and the education. Home schooling takes up a certain amount of time. We have accepted this, when we started. However, when the health issues become an ever increasing problem, then for both together, school and medical treatment, quite a lot of

time is needed. When do we reach the point, where we have to say "this is no longer effective"?

Home schooling is going well so far. Nevertheless the question remains, when will be the right moment for the return to Switzerland? Our kids are two years apart.

Connected with that is the question, what we should do, when returning to Switzerland, no matter, which date that will happen. We really would love to go on with the ministry in one form or another. We are thinking about the possibility, to continue with translations and certain projects (such as the video bible), even when based in Switzerland. Thanks to modern technology it would not be a problem to stay in touch with the Ukrainian editors. The challenge would be on the financial side. We would either need additional support or then I would have to find a part-time job.

One way or another I would really love to use my renewed passion for God in a full-time ministry.

I am writing this, so that you have an idea where we are at. Please pray, that we can know, what the right direction is and when it is time to make a decision.

Thank you for all your support. Without you as partners, it would not be possible to do this kind of ministry.

Many greetings from Ukraine

*Erich & Tetyana with Darja & Dan*

## Prayer requests

### Give thanks for

- the peaceful situation in our region
- all the people we have the privilege to minister to
- the constant progress with the sermon translations
- the publication of the book "God of the Possible"

### Pray for

- success with the home schooling
- the recordings of the video bible
- the two orthodox priests
- health and protection
- clarity about our future
- peace for Ukraine

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[www.salzanzeiger.ch](http://www.salzanzeiger.ch)

Video-Bible in Russian sign language:

[www.youtube.com/user/surdobiblia](http://www.youtube.com/user/surdobiblia)

Direct link to sermons in Russian language:

[www.salzanzeiger.ch/media](http://www.salzanzeiger.ch/media)