

Report for work in Mariupol, Ukraine

July 11, 2004

I hope this report finds you well physically and spiritually. It is hard to believe that it has been four weeks since our return to the United States from Mariupol, Ukraine. While we were overseas, my wife completed the process of buying our new home and we have finished moving. We are settling in nicely and I now have opportunity to share with you the details of our June trip. I want to thank you for your prayers while we were away – and thank those of you who supported this work financially. Thanks to everyone who took the time to email us while we were overseas – your kind words were a source of encouragement.

Accompanying me on this trip were Mitch Davis who preaches for the church in Fayetteville, GA and Kipp Campbell who preaches for the church in Clarksville, IN. Kipp, as you may remember, accompanied me to Ukraine last year. This was Mitch's first trip to Ukraine. It was a pleasure to get to know him and count him as a friend. We departed Indianapolis on Memorial Day and arrived safely in Kiev. After staying overnight, we boarded a plane for Mariupol and arrived on Tuesday. We were met at the airport by Matt Duggin and our translator, Vera Khorvets. Matt Duggin has just moved to Mariupol and will be working with the brethren there for the next few years.

Our task for this trip was to take up where we left off in 2003 – continue teaching the young Christians on the basics of Christianity, while taking advantage of new contacts and prospects that would come our way. We were able to meet with the brethren in Valentine & Galena's flat each evening – alternating teachers for each session. Some of the topics we touched on were authority in religion, the Christian and alcohol, forgiveness, giving, basic Bible history, the work of the church, and patience and forbearance with fellow Christians.

You might note that we focused on forgiveness and forbearance in our teaching, as this was an important topic on their minds. In the year that has transpired since our last visit, there has been an upheaval among the brethren, with a sister and her family leaving the group. The feelings of hurt run deep. Several were very emotional in how things have become between them and the sister who left. Our brethren in Mariupol will have to press through and hope for repentance on the part of those who left. We were able to meet with the sister who left, Alexandra, and get her perspective on things. She met with us for a few hours on Saturday, June 5 at our hotel restaurant. It was an opportunity for her to talk. Alexandra indicated, to us, that she wanted to work things out with her brothers and sisters. She did, however, place much of the blame on the remaining members of the congregation, but indicated she wanted to work everything out. We told her that the best way to do that was to meet with us the next day for worship services. It would be an opportunity for reconciliation. Alexandra never showed up to worship on that Sunday (or the next), and we never heard from her again. That was a disappointment to us. You may remember that Alexandra was the initial contact person in Mariupol, being baptized in 2002.

While there, we also spent time getting to know Matt Duggin. Matt is originally from Murfreesboro, TN. He has just moved to Mariupol, sight unseen. He is a courageous and zealous gospel preacher who is already forming strong bonds with the brethren in the church there. We are confident he will do a good work. Matt was a tremendous help to us in getting around Mariupol, buying food, and in Bible study. We feel like we were a source of encouragement to him and hope that we will see him again on a future trip.

We were able to spend two Sundays with the brethren (June 6 & 13). Matt, Kipp, Mitch, and I led the worship services. During one of the worship services I spoke on "Improving Relationships with Brethren" which gave some encouragement on helping the church deal with the pain it had been through in the previous year. On the Sunday before we left, June 13, I spoke on "The Fate of Those outside Christ." Both of these sermons were received well. One of the highlights of our trip took place on the Saturday before we left (June 12). Something that has always impressed us about this group is the hospitality they show. The ladies go all out on food preparation for us. We wanted to return that favor. On Saturday June 12, we invited everyone in the church to Matt Duggin's flat for an American style cookout –complete with burgers and French fries. Some of them had never had a hamburger before, or Coca-Cola. After eating together, we sang hymns for an hour. It was great. As we were concluding the song service, a young lady named Natasha approached Matt and requested to be baptized. Natasha and Lenna had been invited to our studies by Matt Duggin. Matt met Lenna in a photography shop a few weeks before we arrived. Her boyfriend spoke English, so they immediately struck up a conversation. He invited them to their studies. Lenna started coming and brought Natasha with her. We baptized Natasha in the bathtub (very cold water) that evening in Matt's flat. It was a great evening and we left rejoicing with our new sister in Christ.

Overall, this was a very encouraging trip. We departed Mariupol on Monday, June 14, with an overnight in Kiev. On Tuesday morning, June 15 we flew from Kiev back to Indianapolis arriving late in the afternoon. It was good to see our families waiting on us as we exited the airport terminal.

We want to encourage anyone who is interested to go to Mariupol to help with the work. Matt Duggin would welcome your help and encouragement. He is twenty-four years old, working alone, five thousand miles from home. You can contact him at mattmanua@mac.com.

Upon my return to Brownsburg, I presented a report of this trip to the congregation. Video copies are available. Please contact me if you would like a copy.

For His Service

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Mitch in WWII Memorial Park



Statue in Kiev



Mariupol church after worship



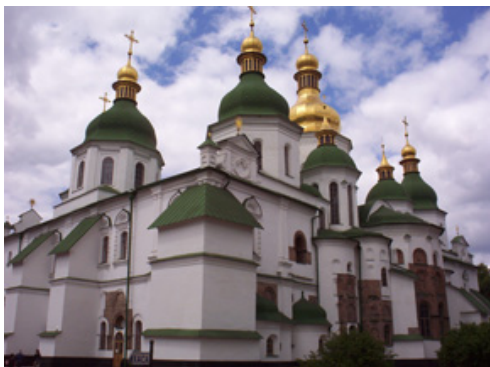
Mariupol gets UPS!



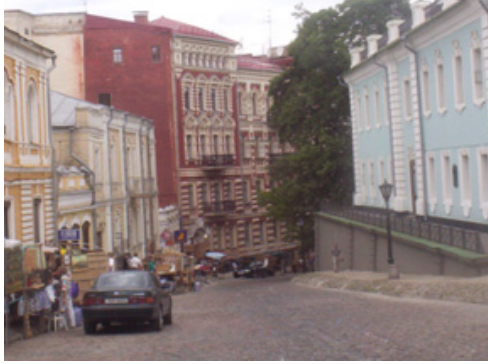
Kipp/Mitch styling Russian hat



Sea of Azov (Black Sea)



Kiev Eastern Orthodox Church



Old Kiev cobblestone strs.



Down time at Kiev hotel



Brethren intently study Bible



1930-40 elect. power trans.



After worship - Sun June 6