

# the Gazette

Music Mission Kiev  
Музична місія Київ

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Music | Widows | Orphans and Children | Church | Victims of War



**Summer Camps  
Accomplish Their  
3-Fold Purpose**

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# Leading Change With Our CEO

In a movie a few years ago, there was a scene that has become known throughout our culture. The lead actor's character was given the choice of choosing a red pill or blue pill. Choosing the red pill would open his eyes to the "real world and truth." Choosing the blue pill would allow him to stay in his utopian little world.

Of course, he chooses the red pill because he wants to know the truth. He is no different from any of us in the world who long to know the truth and purpose in life to give us meaning and direction. As in the movie, the discovery of "what is truth" requires an open mind to the unknown, making new decisions, changing patterns of behavior, and working to pursue this wisdom.



The parallels to becoming a follower of Jesus Christ, coming out of darkness and self-deception, apply to all of us who choose to become disciples of Jesus. This is also part of the plan and mission of Music Mission Kiev to the people of Ukraine and beyond. The heart of our mission is for people to choose the red pill, the pill filled with the redemptive blood of Jesus, who is the Way, the



Truth, and the Life. We want to be a part of seeing lives transformed to God's glory.

In order to accomplish our mission, it means we too must adapt, explore new solutions, and work in a community of Faith, to share love and grace to everyone God allows us to connect with. As you can tell from this new expression of the Gazette, we too are looking for meaningful ways to present new forms to the

mission of sharing the good news of Jesus to and through Ukrainian musicians and ministering to the emerging Christian community in Ukraine. I hope you will be pleased with our new look.

We plan to have reoccurring sections of the Gazette filled with inspiring stories of where and how God is at work and how we are relentlessly working to join Him in His mission. This edition features articles on Roger and Diane McMurrin's past summer in Kyiv, introduction of Pastor Ruslan Marchenko, our summer youth camps, and our connection to Chernobyl. There will always be sections like my reflections, plus updates.

So, find a comfortable place to sit back and enjoy the stories and pictures as we take you on a journey of our recent adventures in Ukraine. I expect you "will see the Truth" in all God is accomplishing through our partnership together.

*(Remember, always choose the red pill.)*

**Grace and Peace,**

**Greg**



# Summer Camps Accomplish Their 3-Fold Purpose

A recent graduate of the 11th grade, he and his three foster sisters and two foster brothers were planning on going to another camp but learned the governmental vouchers were no longer available. However, the next day their foster parents received a call from social services department. They offered vouchers

to the six foster kids for Sputnik Camp. The kids were not that enthused but the parents insisted.

Nykolay shared, “My first week in the camp was terrible. In the town where I live I used to gallivant around, smoke, speak



Nykolay Kolodynskyi came to camp and worked at being the “coolest” and “most challenging” young man to attend. His hair cut super short on the sides but long and braided into dreadlocks on top. He smoked like a chimney-stack everywhere he went around camp the first few days. This is not exactly the atmosphere our camp counselors wanted to encourage.

obscenities, go to discos and date girls. And here (in the camp) there was no place for any of these things! We were given pushups for punishment when we cursed, we were not allowed to go into girls’ rooms, no discos... what was this place? One of the male counselors saw that I smoked. He went with me and waited till I finished



smoking. I felt uncomfortable, even embarrassed. That leader then made a deal with me: I could smoke on the territory of the camp if I would memorize Psalm 119 from the Bible. I agreed, "Easy!" When I saw Psalm 119, I decided that I would rather quit smoking than memorize that text. That's how I quit smoking in the camp!"

By the end of the second week, Nikolay realized he really liked everything happening in the camp. These people were different. The relationships made in camp were different. In fact, he made many new friends. He began to enjoy learning and memorizing "golden verses" from the Bible and to learn who God is.

During the third week in the camp there was a day dedicated to the Gift of Salvation. On this day, in the

evening worship time, the students were invited to come forward and pray. Nikolay knew in his heart he was ready for a new change in his life. He said, "It was the first time I prayed to God! I prayed and cried and it was cool!"

When camp ended he was not ready to go. He had new friends, new mentors, new things to learn about God and this new life he had started. One of the last things he shared at the end of camp was telling one of our counselors "when he enters college soon, he will be attending St Paul's church and reconnecting with his new friends who invested in him."

We ran two youth camps this past summer. Oksanna P. directed the camps for the orphans from Stara Basan over two two-week camps not too far outside of Kyiv. There



are no people at the Stara Basan boarding school who can lead orphans to Christ. Neither their parents nor their teachers know Jesus. It is one of our goals to lead kids to a relationship with God so they may experience His many blessings in their lives. Our Christian summer youth camps create such opportunities for them. Their theme this year was “Wellspring of Hope!”





Irina D. led a twenty-one day camp in the east near Donbass. MMK sponsored 65 youth from Toretsk, Druzhkivka and Kramatorsk, kids we have been investing in since 2015. The government sponsored another 60 youth for a total of 125 youth for 21 days. How would your camp counselors do with youth for a three week time period?

Irina and Oksanna are amazingly gifted leaders who love Jesus and emphasized the three main purposes of the camps we run:

- To teach children to love God.
- To teach them to love and respect each other.
- To ensure a proper follow-up after camp.

Nikolay is only one example of how our team accomplished these priorities with the students they ministered to during our youth camps. He learned God loved him, made wonderful new friendships, and found a church he wants to be connected to through his upcoming college years. Stories like Nikolay's show a great return upon the investment Music Mission Kiev and our partners make in reaching the next generations of the leaders of Ukraine.



## His Truth Is Marching On

by Diane McMurrin

If I have learned anything in the 25 years of serving in Ukraine, it is that God has a plan, and His plan cannot be thwarted. When He called Roger and me to go to Kyiv, I never expected that one day he would raise up a ministry, led by the Ukrainians he was bringing to us, one at a time.

We met Serhiy Basarab on our first day in Ukraine. He was smart, conscientious, and gentle. He served as Roger's translator for those first rehearsals and in the first Messiah concert, that brought even newspapers to declare in the former Soviet country - "Jesus Christ is Born Forever!" Serhiy,

after a time of working at the Norwegian Embassy, came to work full time for Music Mission Kiev. He has been a part of everything MMK has accomplished. He now serves as Vice-President of Operations in Kyiv.

Irina Loktionova was an alto in our first Messiah in 1992. She wrote us letters after we returned from that six-week adventure, and she kept Ukraine on our minds and in our hearts, until the Lord gave us his distinctive call to move there. She has served as translator for the widow Bible studies, and as Roger's and my personal translator on many occasions including the radio program we produced, and many interviews where I presented the Gospel and led people to Christ. Now she works full-time in widow's ministry and leads a



weekly prayer gathering with a faithful group of elderly people.

Vika Konchakovskaya came to the choir as a singer in 1993. Roger soon discovered that she was born to conduct, and it is her passion. She has assembled the best group of singers we have ever had, and she is relentless in her work to accomplish the highest goals in music and mission. She and Sergii Golubnichi, whom our son Matthew recruited in 1999, and who is one of the most sought-after Ukrainian conductors in the city, make a great team to lead the musical arm of the ministry.

Valentina Yenichek, a short, blond little angel of a person, came to us in 1993 as a soprano in the choir. She has a servant's heart, no matter where she is. First it was as librarian for the choir, and now it is taking care of the homebound in the widow's ministry.

Volodya Berezinets came to us as a French horn player with an intense desire to play for Roger in his orchestra. He has a fastidious mind which first managed our orchestra library. Such work requires a genius. He now manages our money as comptroller of Ukrainian funds.

All of these people have become believers through the ministry of Music Mission Kiev, and now they are working for His Kingdom as they carry the banner of His Truth to those to whom they minister. Music Mission Kiev is thriving through God's many blessings.



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Bible class and hearing the Gospel and the lessons based in Scripture has borne fruit in their lives. Kim Janzen and I were dedicated to make this happen, and now we have two excellent Ukrainian teachers in Lena Sagun and Oksana Polevichenko.

Roger and I saw this with our own eyes when we visited Kyiv this past June. We see how they have grown in their faith and how they inspire others.

My purpose in returning to Kyiv for six weeks was to teach the Bible classes and visit with the widows. The Widows Ministry of Music Mission Kiev has been a part of my life ever since it began in 1995 with 20 people. Now we are providing food and spiritual teaching to 470 elderly pensioners, 100 of whom are homebound. Many more are in Heaven.

I think the thing that impressed me the most was how the widows and pensioners are maturing in their Christian faith. Years of coming to

Lena leads the widow's ministry, and is not only a capable administrator, but also a mature Christian leader who has worked with seminaries and has been trained in Evangelism Explosion, the system of evangelism that I have used for 45 years.

With Lena, Irina, and Valentina, I personally visited with 142 widows and pensioners. 118 of them came to the MMK office for a personal interview. I always asked how they were doing, and ended with the question: "Do you know for certain that you are going to Heaven? And why?" My heart was warmed by their testimonies of faith. Irina and Lena helped me in these interviews.

I also did 24 homebound visits. Lena, Valentina and I would take a taxi from the office and go to the homes in various parts of city. I found some of the people in heart-breaking and very difficult circumstances.

One lady that I had had in my Bible studies for many years was now totally blind. She was cared for by her daughter who has Downs syndrome and is totally deaf. Since the mother cannot get out of bed to her toilet chair without help, she has a rope attached to her daughter which she can tug, should the daughter be in the second room of their two-room apartment. The mother, who is 88 years old, gave such a beautiful Christian testimony to us. The week after I left Kyiv, she died. And now she is with her Savior. We wondered who would take care of the daughter. Then another sister surfaced, one we were not aware of. We gave the food card to the deaf daughter, and now we have access to reach the new sister for Christ.

God continues to work through Music Mission Kiev. We now have a Ukrainian pastor for St. Paul's Church. His name is Ruslan Marchenko. He and his family are a tremendous asset for our continued ministry. We have prayed for this for years. God has brought all this to pass in his perfect timing.

Please continue to pray for the leadership of this mission which is so dear to our hearts. When Roger preached his last sermon at the church, it was difficult to say goodbye to this multitude of believers whom we loved. We will probably not see them again until we meet in Heaven. But "His Truth is Marching On," and a new chapter has begun. We have confidence that the best is yet to come.



# Pastor Ruslan Marchenko's Story of Salvation



In 1997, when he was 25, Ruslan experienced a turning point in his life. At Easter, he went down to the village to visit with his mom and fell seriously ill. While he was recovering, he read the New Testament for the first time. Having completed the Book of Revelation, Ruslan realized that he would not fit into the category of people who would be

with God. Ruslan says, "I had no fear. I just experienced a great clarity with regard to this particular issue."

After a while, he got back to Kyiv and met a friend who shared Jesus with him. Ruslan asked, can God change people's lives?" His friend said, "Yes", and invited Ruslan to church. Ruslan confessed his sins at this church and became a regular attender. From the outset, he began to assist with various ministries. Later, Ruslan entered a 2-year program at the International Bible Institute. He graduated from it with B. A. in Practical Theology.

Upon graduation, in 2002, he went as a missionary to Kamianets Podilsky, southwest of Kyiv. He served at a Bible School there without any compensation (except for his housing and food expenses). As Ruslan stated, "It was a difficult time, but it was quite beneficial for me."

This experience had led him to re-think a lot of issues related to his faith. Upon his return from the mission field, he left his church and joined another one. He continued to serve at his church. He was involved in various educational programs started by the International Bible Institute. These programs were aimed at deepening the spiritual life of church leaders and believers in general.

In 2005, he married Irina. She has a degree in Theology and a PhD in History. Ruslan and Irina have two sons, Elijah (8) and Samuel (4). He and Irina make quite the dynamic duo who are committed to their calling and serving our people and reaching our community.



A series of events happened at a church where Ruslan attended. A senior pastor's wife, who had cancer, passed away. After her passing, senior pastor Vadim turned the church over to his successor. Ruslan began to help the new senior pastor. A year later, in 2011 this pastor moved to Israel. He entrusted the congregation to Ruslan as his faithful helper. In a short while, he was ordained as pastor of this church (named after St. Barnabas).

In 2014, he entered the International Bible Seminary (run by Dr. Richard Watson). What really struck him there was that some fellow students (who were

old enough to be his father) served as perfect role models for him. He grew in faith and knowledge during his time at seminary.

Ruslan still serves as the lead pastor for another church. (This is reminiscent of the circuit rider preachers from America's past.) Two-point charges, pastoring 2 churches at once, is still an active model here in the US. One of his strongest passions is strengthening of families and family life. He has developed a ministry in this area and his foundation for most of his discipleship work is done in the model of small groups or life groups. Please pray for God to immensely bless Pastor Ruslan, Irina, Elijah and Samuel. They are an answer to prayer for all of us.

# Did you have the opportunity to see the recent popular TV documentary series on Chernobyl?

Did you have the opportunity to see the recent popular TV documentary series on Chernobyl?

It appears HBO had a record number of viewers according to some reports. There also were a number of rebuttals as to the accuracy of the program. However, it was fascinating to watch and I found myself wanting to get to the next segment in binge-like fashion. Wouldn't it be great to talk to someone who was actually there?

At our Music Mission Kiev office, we have several ladies who have a direct connection to this historical event in Ukraine. Irina Donchenko was a child living in the neighboring city and was part of the governmental evacuation of the residents. She has very clear memories of these events as a young girl.

Ludmila Zavalnaya worked as a nurse for a hospital that treated fire-fighters and soldiers who took part in the clean-up after the explosion in Chernobyl. She shared how the first two months were very difficult in treating people with constant blood transfusions. There was radiation emanating from heaps of dirty clothes people had to shed. The hospital had many patients with high-degree burns, but unfortunately there were far too many medical specialists who fled the hospital for fear of radiation. She stayed. She herself was exposed to radiation. As a result, she lost her hair and is now wearing a wig.

Ludmila has been teaching our Evangelism Explosion classes for many years. Even after the recent loss of both her adult sons, she has returned to teaching EE for our widows and pensioners. She is a great example of committed Ukrainian men and women we have the joy to work alongside in trying to connect people to Jesus in Ukraine. The many ways you help support MMK allow us to serve with true heroes like Ludmila and Irina. They are always looking through the eyes of Jesus to see how they can best serve others.

You may not always hear all of the stories of incredible disciples of Jesus serving with us in MMK but your continued support is

allowing us more ways to keep sharing their stories. These are real people making a real difference in the Kingdom of God.

As you are reading this article, you may have already noticed the new and exciting changes you can see in the Gazette. One of the ways we can be more efficient is to share our letters of appeal with you through the Gazette rather than send a separate letter at a later time. This saves on time, printing, and mailing costs, to maximize our stewardship in all the ways God continues to bless MMK.

One example of a way you too could help us is to sign up as a reoccurring donor on a monthly basis to help stabilize our finances. Many of our donors find this to be a more convenient way of partnering with us. Is this an option you might consider?

Like most operations, many of the initiatives being funded through our general giving include areas like:

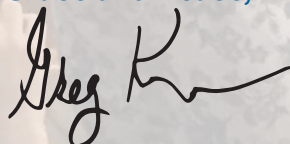
- **The Kyiv Symphony Orchestra and Chorus and the friendship evangelism concerts;**
- **The PTSD training seminars we are part of in the eastern conflict zones to train local trainers be able to help in their own area;**
- **Musicians and leaders teaching music lessons in our Children's Music Club;**

- **Our set-up/take-down helpers at St Paul's church and KSOC concerts;**
- **Visits to our young war widows at their homes during the week in order to better support them and their children;**
- **Support services provided out of our US office;**
- **Eye care and providing medical equipment and medicines to those we serve;**

and the list goes on and on. They are all possible because of your participation with us.

Our thankfulness and gratitude for your generous support through prayer and finances flow from our hearts. Not only are we grateful but we take the time to pray for you too. We are all part of reaching Ukraine and the surrounding countries for Jesus and we do this as a community connected through the good news of Jesus Christ. May God continue to pour out His blessings upon you and your loved ones. Isn't it great to know God loves you unconditionally? Please continue to help us share this good news in our mission through MMK.

*Grace and Peace,*



**Greg Kannon**  
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