

Western Ukraine/Armenia Reconnaissance Mission Report

April 28 - May 13, 2003

Overview

Western Ukraine identifies more strongly with Poland and the Polish Catholic Church is often more noticeable than Russian Orthodox. Bethesda Church in L'viv began in 1993. Bethesda has planted a church in Crimea and has another in process in the village area near L'viv. In addition, land with buildings are being purchased for a center to conduct international ministry. Although the city appears very active and growing, there remains over 40% unemployment. Armenia is a most fascinating nation. Nestled within the Ararat Mountain range and under the shadow of Mt. Ararat itself, Armenia is strategically positioned in the midst of Islamic nations. It was the first nation to declare Christianity as the official religion of the state in 301 A.D. Tradition holds that Thaddeus and Bartholomew, the apostles, first brought the gospel into the region in the 1st century. Although orthodox religion and 85% unemployment burden the region, there is evidence of a spiritual fire through churches like Burning Bush Church located in Vandazor, which is over three hours from the Armenian capital of Yerevan. This is a very free church known for the "fire" anointing.

Highlights

Bethesda Church/His Place Ministries of L'viv, Ukraine (April 29 - May 6) - The entire team stayed with Rev. Bob and Connie Poland whom God has used to establish a large home outside the city limits. The primary mission of His Place Ministries is to assist Jews, however, the Poland's emphatically insist that it is God's House and designed to minister to God's servants. Their hospitality was overwhelming to the glory of Christ. Pastor Taras Kolivoshka, Senior Pastor of Bethesda Church and his leaders were there to greet us at the airport. We were asked to preach at one of the local Pentecostal Union Churches the following night. The Pentecostal Union Churches in Ukraine remain somewhat bound by tradition and this particular church was no exception. Interestingly, it was an international gathering of sorts because a Swedish Youth Choir was also there to sing some special praise selections. There were over 150 in attendance and about 10 people came forward to receive the Holy Spirit following the message. The next day almost 30 women traveled to a retreat center in the Carpathian Mountains for a Women's Conference. Several of the women received the Holy Spirit and many were set free to openly praise the Lord with singing and dancing. At the same time, we held a Youth Conference with almost 30 in attendance. Sunday's message was entitled, "Open Your Eyes" from Mark 10 and this resulted in 5 first-time believers in Bethesda Church. This was followed by a banquet and a meeting with the church

leaders regarding the building of a "Dream Center" which has international ministry significance. The next morning we departed for Warsaw and stayed on a large farm, which is used as a conference center for as many as 200 people. We believed the Lord had led us there to show us a place for international gatherings in the future.

Burning Bush Church of Vandazor, Armenia (May 7-12) - The team arrived in Yerevan, Armenia, at 3:25 A.M. without the expected difficulties in Moscow. We traveled over three hours into the Ararat Mountain Range until we reached the city of Vandazor. There we stayed in the home of a young woman named, Veronica, who has a ministry called, "Bread of Life" to feed the hungry and widows. We could smell the bread baking on the first floor. This would be another divine appointment giving birth to an entire medical clinic for the city. Over 150 gathered for the beginning service at the Women's Conference. The message was on prayer and about 50 women pressed forward for the laying on of hands. Many of them came weeping. The next day the women were taught on being a "God-confident woman". Many danced following the message and many were greatly touched by the prophetic action of placing the robe of righteousness upon them in prayer. There was 1 salvation, 1 baptized with the Holy Spirit, and 1 with an arthritic hand healed to the glory of Christ. Pastor Vachagan took us to the base of Mt. Ararat the next day and the strategic position Armenian believers have in God's plan for the last days in accordance with Jeremiah 51:27-30 was most evident. Our hearts stirred when he shared how he had preached in Iranian villages where many received Jesus secretly. A youth conference began the next day with much worship. The Worship Leader and Team of Burning Bush Church is known for the "fire anointing." Over 70 youth were present with many crying out from their hearts, "Abba, Father" as Pastor Vachagan, Chuck, and I, prophetically embraced them in "fatherly" love and prayer. A young woman named, Tatevik, whose brother and sister had died received Jesus during this time. On Sunday morning, worship again was deep and powerful. I saw the church as a spiritual oil field. The anointing was running like oil. Then the Lord said, "Now in this final hour I am igniting my spiritual oil field, my church." Then I saw a flaming arrow like a torch coming from heaven and setting the spiritual oil field on fire. "I am sending a fresh apostolic fire upon my church that no man can extinguish or put out." The pastor and many began weeping when these words were spoken. Many came forward after the preaching. One young woman sobbed uncontrollable until healing entered her heart. Two others received the Holy Spirit. Two young men testified later they felt a burning like spiritual fire inside. An outdoor barbeque was held later and was a joyful occasion. Here two young men shared their calling to Iran including the willingness to die for the cause of Christ. A 12 month intensive training strategy for rapid deployment to the nations was birthed on the spot. It was a quiet ride in the middle of the night to the airport. As we all embraced and kissed according to the custom once more, we knew in the Spirit that this was only the beginning.

Lessons Learned

- Reconnaissance missions will result in divine appointments and fresh partnership strategies when properly conducted.
- The apostolic calling and anointing upon the church today is bringing forth much higher levels of teamwork essential to the fulfillment of the Great Commission.
- Specialized conferences for youth, women, leaders, etc. are important and should follow a

predictable developmental pattern of Acts 1:8.

- The degree of participation of youth in the life of a church is often an accurate indication of the church's life.
- The importance of linking with the key leader(s) the Holy Spirit is raising up in a region or nation cannot be overemphasized.
- Size of a network should not be used to determine its calling or impact upon a region. This is determined by the sovereign hand of God.

Conclusion

This reconnaissance operation established partnerships with several key leaders. Although these represent smaller and developing church networks, the apostolic calling and anointing is growing stronger day by day. The high percentage of young people actively involved in the leadership and overall body ministry of these churches is unmistakable evidence of the impact they will make for the glory of Christ. It was an honor and privilege to embrace these emerging networks for future partnership.