

Report on Moldova work 2013

Intro: Once again, I want to thank all of you for your support in making another trip to help in the Lord's work in Moldova. You always do a great job in providing not the support needed for such a trip, but also an abundance to share with these needy Christians there. I appreciate you taking the time to read my daily journal which chronicles the efforts while I'm there.

Tonight I wanted to give a brief report on the work just as we see evangelists in the Bible doing:

And when they had arrived and gathered the church together, they began to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. (Acts 14:27)

The NT teaches the importance of follow-up in foreign evangelism. In a way the apostles were "foreign evangelists," i.e. they took the gospel to new places. But they also revisited those churches to strengthen them:

And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are." (Acts 15:36)

And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches. (Acts 15:41)

In a short-term trip of this nature, it is important to have some specifically defined goals.

Since we have supported Serghei Corcimaru for several years, it is important to visit and see how he and the congregations are doing. Each trip affords the opportunity to preach the gospel to new people and to edify the saints.

It also affords the opportunity to help the local evangelists with questions and problems.

I have a standing invitation to come to Moldova anytime I can; but in this case I went to participate in the annual lectureship. (More later)

Report on Family Series

John and Stacy Gentry have moved to Moldova to work with the preachers and congregations there for at least a year to eighteen months. Last year they were forced to return home because they could not get a resident visa to live there. After a few months in the States, they returned last fall to live there.

In order to live there, the government requires that any foreign family have a reason to stay longer than thirty days. After trying several angles last year, some Moldovan lawyers suggested that John and Stacy start a foundation to help needy children. This provides them a government-sanction reason to live there, since they are officers of the foundation. In addition, it is a worthy work to help the needy children in Moldova.

There are numerous orphans and abandoned children there. They have named the foundation Compassionate Christians for Children in Moldova. Not only does the foundation provide financial help to needy children, but also can provide spiritual guidance for families.

With that in mind, John invited me to present a series of five lectures on family life called "The Basics of Well-being in Marriage and Family."

These lessons would provide information to any families from the local area who might come and also serve to teach the Christian families who are there as well.

Ideally, it would provide a point of contact also between the Lord's church and those who might attend the lectures.

The attendance was good and several families came to each lecture and listened with interest. In addition, these lectures were recorded for future use and also broadcast on the internet to a number of people who study through Skype.

Overall, the effort was successful. I was especially impressed with the interest of young unmarried people who wanted to know how to choose a mate wisely.

Report on the Conference

Many of the countries in Europe have been having some kind of national gathering once a year. Some of the Moldovan Christians first attended such a gathering in Romania almost a decade ago. Since that time there has been an annual study at the Institutul Munchi. Originally, because of the inability of the people to pay for such an effort, brethren from the States organized and financed the conference from donations by individuals to make it possible.

Since most of the congregations are relatively small, it is a great boost to the Christians to meet with each other, become familiar with the people of other congregations, and just know that they are not alone in their attempts to serve God. For example, there is one lady, Eva and her daughter, Emmanuella who live near the northern border of Moldova in a village. The only churches there are Eastern Orthodox. The lectures provide them their only opportunity to worship with other Christians. This year's conference was the 8th and was on the Minor Prophets.

John had asked me to organize the topics and suggest any additional speakers that might participate on relatively short notice.

I knew that my good friend Bill Bynum would already be working in Eastern Europe this spring, so I suggested that he be invited. Bill has lived several years in the past couple of decades in Eastern Europe and continues to make regular visits twice each year to the churches he has worked with in Prague, Brno, Bratislava, and Sophia. Consequently he is very skilled in speaking through translation and is a very good Bible student.

Also I suggested another friend of mine, Leon Mauldin to go. He too has experience in foreign work and travel; and is a scholar on the OT. After agreeing to come, Leon had to cancel due to a blood clot in his arm. He could not travel until this was remedied. So this left Bill and me to do the lectures.

Before the lectures I prepared thirteen written outlines to translate into Russian so that the group would have a resource to use during the lectures as well as in the future.

The lectures have a very full schedule: Thursday afternoon until bedtime; Friday all day. Saturday morning to lunch. Singing for one hour each evening. Three Q & A sessions. After presenting an introductory historical overview we spent one lesson on each book (50 minutes) showing its main message and its application to us today.

Responses

The group responded well to the lessons. Many of them had never studied this part of the Bible and appreciated the opportunity to learn more about these books.

I mentioned in my journal that a small group of men from Bendery were so excited that after listening to the lectures all day, they stayed up to 4:00 a.m. in their rooms continuing to discuss the Scriptures.

Some of you will remember an already existing independent congregation of people who met in a theater many years ago and with whom several of us American preachers had discussions with the result that over a hundred of them were baptized many years ago. Afterward they continued to meet independently; but were not always faithful in following the Scriptures due to the influence of their leaders. Some of the folks from this group attended the lectures and in response to the lessons asked if they could join the online classes being taught each week. This will afford us more opportunities to teach them.

So in the two weeks I was there I prepared for translation and presented five lessons on the family, nine lessons on the minor prophets, one Saturday class at Bendery, one Sunday morning sermon at Balti, two sermons and classes at Chisinau.

The congregations and life in Moldova

The Christians in Moldova continue to struggle against the challenge of an economy that has been ruined by self-serving politicians (mostly communists who simply change parties to get re-elected, but govern for their own self-interest)

Average Moldovan salary (\$240/month)

Gas \$5.25/gal. Could you afford a car?

A meal at a restaurant can be close to \$20 (Would you spend 10% of your monthly income on one meal?)

Generally the congregations are doing pretty well

They continue to remain committed to the truth

All of them are growing slowly (converts in this part of the world are made with patient instruction and not usually through quick emotional response)

Brethren there sometimes like here have quarrels or suspicions that can lead to the need for encouragement to get along better

The preachers are growing

Serghei especially continues to master one topic after another with sophistication of a man of his learning (PhD in microbiology)

The other preachers are learning and are competent to teach (Serghei, Andrei, two Vascilli's)

The Gentry's presence adds some mature guidance based on their experience in long-established American churches. It provides relief to Serghei and opens up new doors to teach.

Future prospects for the work continue to look good. In many cases, churches that were started quickly in Eastern Europe have imploded over time. Sometimes it has been the result of a misbehaving American preacher and sometimes through neglect to properly follow-up and encourage. I hope that Moldova will be an exception to that and that there will be faithful churches for many generations to come.

Conclusion: As always, I will be happy to answer questions. Some followup suggestions:

I hope that you will continue to read the reports that come from Serghei. They are very encouraging.

I understand that Serghei has been invited to the States to preach this summer in Alabama. If you interested it might be possible to invite him to visit and speak to us as well during that time.

I would encourage you to help the needy children in Moldova. It is possible to make contributions to the foundation which will be used for that purpose.

I hope that you will continue to pray for the Christians there. Some of them have very difficult lives based on the lack of recovery from the communist years and poor prospects for the future economically.