

# the Gazette

CHRISTMAS 2021



An Update from  
Roger & Diane

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# Holding Fast

A WORD FROM THE CEO



After multiple years of travel delays related to COVID-19, I recently spent two weeks with our team and congregations in Kyiv, Ukraine. It was more than good to be with everyone. My heart, mind, and soul were stirred deeply as I met face-to-face with each of them. St. Paul's Church, the Kyiv Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, our Widow's Bible Study, and the Puscha Bible Study Group were all warm and welcoming. I cannot wait to be with all of them again in the spring of 2022. Their only request was to bring my wife, Donna, with me in the spring. What a great request!

I should not be surprised at how much it moved me to be with our Ukrainian sisters and brothers. Hebrews 10:23-25 says,

**“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”**

I can give personal witness to the fact God continues to be faithful to those we serve in Ukraine. What a glorious time I had with them.

Many widows and friends have asked for an update on our founders, Roger and Diane McMurrin. In this issue, you will hear from Diane about their life in Ohio. You will also read about the retirement news of U.S. staff members Ronnie Santeusano and Deborah Berger after 16 years at Music Mission Kiev. May God bless this next season in both their lives.

I would like to share with you our two most important prayer needs. Everything



*Greg meets with KSOC conductor Vika Konchakovskaya along with four of her new conductor mentees.*

we do is getting costlier, but we know God is blessing our service with great returns in the faith and fruit of the lives we minister to daily. Another significant challenge we face is the exponential spread of the Delta variant of COVID-19 in Ukraine. We need God's protection and healing while we stir up one another to love and good works.

As we move into the seasons of Thanksgiving and Christmas, we pause to give prayerful thanks and gratitude for your support and encouragement for our work in Ukraine. Just as the passage in Hebrews stated, you encourage us with your prayers and financial support. Please consider giving during these two great seasons so we may continue making significant impacts in the lives of our Ukrainian friends who face greater challenges than we can comprehend. May God pour out blessings upon you and on the people of Ukraine as we end 2021 and look ahead to another promising new year.

Grace and Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg K".

Greg

# ROGER & DIANE

## Update from Diane McMurrin



Dear friends,

October marked twenty-nine years ago that Roger and I received a call from the Lord to leave our lives in America and move to Ukraine. He would show us day by day how to bring His Word through music and personal witness to those coming out of a Communist culture; people for whom we had prayed many years but never dreamed we would meet and love.



Our years in Ukraine were so amazing. We saw the Lord provide opportunities that were impossible without His Grace: the many concerts in those early years, the beginning of the church, the widow's ministry as we dispersed food and the Good News of the Gospel, the orphans whose lives were touched by our care, the American tours which brought us together as partners in this

mission, the gatherings in Gorenichi where we lived, the Christmas concerts in Kyrgyzstan for seven years among the Muslim people, and the concert tour to Russia and the Stans in prominent concert halls with the help of local Protestant churches.



Each year was packed with excitement.

During the final years of our ministry in Kyiv, it became clear that Roger's health and energy was fading. Roger didn't want the ministry of Music Mission Kiev to end with him. We are so grateful it continues under Ukrainian leadership, several of whom came to Christ through the Gospel message of Music Mission Kiev.

Now we have been living for three years in Lebanon, Ohio, north of Cincinnati. It is a simple but comfortable two-bedroom condo with a lovely patio in the back, which Roger fills with flowers. How he loves flowers! We also have a grand piano which I enjoy. Our local church, Lebanon Presbyterian, is only minutes away. Roger conducted a Christmas concert there in 2019, and later taught a Sunday school class on Handel's Messiah. I conducted a small children's choir in the fall of 2020.



But most of our time in Ohio is taking time to rest. At 76 and 82, we have entered a new season of life. We have lots of time to spend reading God's Word, praying, and being thankful for each day that He gives us. We also have a black-and-white Bernedoodle dog named Paul Anka.

In January, we finally sold our home in Gorenichi, Ukraine, just outside of Kyiv. We had so many wonderful times there, sharing it with musicians, widows, the church, and all our friends.

In the coming months, Roger will be teaching another Sunday school class on the book of Revelation. I will be lecturing at a local book club about my Kyiv experiences, based on my book *The Splendor of His Music*. I have spoken at two other book clubs on this topic. We miss the fellowship of the many friends across the United States that we visited as supporters of Music Mission Kiev. Such dear people! We are grateful for your continued support for this unique ministry which is dear to our heart.

All Glory to Him,  
Diane and Roger McMurrin, *Music Mission Kiev Founders*

# Celebrating 16 Years of Service

RONNIE SANTEUSANIO & DEBORAH BERGER



For 16 years, Ronnie and Deborah have been on staff at Music Mission Kiev and in September decided they were ready to enjoy retired life after many years of work.

Coming on staff in 2005, Ronnie has served in a variety of roles at MMK. Most recently, she managed the US office as Office Director as well as organized and led annual mission trips to Ukraine and coordinated the widow sponsorship program. She worked with many of you as you sponsored Ukrainian widows in our program. Ronnie enjoys spending her free time with family and friends, volunteering in her church bookstore, reading, kayaking, and playing Top Golf. This year her father passed away, and she is looking forward to the extra time she will now have to care for her family.



Deborah came on staff in 2003 and left for a short time to care for her ill father in Tennessee, returning to MMK in 2008. While on staff, she served as the Donor Relations Liaison and took great joy in connecting people with the ways their financial gifts can meet the spiritual and financial needs of so many in Ukraine. It's likely that if you've ever called our office, you've

spoken with Deborah. Deborah is also very involved with her church and loves spending time with family. She recently moved to Colorado to be closer to her son and one-year-old grandson.



While we are saddened to lose these two wonderful women, we are excited for them as they begin their retirement and prioritize time with their family. We recently celebrated Ronnie and Deborah at a lunch where we showered them with gifts, presented each of them with a commemorative plaque for their years of service, and shared a special thank you video created by the Ukraine staff. Their former boss, Randy Johnson, and his wife, Marcia, also joined us for the celebration. Please join us in honoring Ronnie and Deborah for their 16 years of service to Music Mission Kiev.



Left to Right: Greg Kannon (CEO), Marcia Johnson, Ronnie Santeusanio, Deborah Berger, Randy Johnson (former MMK U.S. Director of Operations 2007-2018), Twila Roberts (Finance Director), Bradley Nolff (Communications Specialist) 7

## Bible Lesson at Stara Basan Boarding School

FIRST TIME INSIDE THE BOARDING SCHOOL SINCE THE BEGINNING OF 2020

Oksana gave the first Bible lesson at the Stara Basan (Chernihiv region) Orphan Boarding School at the end of October. Unfortunately, the school had been forced to go on holiday until the end of the month, so there were only 20 children left in the school, six of which were new. When our group arrived, they looked at us with suspicion and seemed reluctant to attend the class. But after we introduced ourselves, they joined us and took an active part in all our activities.

In the lesson, we talked about God's promises to Abraham. We told the children that although Abraham had to wait for a long time, he continued trusting God, and God kept His promise. But it did not happen immediately and Abraham had to go through great trials.

At the end of the class, two black girls, Marilyn and Benjamina, who were listening attentively to everything we were saying, concluded that they might also have to wait for a long time, but they believed that God could bless them, too. It was very touching.



Oksana said, "I always look forward to such meetings. In fact, although there were just a few of us, the atmosphere was warm and homey."

Please pray that these children would truly entrust their lives to the Lord and follow Him like Abraham.



## Irina Participates in Children's Trauma Healing Workshop

IRINA RECEIVES CERTIFICATE FROM THE INSTITUTE FOR EMOTIONAL HEALING



A few weeks ago, Irina had the privilege to participate in a Trauma Healing Workshop for Children. She attended the seminar along with 31 other people from different parts of Ukraine. The participants had three days of intensive training and were required to pass two exams. Irina shared, "We had long late-night conversations, as we all have worked with children who have experienced trauma and have vast experience in this field." The group took every opportunity to share their experiences and talk about their work. Those participating had a great time together!

The seminar gave Irina a deeper understanding of how much our children need healing from trauma and, what's more, how desperately they need Jesus. The seminar was a gold mine of information and was relevant and well-presented.

"While working with the material, many of us being trained cried more than once, realizing we also suffered from trauma," Ira reveals. They all recognized as they bring everything to the feet of Christ, their wounds are being healed.

After learning the material, Irina took and passed the exams. She received a certificate from the Institute for Emotional Healing identifying she had completed the Healing Hearts Club course and is now qualified to train others.

We heartily congratulate Ira on becoming certified as a trauma counselor trainer. The timing is a great blessing for our mission as we minister to children in the war zone as well as those in Kyiv. Please pray for Irina and all those wounded souls we are ministering to for Jesus.

# KSOC Concert Recap

OCTOBER 11 PERFORMANCE



God truly blessed our acapella concert at the Assumption Cathedral in Lavra. About 150 people showed up to listen to the sacred songs of modern Ukrainian composers. Two of those composers, Ruben Tolmachov and Oleksandr Tarasenko, sat in the audience.

The spiritual music filled the cathedral, penetrating into the listener's hearts, moving their spirits. God's name was exalted! The audience was open and receptive, listened attentively, and even took pictures and videos on their phones. Many young people went to the top floor and listened to the music from there. They were definitely impressed.

The program was prepared and conducted by four young conductors, all of whom are KSOC members, Natalya Begma, Serhiy Zadorozhny, Katerina Tomchuk, and Nazariy Tarasenko. Kudos to them and their mentor, Vika Konchakovska.

Serhiy Basarab shared, "I could go on and on praising Vika and the KSOC, but I'd rather give the floor to one of our widows, Libov A. who attended this concert. She posted a message in the St. Paul's group on Viber." Libov posted, "The concert was a great success. It seemed as though these songs were coming from Heaven. The Psalms were recited quite soulfully. Thank you!"

Before every song, Oles Pavliutin (the actor who brought us so much joy by reading the texts of spirituals in June) read a passage from the book of Psalms. These scriptures added power to the choral presentation.

The next KSOC concert is scheduled for November 18 in the National Philharmonic Hall. The instrumentalists have been doing rehearsals in the office with Vika to save on rental expenses. Once again, we will be taking the Gospel into a government sponsored arena which is fantastic news. At this time, we are moving forward with the concert but recent COVID concerns may affect our ability to perform.

Enjoy the video highlight below, prepared by Sergey Kuchma.



## Watch Video Highlight

SCAN QR CODE WITH SMARTPHONE CAMERA  
OR GO TO [MUSICMISSIONKIEV.ORG/KSOCCONCERT](https://musicmissionkiev.org/ksocconcert)

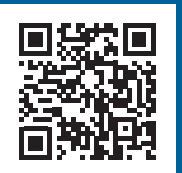
## The Portrait

MEET NAZAR KUSHNIR

*Watch our latest KSOC interview with Nazar, from our YouTube series called, "The Portrait" (Episode #7), which we post on our Ukrainian website to share our mission with others there. Nazar shares about how he was first introduced to the KSOC and the role music plays in his life.*

 Watch Video

SCAN QR CODE WITH  
SMARTPHONE CAMERA OR GO TO  
[MUSICMISSIONKIEV.ORG/NAZAR](https://musicmissionkiev.org/nazar)



# Visit in Druzhkovka

VALENTINA & ALEKSANDR P.



Whenever we speak of Donbas or Druzhkovka, we are referring to the eastern front of Ukraine where the military conflict with Russia continues and soldiers are still being killed. This area is a place where we are investing more and more of our time, talent, and treasures to assist people like Valentina and Aleksandr who are under constant threat of losing everything they have, including their life.

Irina remembers when we first met this family. Their son had died in an anti-terrorist operation. They also had lost touch with their daughter and didn't even know where she was. Aleksandr (goes by Sasha), the husband, was going blind because of diabetes.

Valia, his wife, attended the local Light of the Gospel Church and often told Sasha, her husband, about God, but he wouldn't listen. She invited Irina to their home hoping her husband would be more willing to listen to a stranger's testimony. And he did listen. At first, Irina told him about MMK and why we come to Druzhkovka. But as soon as Irina mentioned God, he got aggressively resistant. It was a long conversation, and the Holy Spirit was touching Sasha's heart. Irina then gave him a chance to repent and reconcile with God. There was a deafening silence for a couple of minutes, and then they heard, "OK, I'm ready to do it!" Sasha prayed, and they all rejoiced with him and gave thanks to our Lord!

A year passed before our return. Sasha was now completely blind. He also had gangrene on his left leg, which was very painful. Despite her own disability, Valia takes care of her husband. Sasha was happy to see us, and we had a long heart-to-heart conversation. As Irina shared this update with us, tears welled up in her eyes—tears of joy and gratitude for the privilege of serving people.

Aleksandr was a different man—no complaints, no rumblings, no anger! He shared how God helped them cope and how he and his wife read the Bible, prayed, and trusted God together.

We brought them food, and when we learned he had no glucometer because their pension was so meager they couldn't afford even the cheapest drugs, we bought it for him. Wiping away tears, they thanked God and our mission for this support!

Not long after we left, Liuba called to tell Irina that Sasha had died! Liuba and Dima (our missionaries in Donbas) were bringing them medicine, and as Valia opened the door, she shared that he had died an hour before. Dima went to report it to the police while Liuba stayed with Valia and helped wash the body. Then Dima returned, and they laid Sasha's body in a coffin. We are grateful to Dima and Liuba who have big hearts to serve people in the name of Jesus Christ.

We know Sasha is with God now, and it brings us peace of mind and great joy. Thank You, Lord, for not leaving us, sinners, and having mercy on us. 13

And the angel said to them,  
“Fear not, for behold, I bring you

*good news  
of great joy*

that will be for all the people.”

Luke 2:10

## It is only a few more weeks until Christmas,

and people all over the world will celebrate the birth of the baby Jesus. Music Mission Kiev exists to celebrate the name of Jesus in all we do and say. My hope in the days ahead is for you to experience a great sense of satisfaction and joy in your life. May you recognize the immeasurable and unending ways God loves you and how all of it can be found through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

I hope this has been an uplifting and colorful edition of our Gazette for you. Many amazing things are happening through our team in Ukraine. To love, laugh, and journey with those we serve is a privilege for our ministry teams. You can see many more stories on our website, at [musicmissionkiev.org](http://musicmissionkiev.org), or Facebook page.

During these challenging times, we are meeting the needs of many widows/pensioners, orphans, and war victims. Each of them needs our help now more than ever before! It reminds me of the quote credited to John Wesley.

“Do all the good you can, By all the means you can,  
In all the ways you can, In all the places you can,  
At all the times you can, To all the people you can,  
As long as ever you can.”

We try to do this every day of the week throughout our various programs and relationships. During this upcoming season of giving, we want to give a big “thank you” for all the ways you have helped us. Together we are sharing the love and joy of Jesus in Ukraine.

Please consider what God would have you do to touch the lives of the men, women, boys, and girls we are serving. Music Mission Kiev cannot exist without your support, so I ask you to give generously for their sake. Your support equips them to become part of the change they want to see in Ukraine.

I send my warmest greetings of Happy Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas!



Greg

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