

# REPORT FROM MARIUPOL, UKRAINE

August 2006

Dear Brethren,

Greetings from a hot Mariupol. Much of Europe is enveloped in a heat wave as, I am given to understand, is much of the United States. Because we are experiencing such high temperatures, the local government decided that the inhabitants here certainly wouldn't mind having their hot water turned off for repairs (as is common in the summer for a month or so) until the middle of October! As a rule, I would not recommend bringing a new wife into a situation in which hot showers are suddenly a luxury item. However, I am proud to say that I haven't heard the first complaint out of mine. The fine woman I married is truly a helper "suitable" for me. It has certainly been easier to get back to work in a well run household than it ever was on my own (those of you who have visited may now stop laughing about my domestic engineering skills).

Upon our return, the brethren greeted us warmly and seemed eager to return to our studies. The heat, however has been a factor here too. At our first Wednesday meeting, Valentin walked in wearing an exercise shirt – if it may properly be called a shirt. It was made of a synthetic material woven in such a way as to provide the wearer with maximum relief from the heat by means of the quarter inch holes covering the garment! It was more a net than a shirt. Thus, it did very little in the way of covering his bare torso. I concluded that another lesson on modesty must surely be in order.

The following Sunday, I delivered the lesson (much like the ones I have delivered in my previous two summers here – It seems that Christians everywhere can use a reminder about clothing from time to time). They received it gladly and thanked me in their customary manner. In the following weeks, I was gratified to see the offending shirt absent from our assemblies and Bible studies. However, at our most recent Bible study, Valentin again walked in wearing his "shirt." This time, instead of showing off his bare torso, he had put on a tank top underneath! Apparently, a bit more teaching is in order. At least he's trying. A heart that remains open to change for the better will ultimately be remade in his Master's image – even if it is step by tiny step.

As many of you already know, Monsour gave us quite a scare this month. His seizures, which seem to occur in cycles of frequency and intensity, reached a peak in the past month. In addition to the physical problems they cause, after a seizure his behavior often becomes erratic. He is invariably disoriented and sometimes violent and has been a great burden on the family for some years.

Two Sundays ago, his mother Elnora, appeared a services with severe bruises on her face which Monsour had given her when she had tried to restrain him after a seizure – which indicated that his seizures had taken a turn for the worse once again. At our next meeting, the entire family was absent and the brethren informed me that he had been taken to the hospital unconscious following a seizure the previous day.

He remained in that state until the following Sunday when he awoke just long enough to fall out of the hospital bed. The doctors were not very optimistic in their prognosis causing all of us to pray the more fervently. They also made a point to remind his mother, that when he was born they had predicted he would not live past his eighteenth birthday. Thus, since he is now twenty-three, she could not reasonably expect him to live much longer. Apparently, this was their way of telling her that they need not expect them to do anything particularly helpful.

By Friday, he had come home from the hospital but was not yet well enough to go anywhere. His aunt told me that when they brought him home he insisted that he needed to go to Bible study that evening. They asked him, "you know what day it is?"

"No," he replied, "but I know I need to go to Bible class!"

Thus, they asked, well have you done your lesson?

"Oh no," he said remorsefully, "I can't go, I haven't done my lesson!"

His behavior remained erratic the following day causing his family to hide his shoes in an effort to keep him from going outside, wandering off, and possibly injuring himself. Not to be deterred, he snuck his uncle's shoes, which are two sizes too small, and went out anyway. When asked if they weren't too tight, he replied – "no, they're loose." Valentin informed me that he saw Monsour staggering around outside as if he were drunk. He wasn't drunk, but full control over his faculties simply had not yet returned.

We were, however, overjoyed to see Monsour sitting there waiting for us when we arrived at worship Sunday morning. He was fairly quiet and did not seem quite himself but as is his custom, assured me that he was doing neither well nor poorly when I asked him. Thanks to all who offered prayers on his behalf. He can certainly continue to use them, but the crisis, for now, seems to have passed.

It has taken a bit longer than expected to finalize all details regarding the newspaper I mentioned as being in development while in the states. I do, however, hope to have everything finalized within the next month. I am however, happy to report that the translation work has begun on Donnie Rader's book on Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage. Thanks to all those who have contributed to this particular undertaking. Thanks to you, we begin with a budget of \$2000 that will cover most, if not all, the expenses related to translating and printing this material. This material is particularly relevant to the work here because of the widespread belief among Eastern Europeans that if they were not married "in the church," they are free to divorce and remarry as much as they would like. There's nothing quite like truth for fighting error.

Finally, we are looking forward to the arrival next Monday of Lee and Marcie Tosti (my sister and brother in law). They have spent the previous two months working with the saints in Yaroslavl Russia and are now visiting Budapest, Hungary before spending their final two weeks abroad with us in Mariupol.

They are in the process of deciding where they will move after Marcie finishes school in December. Amanda and I could certainly use them here and are hoping to exert as much influence as possible during their visit. It has been difficult for me to generate enough interest among my American brethren for them to commit to working in this part of the world for any extended period. Thus, I am doubly excited at the prospect of working with another evangelist here who also happens to be a family member. Please pray for them as they make their decision.

Thanks again to all who helped to make my visit to the States most excellent. It is always a joy to renew old friendships and make new ones. Thanks also to the individuals and congregations who met the increased financial needs bringing Amanda here made necessary. As I have said many times, without

you this work could not take place.

In Him,

Matt Duggin