

May 2017

Dear praying friends and family...

We have had some kind of eventful winter and spring in our house and ministry. If you have time, stick around and I will share many of the details...

We are on our way home for a brief furlough (including Marc and Ciera's wedding, pastoral wisdom and counsel, doctor visits, and **RRR**: (Revive, Refocus, Renew). God knows what we need, just when we need it most. We have needed to do a total restructuring (perestroika) on much of our ministry since two of our primary helpers and workers in this ministry decided to leave. This put me in a very precarious position. I could have stressed out, but God gave us **much** grace! The preacher used to always say, "A faith that can't be tested, can't be trusted." God put us to the test. When our secretary /translator for our Russian printing ministry quit **along with** our primary SS teacher and church pianist, we had to "adjust, adapt and overcome." A particular set of circumstances "came to pass" that allowed Joshua to be with us this spring semester - God at work, without a doubt. Joshua gave us a helping hand and was such a blessing at a vital time. God taught us and him much thru it all. Joshua will work this summer and save his money to return to college in the fall. God gave us a young and teachable pianist who loves Jesus! Praise His Name.

It is so hard to leave the church there and at the same time sooo joyful to be home with family and church family again - at least for a little while. We so need a break. Truly.

Our youth continue to mature in the Lord as we disciplined them through the Timothy Class. We made two teams of teen leaders for the training, and they began to teach, sing and take ministry responsibilities in our village ministry. What a great thrill to see our kids develop in the Lord. Training is not over for them, but they (under supervision of our deacon's wife) will be leading this ministry fully while I am in the States. These current teen leaders have proven themselves trustworthy, and I believe that God will continue to teach and use them. We finished part one of the Timothy Class with a Finale at the Yalta Hotel as a supreme treat and partial reward for their faithfulness during the 7+ months of the class in memorizing our Passages, doing the homework each week, and overall faithfulness to the class. (More about that in a bit...) I am so proud of our teens. Four of them rode on public transportation all the way to the airport to say goodbye to us! It is worth investing our lives in God's work/people! Well worth it!

- Three things that God has used the most during our most recent church plant - LifeWay Baptist - is: TRAINING FAITHFUL MEN CLASS.
- THE YEAR LONG SERIES WHERE WE WORKED TO APPLY 49 COMMANDS OF CHRIST IN 2016
- AND OUR INTENSE WORK WITH THE TEENS FOR THE LAST TWO YEARS. THE TESTIMONIES AFTER WE FINISHED COURSE 1 OF TIMOTHY CLASS WERE JUST THRILLING. GOD TRULY WORKED AMONG US AND USED THE CLASS IN A GREAT WAY FOR SEVERAL OF THEM.

Okay, here are the details and prayer needs regarding this spring. In **February**, we had an ALL LEADERS'S SUMMIT, which the Lord blessed and I am trusting that we will see fruit from our 7 hours of instruction to our men. This was a joint effort of our church and our mother church - Simferopol Baptist. Pray for our men who have a golden opportunity right now to put into practice the many leadership principles shared during those days.

In **March**, we finished up stage 3 of our teacher training course that we attended here in Crimea from CEF. We are soooo grateful that God has raised up that ministry here in Crimea and it is still functioning in our "new country" and flourishing by God's grace! That team of God's servants was a tremendous help to us. March 24 and 25 was quite unforgettable days for our youth as we hosted the Timothy Class Finale 2017 at the Yalta Hotel in Yalta of course. This hotel has over 1000 rooms and is like a little city there on the Black Sea coast. Dawn and I enjoy a night there for our anniversary from time to time, but for some of our teens - it was a once in a lifetime experience. I wanted to give our kids just a "tiny" (compared to Heaven) example of the fact that IT PAYS TO SERVE GOD! So, we rewarded the most faithful in the class. Yes, it cost us pretty good- but it was an INVESTMENT in our youth, in God's work, and for eternity! Please pick a teen listed below and give yourself to prayer for them this next 30 days, will you?...**Pasha Mirovidov**, **Luba** (literally "Love")



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Mirovidova, Caleb or Anna Hess, Alina and Kamila Kanoatova, David, Sofia and Elijah Beelin, Nastya Kazlova, Daniel or Pasha (Russian for Paul) Vinokorov, or Luba Bandarenka. — please pick at least one or two and make them your “prayer project” for this month. I will let them know you all are praying for them. It happened several times this spring that 50% of our Tuesday night Bible study were teens. Pastor, imagine that in your church. God is at work in their lives and they are often the most teachable folks in our churches! Although growth for our church is slow, I am grateful for progress despite what I was tempted to call “setbacks.” God gave us tests and He is changing us thru them.

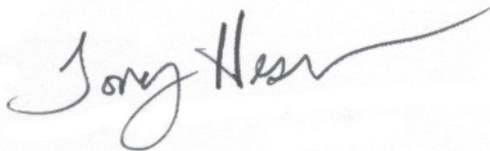
Dear praying friends— THE HESS FAMILY IS FACING INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP ISSUES LIKE NEVER BEFORE. The enemy is fighting us like – overtime!! I beg your prayer support for our family – for humility (the key to grace), patience, forgiveness and repentance for each of us in my family. THIS IS **VITALLY IMPORTANT** – PLEASE.

In closing, let me mention two brief stories to help you “get a feel” for life in Russia as a missionary: I was in the store the other day and I ran into a “scoffer.” After several questions and accusing me to be a spy to which he never even gave me a fair chance to explain, he asked if I was indeed a Christian, “Where is your cross?” They are convinced that to “take up your cross daily” means you must be wearing it around your neck. He ridiculed and scoffed until with a broken heart I left the store ever so burdened for his soul and millions more like him who know just enough Bible to condemn others, but not enough to “save themselves” – that is, to be led to the knowledge of sin and the Savior. Dead religion abounds!

In recent weeks, we had a young lady come to the church as the result of being repeatedly invited by two of our teen girls. Her name is Bogdana (literally “God given”). She has lived up to her name in my book. Upon coming to church one Sunday (very leery about this strange place and strange people), she soon seemed to feel much more at home and see that this “House of Prayer” was also a HOUSE OF LOVE. She came back to every service that week, including our village ministry where we drive one hour to get there. It went thru my mind that the parents are either out of touch, negligent or altogether okay with her spending all of her free time at the church all-of-a-sudden. She had many questions and we have been answering and pointing her to Christ and the Bible. Her primary request by the end of the first week was a Bible. I wanted to get her one that was special and seemed to have a youthful cover, yet quality to last her for many years! The following Sunday our service started at 10:00 as always, but Bogdana was nowhere to be found. It passed thru my mind that parents or something else hindered her and perhaps we would not see this girl again... 10 minutes later, she comes in the door- tears streaming down her cheeks. During the “hand-shaking time” of the service I hurried back to see her to find out why she was crying. The answer came that she was actually coming from a home where Daddy is “Muslim” of sorts and Momma is Russian Orthodox (of sorts) – neither serious about their “faith,” but Daddy didn’t like Bogdana going to this “LifeWay Baptist Church” and he offered her a new bicycle if she would stay away from our church and stop reading that Bible we gave her. It was the kind of test that few 9-year-olds would pass and sooo painful. But pass the test she did and OUR CHURCH FAMILY REJOICED WITH HER. These and others are some of the precious ones we have the privilege to work with on the mission field. Challenging?... yes. Worth it?... ABSOLUTELY!!!

With sincere request for your fervent and faithful prayers, WE REMAIN...

YOURS FOR THE HARVEST,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tony Hess". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name of the sender.

BRO. TONY, DAWN and the HESS KIDS....