

Teaching Ministries International

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Simferopol
Crimea
Ukraine/Russia



"The House on the Hill"

Ministry & Outreach center

A broken year—held together by love

A broken leg

The year started with LaVerne's tibia breaking January 5. It will end with that leg still in physical therapy. LaVerne had a second break probably by the end of September which was repaired October 16. After being wheelchair bound for six weeks, she is back using the walker.

My plan for overseas ministry was broken, too, as our lives revolved around leg issues. I am thankful to Tiffany and all the volunteers that insured someone was with LaVerne 24/7 when I was away.

A broken world

There is so much instability in our geopolitical world. We are praying for America, for France, for Ukraine, for Crimea, for Russia, for ... a broken world.

Christians are a part of that broken world, sometimes contributing to its brokenness, sometimes contributing to its healing. So much is politicized that that becomes our lens through which we see and think and act. We are called to see the world as God sees the world, and to love the world as God loves the world.

Some decades ago, someone wrote a study on the sermon on the mount entitled, ***Why does Jesus make me nervous?*** There is no place in the Christian life for complacency or putting our treasures in political parties or military might or economic prosperity. Jesus claims the sole right of lordship.



BTW, a classic on the sermon on the mount that shaped my early walk with Jesus of Nazareth was Dietrich Bonhoeffer's ***The Cost of Discipleship***. Grace may be free but it is still costly.

TMI's ministry is one of the ways God is bringing some mending and healing in a broken world, one life at a time, one family at a time. Teaching others about God at work in the Old Testament, in the gospels and in history — and how he can work in their lives and ministry — has lasting results. My students in Ukraine minister to others, and I enhance that ministry with what I teach them.

Some of TMI's ministry takes place "by the way" — through encouraging, mentoring, and maintaining communication with former students and colleagues. One day recently I had 5 emails and a phone call from individuals related to our ministry in Ukraine.

Just yesterday I spoke for two hours via Skype with one of our graduates (whom I baptized into Christ). She lives in Kharkiv [Kharkov]—northwest Ukraine, not far from the Russian border. She and her husband are campus ministers with IFES. Tensions with Russia weigh on her. She worked in Crimea with IFES (and with orphans through YouthReach) until IFES decided that they should move the Crimean staff to Kharkiv when Russia took over the peninsula. BTW, there are 40 universities in that city!

In September I worked in a visit to Western Ukraine to visit with former students and colleagues. Quite a few



of them moved there after the takeover of Crimea. We remain an encouragement to each other. I am still teacher and father figure to some of them.

After a few days of comradeship and reminiscing, I returned to Kyiv [Kiev]. I preached for the Fair Haven church on either side of my teaching at the Ukrainian Evangelical Seminary. At the seminary I taught my favorite course: The Life, Teachings and Influence of Jesus of Nazareth. Twenty-six lessons in five and a half days! Plus post-class homework. I preached in chapel per usual but I also was honored to deliver the graduation sermon.

I always enjoy the hospitality and friendship of Sergei and Olga Golovin, my hosts and schedulers for my visits to Ukraine. We worked in a visit to the zoo near Kyiv; rather relaxing.

Broken lives

It was a shock. Willie and Naomi Hammons were the last from the States to visit the Center before the Russian takeover. Afterward we traveled by car in the Austrian alps and Italian dolomites. We were their guests when visiting supporters in Mountain City in late March. On October 8 Willie died in a truck/tractor accident. I returned to Mountain City to express my solidarity with the church in their time of loss of a notable elder and teacher and to be with Willie's family to share their grief.

On Labor Day, the world lost a champion of mission and missions. Larry Vierling and his wife Sandy have been our friends in mission for decades even before they served together on TMI's board. They have served on the board of other missions too. They brought us our first computers for the college in Simferopol. A rare genetic disease (the "Celtic curse") took his life.

Pause to pray for these two families, please.

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**T**he missionary heart: Cares more than some think is wise. Risks more than some think is safe. Dreams more than some think is practical. Expects more than some think is possible. - Karen Watson (missionary murdered in Iraq)

### **Broken vision?**

#### **Recasting the vision for the Center under current duress**

One of our CIU/CAC graduates married to an American and living in the US sent a large donation this month. The donation was both monetary and intangible. The intangible is the message of encouragement that reminded me of the importance of little things. She wrote:

Although the spiritual atmosphere in the House on the Hill has changed somewhat due to all reasons you have described, it is good to know the building is serving as a "safe place to stay" for those who need it and it brings a small income, at least enough to sustain itself. As I type I just had a short vision: so often online and in the past—"Before Screen Era"—we would hear and read about children growing up with certain habits and traits by simply imitating their parents in many ways subconsciously.

**So the vision is:** current residents in the House on the Hill just watching accidentally or occasionally Christian managers minding their own business, behaving in a Christian way, reading a Bible or humming a gospel tune (modern Christian song or something from a classical gospel repertoire), being very generous and humble, etc, etc - countless little, but yet important, details... and a seed of "what it is all about!" might sink in and flourish in the heart of the residents when the time and circumstances are right.

How humbling to be reminded of the importance of little things in the economy of God.

#### **Maintaining order and discipline while being invitational in the name of Jesus!**

Olya writes:

Sir, we are going to have Thanksgiving dinner in November/December. In September we had a cleaning party and a picnic. October is eventless. I guess we were busy with water problems. It's hard to do events now. ...Sometimes it is hard to



Some of our Lviv friends!





be nice to people and yet deal with them sternly at the same time. We don't see any enthusiasm [for events] from the students. The water situation did not help. I cannot imagine inviting girls to a dinner when they didn't have water for a couple of days. They were blaming us though we did what we could.

*[Nonetheless, there was a thanks-giving event! GC]*

Sir, we finally had a student event last week! 13 [out of 17] girls came. We had roasted chicken for dinner and spaghetti with tomato sauce that Nastya cooked with nonalcoholic glint wine. Girls brought salads and sweets. ... I led a brief discussion about happiness and how important it is to be grateful for happiness to occur and we discussed the emotions people have if they are not grateful such as anger, hurt and pride and selfishness. I finished with 1 Thess. 5:16-18 ... Nastya presented mugs with quotes from the Bible. 1 Cor. 13 was very popular. Everyone wanted to have a mug about love. They also were very excited to play the Secret Santa game until the coming Christmas party.

Blessings, Olya

*Please pray for the Center staff to keep their focus on Jesus in all that they do that God might use them to the extent possible under the current circumstances. Pray that the building sells soon, or that God provides a greater ministry for it.*

Please take a look at a [short video](#) of our partner ministry, the [Christian Center for Science and Apologetics](#). (<https://vimeo.com/304884832>)





Looking back...

Broken 1/5/2018



PNG



Pray for our TMI board meeting which is Tuesday the 11th Dec.



Please send donations or letters to TMI, PO Box 904, Melbourne, FL 32902  
Make checks payable to TMI.  
TMI is a non-profit 501(c)3 ministry.