

Chosen People Ministry Update on the Ukrainian Situation

<http://www.chosenpeople.com/main/index.php/special-report-from-kiev>

May 7, 2014

Shalom dear friend in the Messiah,

I recently returned from a trip to Kiev, where I participated in the European section meeting of the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism. This group has existed for thirty years, and was initiated by Jewish mission leaders involved with the Lausanne Consultation on World Evangelism. The meetings for the European group were held in Kiev April, 28 - May 2, 2014.

There were many reasons for the event to be held in Kiev, not the least of which is because there has been a growing, authentic and indigenous Messianic Jewish movement in Ukraine - centered in Kiev - which began in 1989 at the beginning of Perestroika. The [conference statement](#) is well worth reading, and reflects the sentiments of the attendees.

The history of the Jewish people of Ukraine is significant. Ukraine was part of the Pale of Settlement, where Jews were allowed to live, and included land that is now part of Russia, Poland, Romania, Belarus as well as today's Ukraine. The borders were quite fluid for many years, and so many Jewish people's "country of origin" frequently changed. However, the borders stabilized after 1945 and the formation of the Soviet Union. The area has always been important to Jewish evangelism, as more than ten million Jewish people lived in the region before World War II.

Fifty-plus years later, the Soviet Union would become the Former Soviet Union and countries that were once part of it would again assert their independence and individuality. This is most assuredly what is taking place now as the Ukrainians, especially in the Western and more European part of Ukraine, seek continued independence from Russia. The conflict between various parts of Ukraine and Russia is at the heart of current conflict. Although the conflict appears to be purely political and nationalistic, there is a spiritual aspect to the situation as well.

The Ukrainian Christians - Baptists, Pentecostals and those who identify with the mainline churches - have been deeply involved in the political struggle, hoping as well that an independent Ukraine would be best for the spiritual atmosphere of the country's people. This is understandable, as the Russian Orthodox Church has been a very controlling presence in Russia and throughout the Former Soviet Union for many years.

The Christians in the Ukraine believe they now have greater freedoms than others in the Former Soviet Union, and part of their political struggle stems from a desire to maintain this freedom of religion. The fierce and early fighting took place in what is known as Madan Square, the very heart both symbolically and physically of Kiev, the capital of Ukraine. Many born-again believers have found extraordinary opportunities to minister in the midst of the conflict, and as a result of the fighting many Ukrainians have come to the Lord.

Many Jewish people believe that Ukraine is an anti-Semitic country. Certainly this is true historically; however, after meeting some of the believers in Kiev, I can honestly say that these believers have renounced this history of anti-Semitism and assured me that they love the Jewish people, affirm the state of Israel and work hard to make the Gospel known among their Jewish friends and loved ones. This was deeply encouraging to me.

Our Israel Director, Michael Zinn, who grew up in the Western Ukrainian city of Lvov gives us an overview of the events and interviews Yuri, one of the key leaders of the prayer tent movement in Madan:

[Too view the the following videos, go to: <http://www.chosenpeople.com/main/index.php/special-report-from-kiev>]

Michael Zinn: An Overview of Recent Events in the Ukraine

Michael and Yuri: God's Work Through the Prayer Tent Ministries

It was eye-opening to visit Madan Square last week and see for myself some of what transpired. I know a picture is worth at least a thousand words and so you can see for yourself the pictures of the barricades, tents, tires, para-military groups, nationalist allies and more!

My hope is that you will pray for Ukraine and especially for our brothers and sisters who have been so involved in helping, praying, serving food and leading many to Jesus in the midst of the conflict. Messianic Jews from Ukraine were in the trenches as well, sharing the love of Jesus with their fellow Ukrainian citizens.

Chosen People Ministries has had a ministry in the Ukraine for many years. It started in the midst of what I call the "Russian Jewish Jesus Movement," which I date from the fall of the Soviet Union until today. Tens of thousands of Russian, Ukrainians and other Jews living in the Former Soviet Union have come to faith in the Messiah Jesus. In fact, at our LCJE European gathering, about a third of the participants or more spoke Russian or Ukrainian as their first languages. This is miraculous when you consider that the citizens of the Former Soviet Union were once forced to renounce all religious faith, and Jews especially were not allowed to worship in communities.

It is incredible to see what God has done. In fact, twenty-five years ago, Chosen People Ministries may have had a missionary or two that spoke Russian... but today we have 25-30 Russian speakers on our staff, serving around the globe from Russia and Ukraine to Israel, Australia, the United States and Germany!

Vladimir Pikman, who became a believer through our early ministries among the Jewish people in Kiev, tells the story of the founding of our work in front of the building in Madan where our ministries began (now damaged by fire):

Vladimir Pikman: My Testimony and the Birth of Chosen People Ministries in Kiev

Video at: <http://www.chosenpeople.com/main/index.php/special-report-from-kiev>

I was also able to speak briefly about the work of those dedicated disciples who are the fruit of God's work through Chosen People Ministries in Kiev. There are a number of fine Messianic Jewish congregations in Kiev and Ukraine and quite a few mission agencies that are laboring in various cities throughout Ukraine, bringing the Good News of Messiah Jesus to Jewish Ukrainians and to Gentiles as well.

Mitch Glaser: Appeal for Prayer for Ukrainian Jewish Evangelism

Video at: <http://www.chosenpeople.com/main/index.php/special-report-from-kiev>

Remember to pray for Ukraine, as we all have many brothers and sisters there who are enduring hardship and trying to bring the Gospel to their people in trying times. There are still hundreds of thousands of Jewish people in Ukraine, and we are asking God to help us increase our ministry to win our kinsmen to the Savior.

We do have one Messianic congregation in Harkov, led by Sasha Sareda, a Ukrainian Baptist pastor called to serve among the Jewish people. We support Sasha and would appreciate your prayers.

As time goes by it becomes clearer and clearer that we will need to expand ...

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