

THE VISION

'SHARING CHRIST WITH THE WORLD'

Volume 99, Issue 2

July 1999

The Fields of Harvest

By Darrell T. Smith

I have attended only one other baptismal service in my life that has left such an impression on me. It was held on the banks of Black Bayou in Fairbanks, La., where I grew up. Fairbanks is a small out of the way dot on the map. It was over 50 years ago and was held by an all black congregation. I was about 10 years old at the time. I was also the only dry person left when all the shouting was over. The service, which I wish to share with you just now, was held in Izvor, Moldova in the summer of 1998. Izvor also is also a small out of the way dot on the map.



The site of the baptismal service.

Squeezed in between Romania and the Southern Ukraine, Moldova is a beautiful little country about the size of a quarter, on a very large map. Most of it is composed of small rural towns and villages with a few cities of 20 to 50,000.

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Chisinau, the capital, is a very modern city of 700,000. Shops are full and the cultural climate is European. The low rolling hills were painted a bright yellow by the giant sunflowers, cultivated there as a cash crop. There was an abundance of fruit orchards and vegetable gardens. Much of the fresh fruit and produce was being sold by roadside vendors in mini-markets ranging in size from one or two stands to crowded areas of several dozen stalls.

I was so grateful to see that they even use the Phoenician alphabet so that the signs were not as intimidating as in Ukraine.

Except for the language and a few cultural differences, and with only a little stretch of the imagination, I could have thought myself at home in Texas.

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The weather was about what you would expect from a West Texas July. It was very hot. The big difference is that none of the homes we stayed in were air-conditioned.

The people, without exception were also the kind you would expect to meet in rural West Texas, warm, friendly and very helpful.

Since this was a "get acquainted" visit, I had only planned 3 or 4 group evangelistic services.

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I am awed and humbled for the many opportunities we've had to see God at work in lives. Only eternity will record the whole account of the small ripples we have make in His great pond.

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I did however, have several opportunities to witness in homes, which were packed with friends and neighbors. In the village of Izvor alone, there were 9 professions of faith. Two in homes and 7 at the longest and most beautiful baptismal service I have ever attended.

It was the first such baptism ever conducted in this village of about 1,500 souls. At least it was the first in over 70 years. Every thing was in place after months of preparations. Then Saturday afternoon, word came to the pastor of the Baptist church that the priest at the Orthodox Church had issued orders for some of his young male members to do what ever it took to disrupt the outdoor service on Sunday morning.

Some of the Baptist deacons went to see the priest that Saturday night and told him that an American pastor would be there to preach. They asked him if he really wanted to present the impression of denying them the religious freedom their new constitution guaranteed them. He told them that if they proceeded there would be trouble from his parishioners, and that he could not stop them.

The next day, beside a small lake ringed with hills and fields of brilliant yellow sun flowers, as far as the eye can see, we met with about 300 people.

The priest was there too. He came out to see for himself if indeed there was an American pastor present.

The Church of Izvor had even brought in about 10 band members from the neighboring villages. They were not very good, but they were loud and added an air of excitement. Fanfare is the word for band in Moldavian. So when they told me that they would be there with a fanfare I was not sure what to expect.

I was there wearing my cowboy straw hat. I always take a cowboy hat as a prop. I have never failed to be recognized

as being from Texas. When I am "working the streets" it draws people like nothing else. I did not know the priest, he did not have his 'props on', and walked up and gave my testimony tract to his wife without knowing who she was.

When the pastor got my attention and told me that he was the Orthodox priest and the lady was his wife, I looked and he was reading the testimony tract thoroughly.

A few minutes later the priest spoke to the pastor and told him that there would be no interference.

I spoke first and thanked the people of other denominations, who worshiped the same Lord and Savior we did, for the demonstration of support; thanked them for the atmosphere of peace and religious freedom which I was sure the peoples of America would be glad to know exists in Moldova.

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Below the leader and the 'Fanfare', or band. Behind him are the young Orthodox men sent to disrupt the meeting.

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"Only one life, twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last"

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Baptism cont. from pg 1

Notes and Needs

Then I preached the necessity of a personal relationship with the personal Savior. The One who said, "I am The Way, The Truth and The Life, no man comes to the Father except by Me." And in that taken in the light of Christ's claim that although church affiliation was worthy and needed, that no denomination saves. Only Jesus Saves.

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Pastor Simon shares Christ in a very dynamic service.



Simon, the pastor preached some more. He was as electrifyingly and dynamic as any TV evangelistic star you have ever seen.

He had bought a beautiful new robe for the occasion. He told me before hand, that although he did not want to stain it in the muddy water, he thought he should 'look the part' for the Orthodox brothers. And He did!

(See Baptism Cont. page 4 column

And we thought our taxes were bad! For 2 years I had wanted to buy a couple of cars for use by the church and the pastors in Kerch. I owned 2, 1994 Escort station wagons which I could live without. Having paid about \$6,500 each for them, I had decided to ship them over for use there.

Thinking it best to find out about import duties and registration fees before doing it, we went to the customs office in Kerch.

After carefully explaining to the agent what we wanted to do, we sat and waited while he punched keys on his computer. He then told us with a straight face that the import duty on each car would be \$6,400. Registration would cost over \$1,500 per vehicle.

I don't know what the shipping cost would have been, but it did not take long to figure out that they did not want people shipping cars into the country. I told the agent what the cars cost me and he shrugged and said, That's our system, and there is nothing we can do. Perhaps we couldn't but God can, and HE did. More on this story later.

* * * * *

There is a great need to establish some economic enterprise(s) that will provide the financial needs of these pastors and church workers into the future.

We have made several attempts, but in the repressive, Mafia controlled society, even 'Free Enterprise' is not free. Pray for God to open economic windows that will help ensure the work goes on, even if the doors close on us.

If you have ideas concerning enterprises, which may be established on a shoestring and one that does not require excessive training, please pass them along.

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The work of God being reflected in the quite pool.

The robe was both beautiful and symbolic, and so was his message. We sang, then he baptized the 9 candidates. Then we observed The Lords Supper for the ones who had been baptized and laid hands on them and prayed.

An invitation was given and 7 people came forward. The pastor joined in and later told me that he saw several more lost people crying. He told me that they would no doubt have come forward except for fear of the Orthodox reprisals.

The service had begun at 10AM and I looked at my watch as we were leaving it was 1:45 p.m. Over 3 1/2 hours and no one left early to get in line at a restaurant.

Perhaps it was because there were no restaurants- or perhaps because they were hungry for God's Word and true worship.

Whatever it was that held their attention, I gripped me as well. That uniquely beautiful and peaceful, out of the way dot on the map will remain etched in my memory, as a reminder that God is at work in all of those remote and tiny dots on our map. It will also serve to remind me that He has called us to join Him there.

A heartfelt thanks to each of you for your support in both prayers and donations.

Galatians 6:9

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

MEET THE TEAM



Pastor Misha Kuliokov

We met Misha on our first trip to Kerch in 1991. At the time he was working as the assistant Pastor of the Baptist Church there. There was only 1 Baptist Church in that city of over 180,000 people at the time. His pay was \$3 per month. Yes \$3. As a very talented artist he had been earning a very good income with which to support his wife, Nadia, and their 3 children.

Misha had attended a bible institute in another part of Ukraine prior to their move to Kerch, and when God called him to fill the need in the church he did not hesitate.

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When I asked him how they managed on such a small salary, he said that he and Nadia were living by faith. They were expecting the God who called them to provide for them—and that he was.

We spent a lot of teaching time on the importance of establishing a Sunday School. This was a completely new concept to them. We also encouraged them to conduct home bible studies for all the new converts.

When we returned the next year we found that Misha had 11 home bible studies started. And he and Deana, Igor Verstak's (another of our young pastors in Kerch) wife had begun a type of Sunday School.

Not having literature available, Misha developed at least one lesson each week. Then he hand copied it at least 10 times for each of the study groups. That way each of the people in each of the bible study groups had a copy.

Meanwhile, Deana used carbon paper to trace coloring pictures for the Sunday School children.

Now in addition to all that, Misha preached 4 services at the Church each week. We bought them a copy machine that year!

In 1997 God opened a second Baptist Church in the Arschinsiva section of Kerch, and named Misha the pastor. The new church has about 200 members and Misha serves that church as well as continuing as the Senior Shepherd over the other young pastors we work with in that area.

Please remember to pray for this dedicated man, his wife, Nadia, and their family. Nadia was diagnosed with cancer last year and their attitude of faith in The Father has become a vibrant witness to all who come into contact with them.

We are always talking about the call of Jesus to, 'come follow me.' Misha Kuliokov is a man who has been willing to pay the price to do exactly that. He both needs and deserves our prayers and financial support.

If you have a thorny problem in your life, please allow us to join with you in seeking His answer.

WE BELIEVE THAT HE WILL SAVE ALL WHO CALL ON HIM IN FAITH.

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FUNNY BUT TRUE

Funny how a \$10.00 bill looks so big when you take it to church, but so small when you take it to the market.

* * *

Everyone has a photographic memory. But some of us just don't have film.

AND as if that was not bad enough- I just got lost in thought. . . It was unfamiliar territory.

And then there are bumper stickers--

Honk if you love peace and quiet.

Pardon my driving, I'm not drunk. . . I'm just reloading.

If you have a FUNNY BUT TRUE saying, please share it with us.

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WHAT'S HAPPENING

Will leave on July 22 with Dr. Taylor and Eva Henley for Kerch and Odessa. Plans for a month of evangelism, church organization, and leader training.

You can expect some new adventure stories of victories won. You can also expect to hear of other opportunities for you to participate in this exciting work.

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Current specific opportunities:

\$700 for the annual rent of the Church building in the Arschinsiva section of Kerch, Ukraine

\$600 for the annual rent of 2 apartments used for the starting of neighborhood Church fellowships.

\$200 a month to pay monthly the salary of a full-time pastor. We are currently supporting 7 pastors and would like to raise enough support to double our efforts.

\$125 a month to sponsor a 30-minute evangelistic radio program each week.

Please do not think that by our making these needs known, you should feel any obligation to give. This is a faith ministry, sent by God and supported by those whom God leads to do so. He is our source, others, His instruments.

YOU SHOULD KNOW:

Dr. Taylor and Eva Henley have just returned from a mission tour in Odessa, Ukraine and are scheduled to go back on July 22 for another tour in the Crimean area. Having made the trip 33 or 34 times since 1991, this couple has been responsible for hundreds of summer missionaries going into the area which, have resulted in well over 100,000 souls saved.

Pray for this couple, chosen by God to pave the way for so many to serve and so many to be saved.

FREE BOOK FOR YOU ON REQUEST
Touching the Invisible by Norman Grubb
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