

Subject: Mark and Robyn Rose Update: March-April 2006

Dearest Friends and Family:

I am writing to you from Tajikistan where I have Jeff Stamper as my companion and friend to witness to the Tajik people the Gospel of Jesus Christ. My trip began with a stop in Zhmerinko, Ukraine where Pastor Page Hardin of Ratcliff, Kentucky has helped establish a Church and Bible Institute that is training men and women of the former Soviet Union for the ministry. I need to share with you a few important prayer requests as I update you about how God is working in two very important mission fields to save souls and plant Churches.

Robyn and Valerie remained in the US as this year may be Valerie's last year of school in the states. Robyn is getting the house ready to sell as we prepare for a permanent move back to the former Soviet Union this summer.

I was troubled that three souls who converted from Islam to Christianity through our work in Tajikistan were alone and unlearned about the doctrines of the Bible. The Lord reminded me daily of their hard lives and the need to return here was like a fire burning inside. When Pastor Page offered to help with travel expenses my heart leaped with joy for both the opportunity to help with the work in Zhmerinka as well as the chance to return to Tajikistan and work with the new Christians. It is so important now to pray for Jallil, HiToy, and Tohere. Because all our letters are intercepted and all our conversations monitored here, I will not give more details of their location or identity. But please pray for these three precious souls and the 9 children impacted by their decisions over the course of three years to accept Jesus as their only Lord and Savior.

In Zhmerinko I was amazed! God has done such a great work through Brother Page's faithful service and personal sacrifice. He caught the vision of a young Russian missionary and began supporting financially and prayerfully several years ago. The new Church and Institute were planted through the prayerful vision and love of Missionary Valerie and his wife Tanya. Sergei came from Ratomka, Belarus to help myself and Professor Jerome Smith teach 11 students; a mix of Moldovans and Ukrainians. I wish I could share in this letter the strong presence of God we felt as we prayed and studied the Bible together. I saw future ministers of the Gospel being trained by Brother Valeriya Valera and Tanya who have sacrificed much for Christ's sake. The Lord formed a strong bond of fellowship between Valera, Sergei, and me thanks to Bro. Page. Some very interesting plans developed that could have only been wrought by God. We ask you to pray with us for the work in Belarus, Ukraine, and Tajikistan. If the Lord confirms these plans and answers our prayers then it will mean that the vision to plant Churches and train missionaries is about to shift into high gear.

Belarus exploded in March after a third fraudulent presidential election handed the *oligarchy* of President Alexander Lukashenko its third victory in a row.

oligarchy

ol·i·gar·chy [ól-li g rkee]

(plural **ol·i·gar·chies**)

noun

1. small governing group: a small group of people who together govern a nation or control an organization, often for their own purposes

2. entity ruled by oligarchy: a nation governed or an organization controlled by an oligarchy

3. government by small group: government or control by a small group of people

[Late 15th century. From Greek *oligarkhia*, from *oligos* “few” + *-arkhia* “-archy” (see -arch).]

-ol·i·gar·chic [òlli g rkik], *adjective*

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Belarus controls all media outlets and the true story of what happened was severely repressed. Many were killed by club wielding riot police for peacefully protesting widespread election fraud. On top of this, the election itself was illegal.

Belarus law originally stated that the Presidency shall be for 6 years and no more than two terms may be served by any one person. Lukashenko held two illegal and fraudulent referendums that changed the country's constitution and voting laws. The referendums were denounced by all nations except Russia and a couple others. The referendums passed and allow this “Hitler-Stalin” style thug to extend his original term and to run for a third term as President.

Any who speak out against the President of Belarus are silenced. Atrocities of murder, torture, and imprisonment seem to be unnoticed by America and the west. Why is this? America needs Russia in the war on terror. To champion the cause of freedom and democracy in Belarus is a risk the west is not willing to take. There are lots of public denouncements of Mr. Lukashenko, but very little concrete steps have been taken by diplomats to put solid pressure on Belarus for change. Meanwhile, our little Church in Ratomka grows by your faith and prayers. We can pray! This, after all, is the most important weapon against tyranny, fear, oppression, and the evil that lurks behind.

1. 1Th 5:25 Brethren, pray for us.

2. 2Th 1:11 ¶ Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power:

3. 2Th 3:1 ¶ Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:

Belarus, Ukraine, and Tajikistan need your prayers. This year's election saw many murdered in plain view of other protesters and Alex brought me many pictures of the demonstrations.

President Lukashenko and Priests of the Russian Orthodox Church often appear on state radio and television to denounce the West and to tell the people how America seeks to overthrow the government. They claim the west uses western missionaries as spies and agents to advance insurrection through our “false religion”. The simple Belarusian knows no different and believes the President. At the same time the absence of a free press and the proliferation of human rights violations, murder, state censorship, and oligarchy hold the people in a “prison of fear and disinformation”.

In 2004 we began praying that God would allow us to build a foster home next to the Church in Ratomka Belarus. This home will shelter orphans as part of our **Shelter the Children** ministry to fatherless and neglected children.

Pastor Sergei met me in Ukraine with copies of all documents necessary to begin construction. A year ago many were led to offer help with this project. It took a long time for Sergei to get the documents in order and we held off promoting this project until everything was ready. Plus, last year brought many trials and we were all tempted to turn back due to hardships with the Church and the mission house in Ratomka.

Now I challenge everyone to pray and tell us if you are still willing to help. Our prayer is that the Lord will burden some to come to Belarus and help with construction anytime between July 10 and August 10, 2006.

The experience in Zhmerinko, Ukraine was great! We were very fortunate to have Dr. Jerome Smith come and help teach the students. Dr. Smith did a good job of teaching Bible doctrine and had a really good time working out daily with the students. Daily worship, fellowship, sports, prayer, and evangelism really blessed me and I left very much encouraged though very sad after a tearful goodbye. I grew to love these guys and I know Professor feels the same. It was also a pleasure to work with Dr. Smith again. He was with me in Belarus teaching for a year in our missionary Bible training 2003-04.

Sergei, Valera, and I are excited about joining the **Missionary Training School in Belarus**, the **Bible Institute in Zhmerinko**, and the Church planting/ministry training we do to make **a four year Bible Training College for Pastors, teachers, and Missionaries**. We ask you to pray with us as we seek God's leading in this. The idea is a great one and puts together everything we wanted to do from the beginning. There are many Russians, Moldovans, and Ukrainians who have completed the two year Bible courses in Ukraine that want to help with the **2007 Campaign**. They are very zealous to be used by God and to plant local Baptist Churches that are autonomous and subject only to the leadership of God.

The **2007 Campaign will be in July and August of 2007**. I am praying for a team of 20 to start evangelizing in Muslim Tajikistan, continue on in Russia with Missionary Chet Furrow in Cheboksary, then on to Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania. At the heart of this will be the teaching and preaching of the Gospel among the poor and neglected in each of those countries. Pray for this campaign!

This summer there Pastor Valera and Pastor Sergei are planning a joint **Church camp in Ukraine**. Any American youth or college students that would like to come and help with this effort should contact me and let's talk about your participation in one of the most exciting Church camp events ever.

From Ukraine I traveled to Istanbul, Turkey where I met Brother Jeff Stamper joining me for the remainder of the trip to Tajikistan. Upon our arrival at the airport in Dushanbe, the Tajik border police pulled Jeff and me off to the side. We were detained for almost 3 days and kept at a military compound just off to the side of the runway. There we slept and prayed waiting for God to reveal to us what had happened and how we could gain our freedom and entry into the country. At the military compound we slept in an office and were under 24

hour guard. Our spirits remained high as we witnessed to all in the compound about the Gospel. Finally the word came down late Wednesday night that we were going to be deported back to Istanbul if we did not pay a \$1200 bribe. After praying, Jeff and I told our “handlers” or “captors” that we lived by the principles of our faith and that paying a bribe would undermine the foundation of what we believe and our purpose for being in Tajikistan. God woke me and we began to pray at 4am on Thursday. We decided that this was the “moment” to stand and refuse to bribe our way into the country. By 9AM everything changed and we were rushed to put our gear in a car with a Colonel in charge of the Border Police unit which is very powerful and submits to no authority apart from the President and General Staff. I believed the end had come. At the airport we were put in a room full of military and police. My heart began to race thinking that we may possibly be executed and deportation started looking pretty good. We were told to stand and were escorted to a small café hidden inside the terminal at the airport. Seated at the table was a well dressed civilian with an armed body guard whose neck was as wide as his shoulders. When we sat down we were welcomed warmly by the man who turned out to be the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ visa section. He kindly apologized for the internment and asked if I wanted a short term or long term (2 year visa). My mouth dropped open. He explained that their suspicions of us had been settled and they realized how much we had already done for the Tajik people through the previous 4 years of campaigns and school construction. Our hearts began to race as we slowly turned from doom to joy and elation knowing our ordeal had completely turned around. God had showed up!

It was interesting that while we were held, nobody came looking for us and offered to help us. The border guards and the Consular Chief explained that this caused them to be more suspicious at first wondering why nobody wanted to help us. We called the US Embassy and the US Consular. He never came to even see the conditions in which we lived though I called several times asking for help.

Jeff and I now know that it was only God that changed the hearts of the border police; they told us that it was only their decision-and their exclusive right to make this decision-that we were released. In other words, after watching us and talking to us for three days they decided to let us go and they took responsibility for us-an extremely rare thing to happen! God tested our faith. Paying a bribe would have been wrong. Because we made the right decision to “die to self” so that Christ could be lifted up, the Lord was blessed and His power made very real in our midst-Just like Acts 16 when the Lord opened the prison, but Paul and Silas stood fast and refused run. They chose to carry a cross and they found the joy to sing and testify. It led to the salvation of many. Pray for us as we continue this ministry in Tajikistan.

To plant the Gospel in a country takes a lot of sacrifice. We ask you to pray earnestly that we may have God’s blessings and protection. Pray that we may allow Christ to be resurrected in us and His power made real in our midst. I thank God that I have Brother Jeff with me on this journey. His “selfless” character has done much to further the Gospel witness though he cannot speak the language.

On Monday Brother Sergei and Valera arrive from the Ukraine. Together we will work along side our Tajik converts helping them with spring planting and farm work as they start the race of survival that runs from now until the harvest in the fall. Life here is harder than anything I have ever seen anywhere. The oppression is strong but the warm hearted Tajik people make the burden lighter by their kindness and hospitality. Sergei and Valera will

remain here with us until our journey is complete. Pray for the Church in Ratomka while Sergei is gone as the Belarusian men of Ratomka BBC (not the Americans) were left in charge and are running the services and doing all of the preaching. I thought it a remarkable thing that Sergei is discipling men almost twice his age.

Next year the missionary training school will be an extra blessing for Missionary Stephanie Sexton and the Whiteside as they will enter their second year in a school established to train missionaries and run by Belarusian nationals as all Americans will have moved on to other fields to plant the Gospel of Christ.

In Romans 15:19 Paul says that the Gospel was “Fully Preached” from Jerusalem to Illyricum. “Fully Preached” means the Gospel was preached, *souls were converted and baptized, and a local Church was planted*. God willing, we will do the same from the Baltic Sea to the borders of Pakistan, China, and Afghanistan.

Ro 15:19 Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

We need your prayers.

I really want to thank all of you who have been praying for Jeff and I on this trip. The fact that your prayers have delivered us has been the topic of our discussions and we want you to know how important this is.

To my family I send my regards and prayers for you. I miss you and hope all is well. I miss Valerie and I hope she remembers how much her daddy loves her. I have shown the pictures of my family and our Church in Belarus to all and they gasp with joy when they see my four grandchildren. I only wish my sons and daughters could be with me on this journey along the ancient silk trade route that Marco Polo and Alexander the Great once traveled.

In closing I want to relay the heart of a conversation I had with a very prominent Tajik scholar. He pointed out that the war on terror has brought a revival of Islam throughout the World. He said the war is quickly becoming less about politics and oil as it transitions into a Holy War between Moslems and Christians. While many would lay the blame at our nation’s President, I challenge all to remember the prophets foretold how the last days would bring the final battle of Armageddon. Today we can see how God is allowing the battle to be set in array. Do not be discouraged but remember how Great our God is to deliver when all hope is lost and after we come to the end of ourselves. The call for revival in America should be given by men who live the Gospel as much as they preach the Gospel.

May God bless you and keep you as you do the same there! This is our reasonable service today in a world that is at war and needing soldiers to be soldiers! Amen!

In His Grace

Mark Rose