

December 14, 2016

Peace to you, dear friends!

It's been exactly two weeks since we left Fresno and drove to Los Angeles to fly to Chisinau. 14 days - a short period. However, in our lives many things have taken place during that short time. For us, Nina and I, a new chapter in our lives has started. During these two weeks, we have clearly seen the caring hand of God upon us. And so, in this letter, first, I want to give glory to God for His protection, care, leadership, and help. We are sincerely grateful to the Lord, who paved the way for us to this new home, and we believe that He will continue to lead our lives here.

Our travels went very smoothly. Both on the road from Fresno to Los Angeles as well as on the flight from LA to Chisinau there was not much trouble. The only hitch was that we had an overload in your carry-ons. We had to take out some stuff. Fortunately, our son Benjamin accompanied us to the airport. He was able to take the things that didn't make the cut. The rest of the way to Chisinau was normal. We discovered that Turkish Airlines was not a bad company in terms of service and conditions in flight. But the most importantly—our luggage arrived with us on the same plane. Our son, Andrei, came with us on the trip and stayed for two weeks to help us settle in. For us, his aide was a great blessing.

When we arrived in Chisinau in the evening on December 1st, we were met at the airport by the Bishop of the Baptist Union of Moldova, Ion Miron, with his wife Valentina. We felt very honored. They brought us to the building of the Baptist Union, and lodged us in the guest rooms. On the third floor of the three-story building of the Union, there are four furnished rooms, specially equipped for guests. Each room has several beds, shower and toilet. Very comfortable accommodations. In the morning and in the afternoon, we were fed a delicious and hearty Moldavian meal, for which we were very grateful.

The following two days were devoted to an intensive search of housing. The invaluable assistance in this process was given to us by Igor Mordvinov, a staff member of the Baptist Union. With him we saw several different apartments and settled on one that is in the most convenient location in relation to public transportation and shops. And the apartment itself was very nice, newly renovated and spacious. This area of the city is called Ryzhkanovka. On Tuesday, December 6th, we settled into the apartment on the 7th floor of a 10-story building. The apartment is furnished, which made our move that much easier.

On the first Sunday of our stay in Chisinau we visited *Bethany*, a 17-year-old church of about 200

members located in the Chicano district. The senior pastor is Nikolay Vozyan. The leaders of the church received us warmly. They invited me to participate in conducting communion. The service lasted two hours and included singing, sharing and sermons. It was interesting to hear different languages, like Russian and Moldavian, during the service. The pastor speaks and preaches fluently in both languages. We were introduced to the congregation at the end of the service, and many people were happy to see those who have come from America to serve in Moldova.

During the first week, in addition to moving into the apartment, I had the opportunity to participate in an important meeting of church leaders. Early December is when the Baptist Union leadership board gives an annual report to its church elders. There are 344 congregations in the Baptist Union of Moldova. The whole country is divided into 9 regions. Each region has an Elder/Regional Presbyter. And in December, the Union leadership visits all regions and provides information for the elders of local churches in each region on the work accomplished during the year. On Thursday, December 8th, I was invited to the meeting for the Chisinau region. It was interesting to learn how churches live in Moldova. I was glad to hear that a missional spirit dwells in the churches. Evangelistic activities are conducted and converts are baptized.

On Saturday, December 10th, my wife and I were invited to a Christmas dinner with the leadership of the Union, the regional elders and their wives. During this meeting, the elders and their wives shared what took place in their ministry over the past year, joys and sorrows. Life is not easy in Moldova in terms of economy. Along with the freedom of religion, the heavy burden is the lack of work for the population, including believers. It is not easy for pastors to lead congregations while experiencing a chronic financial shortage.

On Sunday, December 11th, we visited the church called *Voice of Truth*, which is in an area called Old Post Office. This congregation is 10 years old and most of its members also came to Christ from non-believing families because of evangelism. There are about 200 members in this church. On each Sunday, there are two services conducted in Russian language in the morning, and one service in the evening (at 4:00 pm) in Moldavian language. The church is very active in terms of evangelism and committed to social work among people of the local community. Last year, the church baptized 32 new members. There was an interesting announcement made by pastor Vitali at the end of service. He announced that on December 23 children from the nearby primary school classes will be brought by their teachers to the church to celebrate Christmas there. It was arranged with the school's leadership. If in the past, Christians tried to get into the schools during Christmas season to perform Christmas performances for children there, now the school children are coming to the church for the same purpose being led by their teachers. For us to hear that was very surprising and joyful. Thank God for such a favorable time for spreading the Gospel in Moldova! In this church, we were also introduced as those who do not fit into the concept generally accepted in society—at a time when thousands flock to America, we went against the tide and came to the small poor country of Moldova.

In short, we're viewed as quite strange people. During the service, I was also invited to participate in conducting the Lord's Supper.

In the evening of the same day, we visited the church called *Grace*. The senior pastor is Sergey Yatsenko. It is located in the area of Chisinau called *Telecentre*. In this area live very wealthy people, including the US Ambassador to Moldova. The church is small - 63 members, but has a very cozy, beautiful new house of worship. In the church, a large portion of people have difficulty seeing or are blind completely. It was very touching to see a few blind brothers participate in the service, who played the bayan, accordion and flute and sang. And they did it with a noticeable joy on their faces. After the meeting, they told me that they are working hard among blind people. Holding evangelistic meetings with them—more than 100 meetings a year! To see these zealous blind brothers is a great encouragement for all of us. In that service, I was asked to participate by preaching the Word of God.

On Tuesday, December 13th, a meeting with the leadership of the Christian University took place. The president and the deans of several departments came together to meet with us and discuss specific things regarding me teaching during the spring semester. It was agreed that I will teach a course called *Cross-Cultural Communication* and part of the *Theology of Family* course. The university has several branches in Central Asia. Therefore, in addition to teaching in Chisinau, teachers are expected to attend branches in the former Soviet republics of Central Asia. In addition to classroom teaching, there is a great need for pastoral work with students individually. In this area Nina and I can also be useful. Young people are always in need of a caring heart available to listen to them, especially if they are far away from home. Many students of the University come from the Central Asian republics.

Of course, you might be interested in what the weather here is like and how we react to it. This is winter here now. Within two weeks of our stay here, we have experienced both above-zero temperatures and sunny days as well as freezing winds and snow. The weather here varies quite a bit. However, we are adjusting to it well. We did not get sick so far.

In conclusion, I would say that the first impression of our stay in Moldova is very positive. We have received a very kind treatment at the churches. The university leadership is also very happy for our participation in the service of the institution. Life in the city goes on. Although there is a noticeable influence of the West, at the same time this is a unique country with its own culture and language. This means that we will need to make efforts to learn the language and culture. What is unusual for our life here is that we do not have a car and we have to re-develop a skill of using public transport. We have to walk a lot. This, some say, is good for health, but it makes your body tired. Overall, we are pleased and grateful to the Lord for allowing us to serve Him here.

Today our son Andrei departed for California. Nina and I were left alone in our apartment. A little

heartache set in. Until this day, we did not feel fully the separation from our children and grandchildren, because we had at least one of them with us. With his departure, we feel the sharpness of separation from family and friends who stayed in America. This is the price for the right to be missionaries.

Thank you all for your prayer support! We need it very much. Sincere thanks to those who gave us financial support. This is a big help for us.

We pray that the Lord richly bless you all. Please continue to pray for us.

Your co-workers in God's Kingdom,

Vyacheslav Nina Tsvirinko  
Kishinev, Moldova

P.S. Below you can see some photos of our lives in Chisinau.



At the LA airport, November 30, 2016



At the Chisinau airport, December 1, 2016



Exploring the city. The main prospect of Chisinau. December 5, 2016



Christmas dinner of the Baptist Union of Moldova leadership, December 10, 2016



Communion at the church *Voice of Truth*, December 11, 2016



Meeting with the University leadership, December 13, 2016