

# MINISTRY

GREAT COMMISSION MEDIA MINISTRIES

October/November 2021



Russia: Churches Receive 250,000 New Testaments  
Ukraine: Christmas For Millions In The War Zone  
Afghanistan: The Church is Left Behind



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# The God Of Our Valleys...



Some time ago, I came across a message by Pastor Rick Warren, which inspired me to write this editorial.

Valleys in life are inevitable. We go through negative experiences not because we are bad, but because we are human.

We live in a broken world where bad things happen to good people too.

We call them unwelcome disruptions, out-of-control situations, losses, or collisions. They may be relational, financial, or health related.

There is never a convenient time to have a problem. A problem can be just one phone call, meeting, or accident away.

A problem-free life is an illusion. Problems plunge us into dark valleys. No one is exempt.

### Valley Experiences

In Psalm 23 the psalmist David wrote: "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you (the Shepherd of my life) are with me."

David knew that his God was not only the God of the mountain but also the God of the valley.

David knew that in the valley there was potential for things to go really wrong, to drain life's energies, destroying life itself. So, David recognized he needed protection and guidance by the Shepherd of his life.

### The God of the Valley

In 1 Kings 28:20, the Syrian General Ben-Hadad, addressed an Israel who were paralyzed with fear. The General scoffed at Israel's God saying: "Israel, your God is God of the mountain, but he is

not God of the valley, so you Israel will be defeated in the valley."

The General was dreadfully wrong. His discovery was fatal. God was in the valley and the God of Israel fought for his people in the valley. Ben-Hadad was defeated big time, in the valley!

### Elah, The Valley of Conflict

Remember David and Goliath? David meets Goliath in the valley of Elah. The Valley is symbolic of conflict. This is a valley where we face life's colossal challenges, giants that intimidate, scare and pacify us.

These giants do not come at us with sword or spear. They swing the blade of unemployment, debt, disaster, disease, abandonment, or addictions. They threaten you with a past you cannot shake and a future you cannot face. The list is long.

### Giants are Bad News

David could hear Goliath 'fog-horning' challenges at sunrise and sunset, every day. Our giants do the same. They give us no peace.

King Saul's army was pacified and petrified with fear.

Not so David.

Why? Because David knew how to deal with giants.

And since we know what David knew, we can do what David did.

We should never attempt to face a giant unless we have first met with God.

David's meeting with Goliath was a "deja vu" experience for him, but Saul's army trembled with fear.

David remembered how God

had given him strength to single-handedly kill a bear and a lion.

One may ask what the difference is between a bear, a lion and a giant by the name of Goliath.

From David's perspective - there was no difference. He remembered his past.

A good memory of past victories makes men and women of today winners, and we lose if we don't!

In Psalm 103 David writes "Let all that I am praise the Lord; may I never forget the good things he does for me (NLT)." In other words, remember!

### Journaling God's works

Journal the works of God in your life. Has God not walked us through high waters? Has He not proven to be faithful? Have we not known His provision?

We do this best when we spend time in prayer. When we go to war against life's giants' prayer is a must.

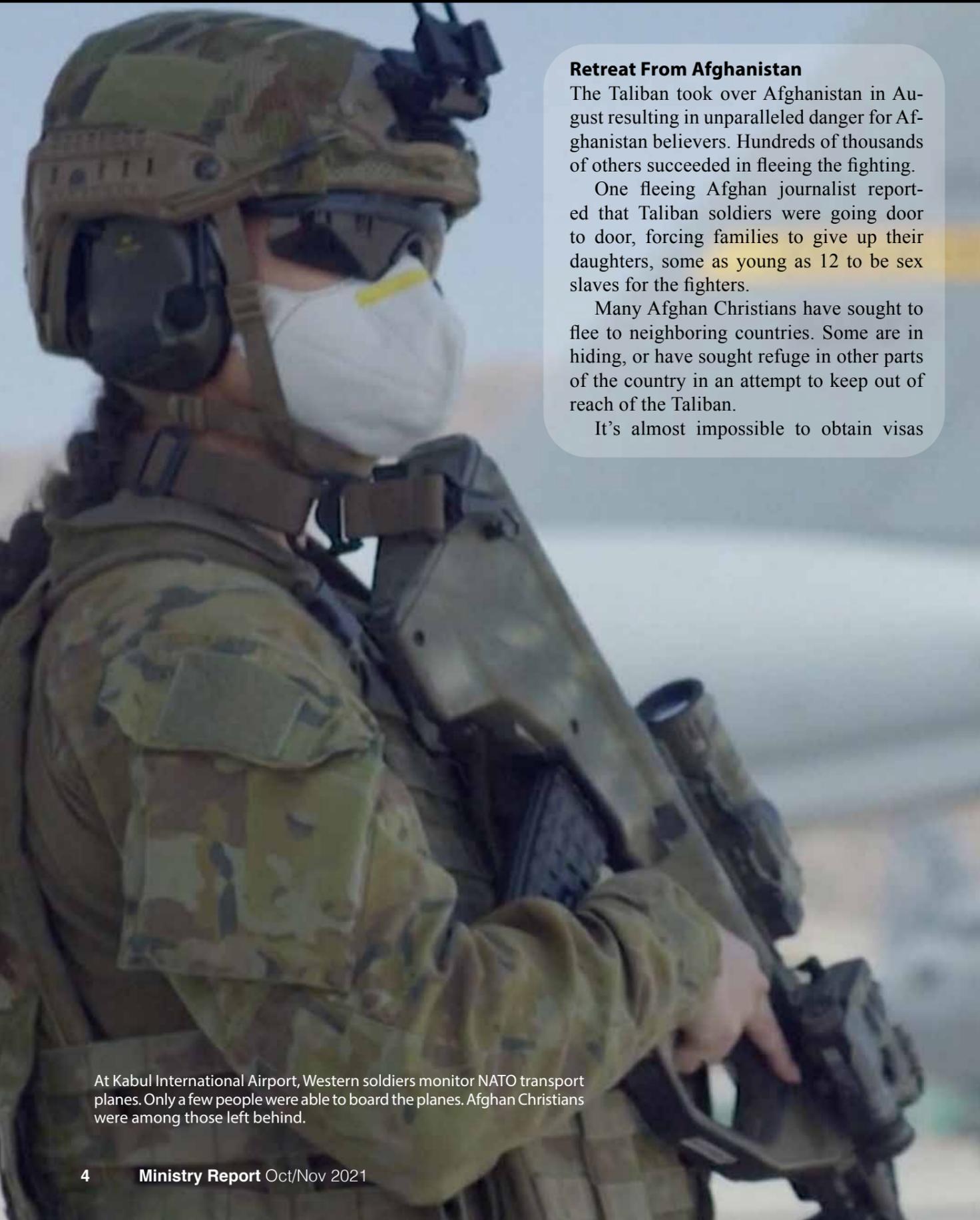
On the battlefield, the soldiers were focused on Goliath, as they were discussing the odds. Their eyes were fixed on Goliath.

David appears on the battlefield with his eyes fixed on God. David sees what others do not see. He refuses to see what others do.

David's heart, mind and soul were saturated with faith in what God could do. So, he runs toward Goliath. In stark contrast, to the soldiers who had fled every day from the roaring Goliath. David was willing to give his life for the reputation of his God, regardless of the outcome.

*continued on back cover*

# Retreat From Afghanistan: The Church Is Left Behind



## Retreat From Afghanistan

The Taliban took over Afghanistan in August resulting in unparalleled danger for Afghanistan believers. Hundreds of thousands of others succeeded in fleeing the fighting.

One fleeing Afghan journalist reported that Taliban soldiers were going door to door, forcing families to give up their daughters, some as young as 12 to be sex slaves for the fighters.

Many Afghan Christians have sought to flee to neighboring countries. Some are in hiding, or have sought refuge in other parts of the country in an attempt to keep out of reach of the Taliban.

It's almost impossible to obtain visas

At Kabul International Airport, Western soldiers monitor NATO transport planes. Only a few people were able to board the planes. Afghan Christians were among those left behind.

from neighboring countries. For many weeks the only way out of the country was by air and flights were full.

We have been hearing different stories from areas currently controlled by the Taliban.

A few days ago, GCMM received a tragic message from an underground group in Kabul.

We were in touch with one of our sisters of faith yesterday evening by phone. They were in Kabul, gathered together for a prayer meeting at home. Her last words were: "We feel the power of your intercessory prayers. We are experiencing how a supernatural strength has come upon us. We are singing in the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit. Amidst the danger, my children said to me, Mom, we are not going to deny Jesus!"

Soon we heard shouting and then shots being fired. Then the line went dead. Taliban fighters had invaded their home. Our friends had paid the ultimate price with their lives because of their faith.

Words from a Hymn, written in memory of martyrs of Christ:

These are dressed  
in white  
and they are crowned  
with crowns.  
They  
are rewarded  
and  
their tears  
have been wiped away.  
They have risen

to Glory  
to forever  
be with their King.  
Never again  
to experience  
the pain  
of war

Under previous Taliban rule in 1996-2001, Afghan Christians new of few if any other believers in the country.

After western forces liberated the country led by the US military, the Taliban was removed from power.

In the following decades, the Afghanistan church grew from a community of unknown, secret worshipers to a church of about 8,000 believers.

That however came to an end in August of this year.

At a safe house in Kabul, Jaiuddin (not his real name) is hiding with 12 other Afghans after the Taliban took over the city.

"One of us is always awake during the night, walking and praying in case the Taliban comes knocking. In so doing, we have time to warn others."

Jaiuddin and his group are part of a small Christian community. They told us they don't have passports or US government issued exit documents. Their hopes of escaping are minimal at most.

Sarah, another member of the group adds: We had plans to proclaim the Gospel with our brothers and sisters in this country, but the Taliban took over sooner than anyone thought. It all happened so quickly. Now, we have become 'targets', we are known to the Taliban.

Jaiuddin: "I receive calls every day, warning me that if I am found, I will be executed. I am not afraid of dying, I just ask for intercessors to pray for my country."

While international believers



Many Afghan Christians have tried to flee to neighboring countries. Others have moved to different parts of the country. Many have been trapped.



Among the thousands of citizens who fled the country were a few Afghan Christians. Only a few got on the planes. In the photo, a mother and daughter are escorted to the plane. There is no information about the father and other members of the family.



In Kabul, a heavily armed Taliban soldier monitors people on the street.



A reporter told how the Taliban go door to door, forcing Christians to give up their daughters, some 12 years old, as sex slaves to fighters.



A NATO soldier took charge of these children at Kabul airport. The fate of the children's parents remained unclear.

are focused on assisting people to escape, many belonging to the underground movement of believers want to stay in the country.

Jaiuddin: "We pray for each other, that the Lord would set His angels around our hiding place to protect us."

Prayer is the only thing that

we can do at this moment. So, we pray. People that I work with wonder, 'Where God is in all this'?

The Psalmist asks, 'Has God forgotten us? Oh my God, how long, how long, Oh God'?

We have seen how churches in Afghanistan have grown, and now we are witnessing their

collapse. We sigh fervently and lament with intensity, as did the writer of the Psalms.

Laments do come to an end in the Psalms. They put their trust in the fact that God reigns and is in control of His kingdom. We continue our life's journey in His kingdom.

## Great Commission Media Ministries launches production of Christian satellite TV programs for Afghanistan!

An appeal for Christian TV programs in the Dari language had come from Afghan believers who were able to flee Afghanistan in August.

We heard their plea at GCMM and in October, the production of Gospel programs was launched. The Dari lan-

guage is spoken by 50% of the population. Dari is the Afghan dialect of Persian and as such is sometimes referred to as "Eastern Persian". Dari serves as the lingua franca of Afghanistan.

These satellite TV broadcasts can be seen in homes throughout the country.

Believers who fled the country are now assisting GCMM productions teams as hosts and speakers, as well as providing music. Many Afghan believers have found refuge in Europe. From there they travel to the GCMM Ministry Centre in Finland for program production.

# Churches In Russia Suffer Amidst The Coronavirus Pandemic



The music of the evangelical churches in Russia is known to be of a high standard and deeply spiritual. Pictured is the men's choir resembling the tones of the famed Soviet Red Army Choir.

## The pandemic continues to spread unchecked in Russia

In October, record numbers of deaths due to the Coronavirus were recorded in Russia.

An extensive statistical comparison on a popular Russian website

revealed that, according to official statistics, over a thousand deaths have been recorded per day. The total number of deaths in the pandemic has exceeded 215,000.

According to GCOMM sources, the pandemic has not spared

churches. In one St. Petersburg church, the entire membership has fallen ill with Covid. This church is by no means the only one to experience the same fate.

The pandemic has touched many friends of GCOMM's Russian ministry.

In the early days our Russian radio ministry in the Soviet Union, our programs would frequently feature beautiful music from churches within the Soviet Union.

The performances of Boris Berzhnoy, the top vocalist of the First

Moscow Baptist Church, and composer Yevgeny Goncharenko have blessed countless millions with their worship music in venues across the former Soviet Union, as well as millions of radio listeners from the 1970's to spring of this year.

Boris first performed at the age of four. In 1967 he was baptized in Frunze, now known as Bishkek. That same year, he befriended Yevgeny Goncharenko, who in 1974 invited Boris to minister in Moscow. Since then, Boris has ministered

# "Our Lives Are Christ's Epistle That Others Will Read..."

in song and word in thousands of churches, on hundreds of mission trips in the former Soviet Union and Russia.

This past spring, at the funeral of his friend and composer Yevgeny Goncharenko, Boris sang a powerful song which Yevgeny had specifically written for Boris. The song is called "We Are Letters of Christ."

The lyrics challenge every believer, since 'People read our lives and how we live, as one would read a letter.'

Boris often sang this song in his concerts. At Yevgeny's funeral, Boris said, "We have a lot of ministry ahead of us in Heaven. Preaching is no longer needed, but there is a lot of demand for worship music."

About 3 months later, Boris' obituary appeared: "On June

25, 2021, Boris Berezhnoi (born 1949), a famous performer of classical Christian songs and head of the chamber ensemble Blagoveshtie, left his earthly life to be with his Heavenly Father.

The day before, his wife Raisa went to be with the Lord. These sad events were preceded by the onset of COVID-19, which took the lives of both spouses.

Boris' wife, Raisa Dmitrijevna, faithfully and humbly supported her husband's ministry. They finished their course on earth together.

Boris' home church in Moscow added their condolences:

"We express our deepest condolences to the family of Boris and Raisa. May the Almighty and Merciful Lord send His comfort and help! The reunion in Heaven



Well-known Russian singer Boris Berezhnoi and his wife Raisa died due to the coronavirus.

is near!" "The righteous are taken away to be spared from seeing evil!" (Isaiah 57: 1)



Talented musical composer, lyricist, conductor Yevgeny Gontsarenko served in the Moscow Baptist Church with Boris Bereno.

## More Scripture Delivery To Russian Churches In Time For Christmas

At the beginning of 2021, we set a goal to print 750,000 New Testaments and Gospels of John for ministry by churches in Russia.

The political situation, and the freedom of expression in Russia

has continued to deteriorate making the future next to impossible to predict. In response to this, we have been providing as much help as possible by keeping churches supplied with Scriptures.

In February, GCMC printed 10,000 "Transformations" evangelism books in Mongolian for Mongolia. In March 50,000 New Testaments came off the press, in Russian, and in May 200,000 co-

pies of the Gospel of John.

At the end of August, we ordered 100,000 New Testaments and 20,000 evangelism books in the Yakut language spoken in Siberia. There continued to be a strong

demand for the New Testaments and other evangelistic literature that had been printed, and the churches were requesting more.

So, another order was placed earlier this fall for 200,000 Gos-

pels of John and 100,000 evangelistic books. This demand is a sign of profound spiritual hunger in Russia.

The goal of the churches is to evangelize towns, villages, and

*continued on page 12...*



In Siberia, interviewing a printing press employee. The campaign's life-changing stories were read during lunch breaks.

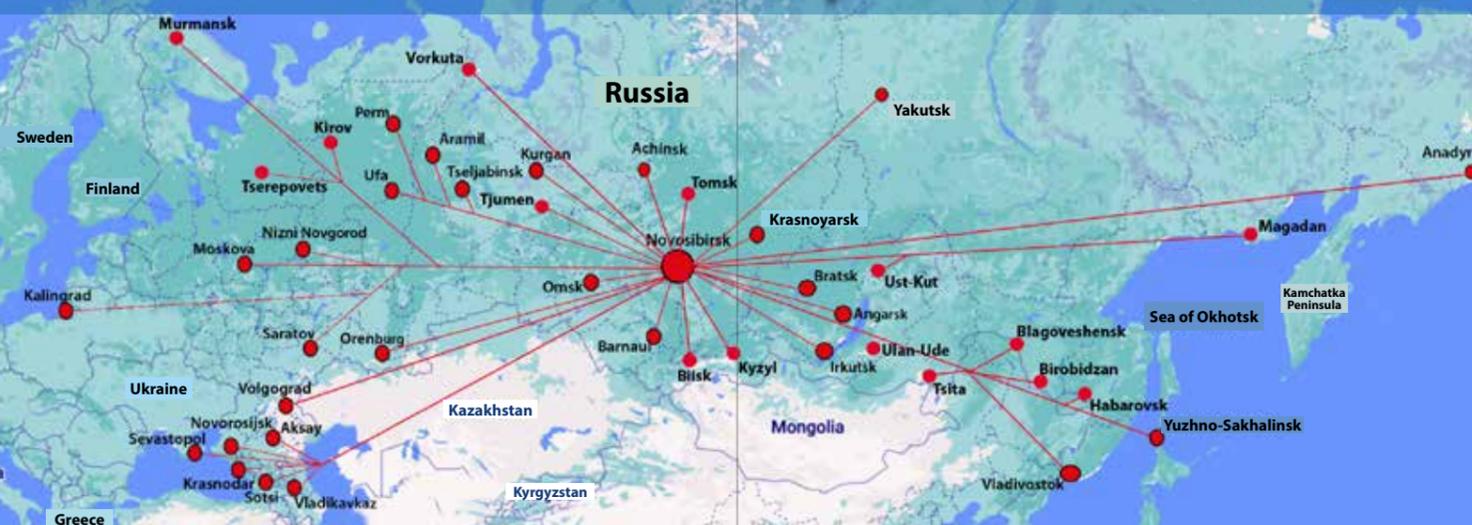


At the Siberian printing house, New Testaments in Russian are awaiting further processing.



Hannu at Syktyvkar Airport in the Ural Mountains. During the trip, 5 million campaign books were ordered by the Union of Evangelical Christians.

# GCMM: Fresh Deliveries Of Scripture To Russian Churches



How is it possible that we are allowed to continue printing Bibles in Russia? Response: It is God who is keeping the door open for GCMM. No one knows how long this will continue. We will use this opportunity until we are told to stop.

Churches are using GCMM financed evangelistic literature and going to door to door, sharing the good news of the Gospel. This ministry fares well in Siberia and eastern Russia where the Gospel is still welcomed and received.



## Freedom of expression in Russia

A new law that adversely affects freedom of expression was enacted on 1 June 2021.

The new restrictions also apply to freedom of religion and the practice of religion.

Churches that are faithful to Christ's great commission have suffered the consequences.

## Quoting the Bible in Russia

In Russia, quoting the Bible can lead to punishment by law.

As of June 1st, a law was enacted prohibiting educational activities without special permission from the authorities. The

law is comprehensive and the penalties are clear.

## Educational activities without the permission of the authorities prohibited

Educational activities include everything from lectures, to any form of instruction, including audio and video recordings on the Internet, and all kinds of instructional material downloadable from websites.

Bishop Yuri Ananiev stressed this point: "The saddest thing is that for congregations, this new law means that the dissemination of all spiritually or religiously educational material is forbidden."

*continued from page 11...*

municipalities in Siberia and Eastern Russia. As a result, hundreds of thousands of books mentioned above, have been transported to one hundred Russian cities, mainly in the Russian Far East and Siberia.

In addition to the 100,000 New Testaments and 200,000 Gospels

of John there is a high demand for 50,000 Bibles as well. We hope as many as possible will be printed in time for Christmas. (These 350,000 copies will cost about \$220,000 CAD.)

To all of our friends and partners, please accept a very warm thank-you. You have helped make

this possible.

According to Senior Bishop Grabovenko of the Churches of the Evangelical Faith of Russia, more than a million Russians have prayed the prayer of salvation at events where this literature has been used.

# Syria: Government Official Finds God

GCM Ministries recently received an invitation to conduct a mega city media campaign in the city of Damascus, Syria. The Lord willing, a delegation from Great Commission Media will travel to both Damascus and Aleppo soon to discuss possibilities of making this a reality.

## A Member of Parliament receives Jesus

This past fall, we received some exceptional news. GCMM Arabic ministries director Hani, shared a message from a Syrian Member of Parliament who had come to faith through our TV programs. For many years he had been watching a TV series called "Your Life is a Story". Then one day after watching a program, he knelt in prayer and gave his life to Jesus. He had



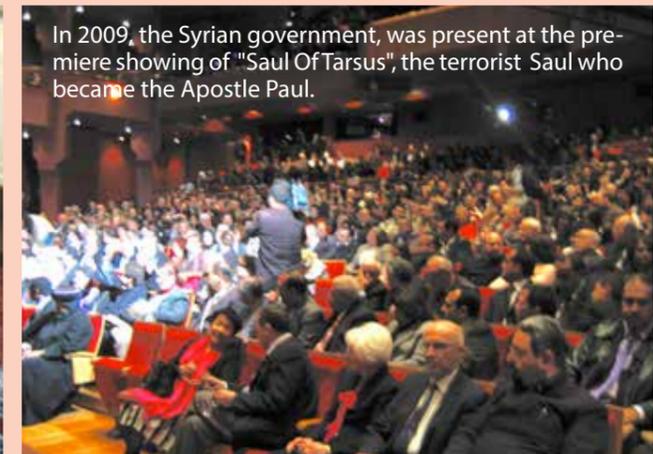
GCMM Arabic Director Hani, left, and Carol and Jack Klemke from Canada, with Hannu Haukka in Damascus, 2009.

served as Mayor in Damascus for 5 years. This is another example of the hundreds of thousands of

responses that we receive regularly to the Arabic-language satellite TV ministry in the Middle East.



A handful of worshippers in this mosque in Damascus, Syria has traditional Christian Chaldean and Assyrian churches.



In 2009, the Syrian government, was present at the premiere showing of "Saul Of Tarsus", the terrorist Saul who became the Apostle Paul.

In 2009, "Saul Of Tarsus" was shown in movie theatres in Syria. The film was about Paul's conversion on his way to Damascus.



# East Ukraine: "Sooner Or Later This War Will End.."



The GCMM media campaign planned for the war zone in East Ukraine has received support from a surprising source. Officials responsible for State Security invited church leaders to discuss the impact of the prolonged conflict in the occupied territories of East Ukraine.

"Only the Church has the message that can bring healing to minds and hearts, change attitudes, and thoughts, so that East Ukraine might once again live as a united nation," says senior pastor Yuri Babynets of the Kiev mega church.

At the outbreak of the war,

millions of people fled the occupied Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

Still millions of others remain in their villages and towns despite daily hostilities in East Ukraine.

Sooner or later, this war will be over and we will have to

look each other in the eye. Yes, there are also churches, pastors, members of the Church on the other side of the front line as well. We all need to give an account of what we have done on this side, and they too will give account of what they have done on their side.

I understand that the general population is not to blame for what is happening. Powers beyond their control have led to these atrocities.

God is the judge. The only thing God requires of us is that we love our enemies.

Our enemies can even be

far away and yet, we do not love our enemies. Then it becomes a fact that the "enemy" has gained access to our hearts. Therefore, it is better to love our enemies, as the Bible teaches.

# Ukrainian Authorities Give Green Light To Media Campaign



Preparations for the media campaign in the war zone which were postponed during the pandemic, have now resumed. Our target date is the month of December.

## Precious Memories From Kiev!

- Although it's been several years since the mega city media campaign in Kiev took place, mega church pastor Yuri Babinets remembers it warmly.

Yuri was the national director of GCM's Kiev campaign and is the leader of the largest congregation in Ukraine.

His church has experienced strong growth since the media campaign in 2007.

Today, 130 assisting pastors serve some 800 home churches planted in the years following the campaign.

## We asked Yuri how the East Ukraine campaign differs from the Kiev campaign?

- For cities with a population of over a million, the media is well

developed. There are a huge number of billboards, newspapers, as well as numerous means of transportation carrying campaign ads that can be used - and it works.

There are a lot of towns with a lot less people. There is no infrastructure, church buildings have been damaged, people have been evacuated, and there is a lack of church workers.

## Authorities are looking to the Church for help to resolve the mental blocks, attitudes, hostility, and a return to normal. What do you say Yuri?

- There are no other tools with which we can influence people's hearts.

State Security welcomes the campaign, and has promised their support for it.

Ukrainian State Security promised to provide the necessary protection throughout the conflict zone which is about 600 kilometers long.

## Message of hope

- The government understands that without the Church we will not succeed in returning the occupied territories of Ukraine back to Ukraine. By this I mean, the hearts, thoughts, and souls of the citizens of the occupied territories of Russia would be restored so that they would become peaceful, blessed residents of their beloved homeland. Without the Church, it will be difficult. Therefore, the authorities also encourage the Church and welcome this project.

We have received approval from them regarding the concept of the campaign and advertisements. The campaign book is published in Ukrainian and Russian for the war zone. The book is to be distributed on both sides of the line of fire in their respective language.

In this way we wish to show the people in the occupied territories that language is not an obstacle. No matter which language you speak, you are equal to your brothers in Kiev, in West Ukraine, in East-Ukraine, and in Crimea.

## In Kiev, you followed up with thousands of people who responded to the campaign. Did these people end up in church?

- The call center received more than 17 thousand calls. Our church followed up about 1,200 calls from people requesting the 'key tool', which was the cam-

Photo: Ukraine Ministry of Defense



A Ukrainian soldier is on guard at a "no entry" checkpoint on the road leading to the occupied territory. Traffic was stopped in 2015 when Russian troops entered East Ukraine and backed mercenaries and rebels siding with Russia.

campaign book with powerful stories of changed lives.

A few years later, it turned out that of these 1,200 people, more than a thousand are in our church today, baptized and attending church.

In the year following the campaign, our church saw a record number of baptisms. This shows the real impact the media campaign had on the churches and the lives of our people.

The media campaign took place in November. In the middle of the month it started to snow.

It was a heavy snowfall. In the evening we bought a huge number of roses, several thousand. We attached a note card to each rose. And our young people went out in this blizzard to hand out roses to people - smiling, and handing out roses to people saying "You can experience the power to change".

And this simple gesture developed into a conversation with people.

So, one of our sisters stood at a bus stop. The door to the bus opened and a woman stepped

out, carrying two huge bags. She covered her face with a scarf for protection from the snow. She struggled over the snowdrifts and almost collided with the girl holding out a rose. The girl smiled, their eyes met, holding out the rose she said, "You can experience the power of change, God loves you!"

The woman began to weep. She said her husband had left her that day, her parents blamed her and said that they didn't need her either, and her kids refused to talk to her.

Ukrainian soldiers and civilians at a church service in the war zone. The speakers were military pastors, and leaders of the Pilgrim orphanage in the city of Mariupol.



# Held In Captivity For 700 Days

The woman had decided to prepare her last supper and end her life. Meeting this young girl with a rose out there in that blizzard saved her life. And there were many such stories from the campaign.

The book that will be used in the war zone contains life-changing stories of people in East Ukraine.

– There are 15 stories in the book. All are about people living in a war zone. Among them are young girls, boys, adults, and pensioners. There are miners, doctors, teachers and scientists,

and from all walks of life. One of the people in the book is a scientist who was held hostage by East Ukrainian rebel forces for 700 days.

The common thread in these stories is the past, adversity, misfortune and problems in different ways, and the fact that they came to faith in Jesus who changed everything. Each story is a real miracle of God.

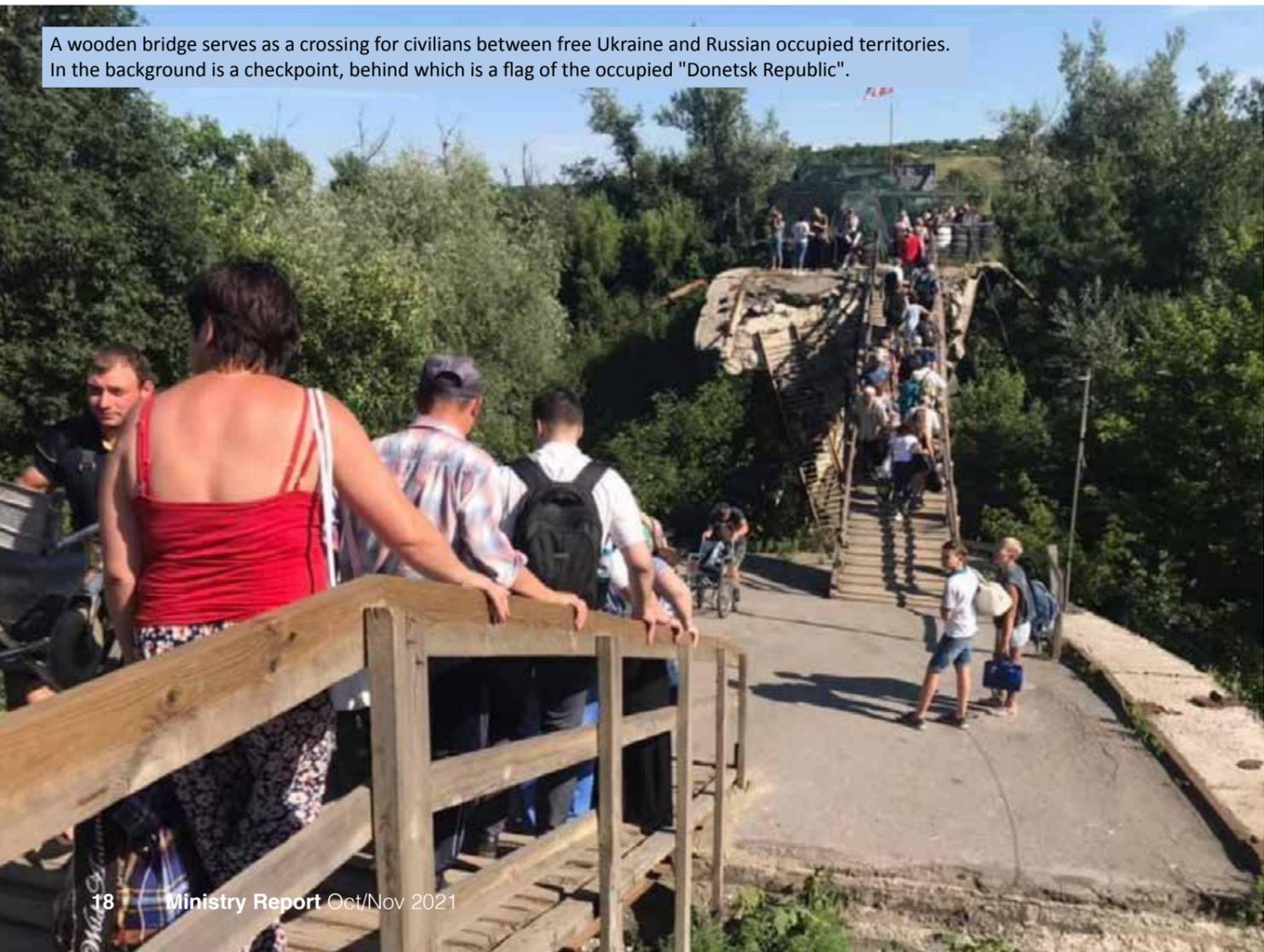
NOTE: There are approximately 6 million people reachable by the campaign living on both sides of the line of conflict in major cities



Scientist Igor Kozlovsky, was held by East Ukrainian rebel forces for 700 days.

such as **Mariupol, Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkov, Dnepropetrovsk, Zaporozhiye, Slavyansk, and Kramatorsk.**

A wooden bridge serves as a crossing for civilians between free Ukraine and Russian occupied territories. In the background is a checkpoint, behind which is a flag of the occupied "Donetsk Republic".



Travel Advisory for European Union citizens wishing to travel to East-Ukraine Conflict Zone:

In a recent press release, the following travel advisory has been issued concerning the security situation as follows:

"The security situation in the eastern most parts of Ukraine may change rapidly as hostilities continue despite ceasefires. Avoid all travel in the vicinity of the contact line. The border zone separating the parties is a

very insecure area.

Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts belong to Ukraine, although some of them are not currently under government control. The security situation in these areas is poor."

A home meeting in a small village in the war zone. Thousands of Ukrainians have fled the war zone to others cities in Ukraine. Thousands were trapped without an opportunity to settle elsewhere in Ukraine. Others stayed in their neighborhood hoping that the war would end.



*continued from page 3*

David won.

There is a popular song that fits the story well.

The song says: "You raise me up to stand on mountains... You raise me up to walk on stormy seas... I am strong when I am on your shoulders... You raise me up to more than I can be..."

### **The Valley of Weeping**

The Valley of Tears is a time and place in life where all of us have been.

There is an actual geographical place called the Valley of Weeping.

Pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem would pass through this valley on their way to the Holy City.

The Valley of Weeping speaks to us of times of drought in life, of times when all joy is lost, when nothing grows, when fruit is absent.

As the psalmist went through his personal valley, he cried out to his God: "My tears have been my food day and night." Psalm 42: 3

But sorrow does not last forever. "Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning". Psalm 30:5.

### **He is Near**

We can be sure that a broken heart moves the heart of our Heavenly Father. Psalm 84.

"The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." Psalm 34:19.

"When they pass through the Valley of Tears, they turn it into a land of fountains and the autumn rain covers it with blessings. They go from strength to strength till each appears before God in Zion."

Psalm 84:6,7.

Psalm 23 does not end in the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

David tells us that there is life on the other side of our dark valleys. On the other side, the Shepherd prepares a banquet table in the presence of our enemies.

As a sign of honor, the Shepherd anoints our head with oil. He restores our soul. He fills our cup to overflow indicating unusual abundance. And in summary, He assures us that goodness and mercy follow us throughout our life here on earth.

He has promised to be with us always. Valleys do not last forever. They have a starting point and an ending point.

Our God is not only the God of the mountain, but He is also the God of the valley. He fights for us.

*Hannu Haukka*

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