

The Gazette

OF MUSIC MISSION KIEV

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

GOD'S VOICE THROUGH MUSIC

by Yuri Polakiwsky

God speaks in history. His message is one of love. It is a message of caring that illustrates His compassion for His children. Inherent within this message is the 'good news' for all that is found in the sacrifice of His Son.

It is a proclamation that His created are not forgotten. It is a word that speaks of the opportunity for the potential of peace.

To express this message, He relies on His chosen to be the voice of this message. In Ukraine, one of those voices is the Kyiv Symphony Orchestra and Chorus.

A choir is a literal blend of choral voices that when combined produce one voice. In this way, a choir is one corporate voice. And in this sense, KSOC has become a singular and unique voice in Ukraine. It is a voice of witness, of proclamation, of praise of God.



It is a voice of hope and of the potential of God's blessing in a culture that lacks a sense of purpose, feels forgotten, and is under tremendous psychological duress in a time of war.

As believers who express their faith through various confessions, the members of the choir, to a person, believe that they have been commissioned to proclaim the Father's message in the world, that is, to be a voice in "the order of society." More specifically, the choir believes and takes as its primary mission to be, to enter the culture of Ukrainian society and proclaim the "good news" of the Gospel.

In their words, shared at dinner tables, in casual conversation and on trains traveling across the country, they share what it is that inspires them to use their God-given musical gifts and talents at this traumatic time in their country's history.

"We are proclaiming God's word through song."

"When we sing, we want to convey that we care for the people. In certain places, especially those places mostly effected by the war, we want them to know that they are not forgotten."

"In the use of our voice, we are, in a way, conveying God's voice to the people, our society, and our country."

When asked to explain the mission of the choir, their response is clear, "We are here in the choir to convey a higher sense of the meaning of life. We are unified in that purpose. Everyone in the choir feels this way."

"When we sing or play, we establish an emotional bond with our audience. We can see and feel how they respond to the music. It encourages us as much as the music, encourages them."

To a person, they believe that the voice of the choir is God's voice. A voice that expresses care and concern, proclaims God's love for each life, expresses concern for those who are suffering and of the opportunity for each person to know and experience God's joy.

"For many of us, to be able to sing songs that are inspired by God's word, is an opportunity to express a voice that teaches and instructs individuals in God's way."

"We are singing God's word."

"We provide our audiences with a gift of hope."

"Our aim is to provide people with spiritual rest, a feeling of relaxation through the world of music."

"As we sing, we see their reaction, they always experience positive emotion."

When asked, what they feel when they see the effects of their ministry of song, they respond with joy and pride. "We are oftentimes overwhelmed when people respond so positively to the gift that we bring them."

"In one way, we are ambassadors of peace. We sometimes feel that we get better results than some diplomats."

What is the reaction of the people when they talk to you after one of your concerts, they are asked?

"You have given us hope," many say simply.

"You have given us wings," others say. "You inspire us."

In response to these comments, choir members say, "We know that the ministry of the choir changes people. Because of the work of the choir, many are led to God."

"The choir creates an example of good intentions. We make friends wherever we go and keep in contact with those who have heard us through social media. They always want us to come back and sing for them again."

"We know the Lord speaks through us because all of the words we sing are inspired by the Scripture. We know that the Lord "fellowships" with the audience through us and the music that we sing."

In Ukraine, the Kyiv Symphony Orchestra and Chorus is unique. There is no other choir like it. Its established reputation as the leading interpreter of sacred music in the country is unmatched.

Whether performing in leading cultural venues in the capitol of Kyiv, in various cities throughout the country, like Dnipro, in small towns directly affected by the war such as Dryhivka, to audiences made up of Ambassadors, political leaders, to the suffering and displaced, the widowed and orphaned, or to the country's protectors in the military, the KSOC unabashedly proclaims the Gospel, acting as God's voice and witness in a country that yearns for peace and hope.

Winter Camp in the Carpathian Mountains

by Oksana Polevichenko



Oksana at Winter Camp

When kids, who went to the “Fountain of Hope” summer camp learned about the plans for a winter camp, they kept asking me to send them there. I answered that I would pray for that, but I couldn’t promise anything.

For three of them, their dream came true. MMK covered expenses for vouchers and tickets, so these three children could be refreshed physically and spiritually. For 24 hours a day there was a Christian camp counselor with the kids, who became a loyal and attentive friend and mentor for them

(like a caring mother or father). In camp kids truly felt valued, they were surrounded with love and care the whole time.

For the first time, our kids tried their hand at skiing and used a ski lift for the first time. God blessed us with good weather and we all considered it a success. In addition to skiing, there were a lot of different clubs, tasks and games for kids centered around building community and relationships.

However, the main focus was how the entire camp program was built on God’s Word. Kids had theatrical sketches, Bible lessons and evening companionship on the Biblical topic every afternoon and every evening. They were immersed in God’s love for them.

The topic of this camp was “They did



Oksana and two campers

it.” On arriving at the camp, children got into the imaginary maze. Every day, on the example of characters from the Bible (Joseph, Moses, Ruth,

Esther, Nehemiah, Mary and Jesus Christ), children were learning to seek the right way in mazes of life. Jesus was the center of the maze. It is He, who helps us to find a right way in every maze of life.

Artem, Nastya and Nikita are very grateful for a wonderful time they spent in a camp. Even staff members from the boarding school told us that children were full of great memories and positive emotions by the end of winter camp. Two of our sponsored children were awarded with a special document for “good behavior” which served as a good example for other children.



Stara Basan Children Treated to a Puppet Show

by Oksana Polevichenko

On January, 27 a team led by MMK staff members brought a Christmas puppet play to Stara Basan. Children of fallen soldiers served as puppeteers. The puppet-play was called “Grandpa Nicholas Christmas.” The message of the play is that we serve Christ by doing good, taking care of the others. It also reminds us that we need to do good not just at Christmas, but every day. Our puppeteers put on a great show.

We wanted to prepare good Christmas presents for the orphans, but the combined costs of presents, transportation and food for such a large team seemed to be too high. So I began to pray that God would make this trip possible.

My prayers were heard! Just as in our Christmas show, people opened their hearts to take care of the children. A freewill offering taken at the KSOC concert helped to buy a good number of gifts. Through gifted musicians and concert organizers God inspired the audience to give generously to meet the needs of these orphans.

But what we collected at the concert was not enough to purchase Christmas gifts for all. God saw this, and He opened additional venues through MMK partners – ALFA team who provided some more gifts. Also I asked the students of the school where my children study, and their parents to pitch in. God opened their hearts and these people provided different gifts, so we could give a really good Christmas gift to every child.

God’s glory was revealed in our weakness. Some people donated their time and efforts to prepare the Christmas show. Others donated funds to the needy. They followed the pattern presented in our Christmas show and in Matthew 25:34-36.

Intense preparations and the trip itself drained our physical energy. But we have been blessed spiritually! I am so grateful to God for His blessings and His miracles. I am also thankful to all those who have supported MMK ministries and prayed for these ministries. May God bless richly each of them!



Stara Basan show

A LIGHT FOR UKRAINE'S PATH

by Serhiy Basarab

On a weekend in August of 1989 my friends took me, a young University of Notre Dame student, to Chicago. They said that as a Ukrainian I must see the Ukrainian Village. It was quite a memorable experience. We visited many interesting places, including a small bookstore. There I found a Bible in Ukrainian. It was rather expensive for a student, but I decided to purchase it anyway: at that time Ukrainian Bibles were almost impossible to come by in Soviet Ukraine.

Could I (or anyone else) foresee that in two years a Bible Society would be formed in Kyiv, and by the fall of 2018 it would print and distribute about 12 million copies of the Word of God?



MMK staff enjoy fellowship with leadership at Ukrainian Bible Society

I was meditating on these things this past Thursday, November 9, when I took a group of MMK colleagues to the central office of the Ukrainian Bible Society.

We are grateful to the UBS leadership — Dr. Grigory Komendant, Father Vasyl Lutsishin and Anatoliy Raichinets — for extending this invitation. It was a mutually beneficial dialogue. On the one hand, my colleagues Irina, Sasha and Oksana were able to gain deeper insights into multifaceted activities of the Bible Society. On the other hand, we were able to share what MMK does as a UBS partner.

Quite often our mission is associated primarily with sacred music. The KSOC concerts presenting Bible-based classics in the language of the people are well known and deeply appreciated. We were able to broaden that perspective by focussing on less familiar aspects of MMK. The UBS leaders listened with great interest to Irina Donchenko's story about her Bible lessons and counseling sessions in Donbass.

Irina told about one widow who confessed she spent all of her life investing wrongly in material things. Instead, she should have invested in THIS — and she showed to Irina a large print New Testament, a present from MMK. It was equally moving to hear Oksana Polevichenko tell a story about young military widows who are drawn to the Word of God. Three of them have joined a weekly Bible study at Central Baptist Church in Kyiv.

MMK has been a member and partner of the Ukrainian Bible Society since 2006. MMK representatives have sat on UBS board. Kyiv Symphony Chorus have sung at UBS conferences. Over this period of time, we have purchased and distributed thousands of Bibles in many regions of Ukraine, including Donbass.

But this year our collaboration has risen to a new level. 2018 was the Year of God's Word in Ukraine. To mark it in a special way and to stir the nation's interest in the Bible, the UBS launched two major projects.

In early July, the National Reading of the Bible was held in the heart of Kyiv, near St. Sophia Cathedral. For three days and nights — without a letup! — over 300 readers from all denominations (including three MMK representatives) read all the books of the Bible from a big stage installed in St. Sophia Square. After the last chapter of Revelation was read, the Kyiv Symphony Orchestra and Chorus provided a fitting conclusion to this marathon by presenting a Bible in Song program.

Likewise in July a process of hand copying Scripture started. People in every region of Ukraine have been encouraged by the UBS to participate in this project. Each person is asked to copy one verse. So far about 7,000 verses have been copied. 25,000 more verses still need to be copied.

Sasha, Irina, Oksana and I were happy to make our modest contribution to the National Hand-Written Bible. Moreover, at this UBS meeting, a preliminary agreement was reached to celebrate the Day of the Bible at St. Paul's Church in April or May 2019. One of the UBS leaders would preach at St. Paul's on that day. Several copying stations would be placed at the church. All those who wish to copy scriptures would be able to do so.

As I said in the very beginning: who could foresee that all these wonderful things would be happening in Ukraine? And to me they all began with a serendipitous discovery of the Bible in one of Chicago's bookstores. (Although I have to admit that I realized a true value of that investment years later — when I began to read at least a small portion of the Scripture daily).

Fortunately, today Ukrainians do not have to go that far to discover the Bible and its timeless truths, which are a lamp to our feet and light for our path.



Dr. Komendant, President of Ukrainian Bible Society, watches as Irina Donchenko writes scripture



Serhiy Basarab hand copies scripture



Sasha Agriyants hand copies scripture



Oksana Polevichenko hand copies scripture

Wes and Kim Janzen Retire after 12 years of Service

The story of God at work in Ukraine is an epic story. God is doing some great things in Ukraine through our MMK mission but we want to pause and celebrate our retiring missionaries Wes and Kim Janzen. They recently shared in their postings on Facebook, *“Our lives are arranged in chapters. The current chapter of our life serving in Ukraine is coming to a close. We will bring back to Canada many wonderful memories, to God be the glory, and cheer on and pray for nationals who continue to serve here. Thank you to all of you who have supported and prayed for us.”* With their retirement we celebrate all the accomplishments God has performed under their sacrificial leadership.

As the Janzens were preparing and packing to leave during January and February, MMK had multiple celebrations and good-bye gatherings to honor and celebrate all God has done through them. They passed the

torch of leadership to the hands of our capable Ukrainian leaders reporting directly to our CEO. Ukrainian nationals reaching Ukraine for Jesus is a core value for us and they have been mentored for many years for such a time as this. A new chapter in the missional legacy of MMK is underway and we will be sharing new stories with you in the days to come.

On behalf of Music Mission Kiev Board members, I want to publicly express our deep appreciation for all the sacrifices, mentoring, evangelizing, and discipling Wes and Kim have poured into the relationships and organizations in Ukraine. Our prayers for their future ministry and especially for Kim’s health are deeply sincere and filled with love. The Janzen’s contributions in service to Jesus Christ in Ukraine will produce fruit for the Kingdom for years to come.



Kim Janzen wrote and shared this letter as part of their farewell thoughts as they retired back to Canada. Her thoughts and comments were well received by many in Ukraine and abroad.

12 years ago our family arrived in Ukraine. We felt God’s call on our lives to come here and to serve. It was our joy to serve many hundreds of widows and pensioners each week, to serve children, and also musicians. Then the takeover of Crimea in 2014 happened along with the violent protests in Kyiv and many of our realities changed here in Ukraine.

We were able to serve families displaced from Crimea and the east, victims of war from the east, military widows and their children, wounded soldiers, orphans in the east, pensioners in the east. It has been such a growing and stretching experience. These years in Ukraine have been some of the most meaningful years of our lives. We came wanting to serve you by being Jesus’ hands and feet during the difficult time in 2014.

Through the over 500 widows and pensioners we have the privilege of serving each week, we have learned to love more deeply. Our children have been blessed with hundreds of grandmothers and we have been blessed with many adopted mothers and even a few fathers. You have enriched our lives and blessed us beyond what we could ever begin to express.

Through the displaced families we serve from Crimea and Donbass, we have learned by watching you. You left your homes and lives and fled to Kyiv when the war and occupation started. You didn’t know what you were coming to. You didn’t know how you would survive. But you came anyway because you knew that was best for your families. You have inspired us. You have shown us about perseverance during difficult circumstances and about being content in all things.

Through the children we serve whether they are orphans or displaced

children from the war, we have learned about laughter and having fun even if times are difficult. We have learned to look at things in life through the eyes of a child and the joy of the moment. Not looking too far into the future but enjoying the here and now.

Through the beautiful young military widows and their children that we serve, you have shown what true perseverance is. You have shown hope during the devastating times in life and that it is possible to still laugh when the world seems to be crumbling around you. You have shown that there is an inner strength that can be drawn upon. You have inspired us. We are so blessed to call you our friends.

Through the wounded military personnel we minister to, we have learned to never give up and keep fighting. You are heroes and an inspiration to us. We all have worth and a purpose for our lives as long as we are living. We will always remember just a few days ago when you embraced us when you heard of my diagnosis and we all put our hands together as one. One for all and all for one. We will keep on fighting together.

To our staff of Music Mission Kiev, Wes and I love you deeply. You are our family. Keep on loving and serving as Jesus’ hands and feet. We also want to thank the staff of Universum Clinic- Dr. Crane, Egor, the other doctors and staff and to Dr. Slobodin. Thank you for your tireless work in helping us during a very difficult year and for never giving up in finding the right diagnosis for me. You have given me life again.

To all our musicians. Wow, it has been a great ride together. Travelling the world proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus through music. It has been a delight. You will be our friends and ‘children’ forever. It has been a joy singing with you for these past 12 years. You have helped us to grow as a person and as musicians. We love you all very much.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PRAYERS AND SUPPORT!

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