



# The Rue Family

## UKRAINE

December 2024 (Year-End Update)

Dear Praying Friends and Family,

**Greetings:** I hope this letter finds you well in the Lord as we leave the old year and enter the new. This year-end edition of our prayer letter will necessarily be longer than usual. More space is required to cover my last trip to Ukraine and give an update of our current situation and plans to return to the field. So far, we have financed four trips into eastern Ukraine. I personally participated in the last three. Our most recent trip during the first two weeks of December was one of the best yet, mostly because my son, Samuel, was with me. I want to thank Missionaries Paul Hamilton and Clayton McCurdy for their help and generous hospitality picking us up at the airport in Chisinau, putting us up for the night, and driving us across the border into Ukraine.

**Target Area and Objectives:** Circumstances in Ukraine are extremely varied and often misunderstood. The situation in most of Ukraine is not the same as eastern Ukraine where they survived the Russian occupation of their hometowns for almost a year. After discussions about our upcoming trip, Pastor Alexei and I decided that we would much rather go into the eastern regions than to go to the borders of Romania and Poland. People are needy everywhere. Everyone needs to be saved and to be given a chance to hear the Gospel. However, in eastern Ukraine, there are hundreds of thousands of people who could not flee when the Russians came. The people who survived the Russian occupation have been traumatized, while the people in other parts of Ukraine have not yet been so affected. We wanted to take the Gospel to those left behind. To those who lost everything, who were cold, in the dark, and praying, "God, please help me!" We wanted to reach those people first, to go into new regions who have not yet heard the "Good News" and, so, we went into the Kherson region (see map).



**Preaching in the Regions Beyond:** From our house, it was a 5-hour trip to get there, and we were thankful to have an abandoned church building where we could camp out. It was warm and dry. It also had a small kitchen but no bathroom or shower.

*(Continued on the next page.)*



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All total the Lord provided well over 10 tons of supplies and literature to distribute. We had lots of literature, 1,200 care packages, packages of rice, boxes of flour, and 1,200 loaves of bread to hand out in seven different



Brother Samuel Rue ready to work!

towns. The leaders of these towns cooperated with us and registered close to 1,200 people collectively. We arranged a time and place in each town where they would gather to hear the word of God preached and receive help. I've never seen this type of cooperation from the leaders in Ukraine before. We preached the Gospel in every town and gave a clear invitation explaining that they would be responding to an invitation to call on the name of the Lord to be saved from their sin. After three long days preaching in seven towns, we saw close to one hundred souls respond to the invitations to be saved! There are plenty of stories and details I would love to tell, but space will not allow it. One newly saved person said, "That was the first time I've ever heard anything like this."

**Long Term Versus Short Term Missions:** There is a constant struggle maintaining balance between long-term missions and short term. Between soul-winning/evangelism and discipleship/church planting. Long term church planting in the regions where we've been working is difficult right now. However, there is every indication that the eastern regions of Ukraine will be ripe for church planting and discipleship when peace is achieved. But for now, people need at least a chance to hear the Gospel clearly communicated with an invitation to be saved. Anything could happen in these areas in the months ahead! I believe in the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to not only save your soul but to change one's life forever. The process described in Romans 10:13-15 culminates in the moment when a guilty sinner calls on the name of the Lord for salvation. Though this moment is often preached as the pinnacle, it is really the beginning.



I still remember the day when I trusted Jesus Christ and He changed my life forever. I still believe this is possible every time I preach the Gospel. We set out for eastern Ukraine with this in mind.

**Tense Moments:** Before we set out, we realized that we were going to be preaching just a few miles from the frontlines. There are no guarantees. There are drones, minefields, separatists, and curfews to consider. Then, of course, being that close to the front, there was a slight possibility that the Russians could break through the line and be in our area quickly. You can always hear the war from where we were. There are big explosions over there, about 10-15 miles away, not the kind that smaller drones make. During our first night a drone was shot down over the town where we were sleeping.



On another occasion, we had to make a stop on the side of the road. I left the van to take care of some personal business. When I returned to our van I saw my son, Sam, along with Brother Sasha both checking out a blown-up tank in the burned-up tree line on the edge of the road.

As I walked towards them, I saw a knocked over warning sign on the ground. They had ventured into a minefield! All of Ukraine has to deal with sirens and drones, but these minefields are only located in eastern Ukraine. They are deadly mementos left behind by the Russian army.



Another close call was when we had to change plans, last minute, and go to different towns. Two of the towns we planned to visit had been hit by the Russians and the people would not come out of their houses. One of the most disconcerting moments of our trip was being out past the military curfew called, “commandonski chaas” which begins at 8:00 PM. The rainy weather, and delays from changing course twice had us out way past

curfew, which could have ended badly for us. Thankfully, the Lord took care of everything and everyone!

**Fruit That Remains:** During our last evangelistic meeting, I had a special moment with the Lord while standing in front of the crowd that gathered outside in the cold. I was shoulder to shoulder with my son, Pastor Alexei, and Brother Sasha when I realized what a gift the Lord had given me: the privilege to invest my life into men for Jesus’ sake. We were all there, just miles from the front, by choice. I introduced them, one by one, and stated our relationship. My son was newly married, attending Bible Institute, yet he chose to be there. Brother Sasha is exempt from military service but also chose to be there. I had a small part helping him with financial support and through our online Bible Institute. Then there was Pastor Alexei. He too has exemption from military service and could have left the country to get his family to safety, but he chose to stay and lead the church. I said, “I watched him grow up in our ministry from childhood.” To which he, piped up and said, “That’s the truth!” I pointed out that they were there, not by conscription, but because of a burden for their souls. We were there because of what Jesus Christ has done for us. The people listened very attentively, and 25 precious souls received Christ as their Savior.

Such fruit is not grown in a day. It takes a lifetime of investment on the part of a missionary. I thank God to have made the choice to spend so many hours of my time with men in the ministry. I’ve had several of our supporters comment that I do not communicate with our supporters using social media. I’ve tried to do so in the past, but I find it distracting. Maybe I will in the future. I’ve noticed how many times the words “with them” occur in the Gospels. It refers to the time the Lord spent with His disciples. A missionary can be “on the field” but not in the field “with them.” Again, there is a balance between evangelism and discipleship. Neglect evangelism and there will be no converts. Neglect discipleship and there will be no long-term fruit in the form of a healthy local church. Time spent “with” your converts produces fruit that remains, even while being tried in the fiery furnace of wartime conditions. I’m very thankful for the modern conveniences of communication that allow me to spend time on video and phone calls in meetings in Ukraine. I may not be physically “on the field” all the time but, in the meantime, I certainly spend time in meetings with our people overseeing various aspects of the ministry, making preparations to return to “the field.” We look forward to our soon return to the field where God has put us.

**Returning to the Field:** As I’ve briefly mentioned in past letters, after much prayer and consideration the Lord has made it clear that He wants me to stay in the ministry as a missionary to Ukraine. I’ve had plenty of offers to change direction. Several were very attractive. However, I believe the Lord wants us to return to Ukraine.

We certainly could have returned to the field earlier, without proper documents and a functional home, but it would not have helped the ministry in the long term. It would have been for the wrong reasons and would have been less than ideal.

It would have cost more in time and money in the long run and could have jeopardized my men in the church at the time. Besides, many supporting pastors called and encouraged me to keep doing what we're doing. They encouraged me to keep making our evangelistic trips and assured me that our support was solid with them. Such words of encouragement are gold to me, and I will never forget those men who encouraged me to keep going. You know who you are. May the Lord, Himself, bless you.

We had hoped to return during the fall season but decided to postpone until after winter for several reasons. The first reason involved stewardship of time and money. We must consider the near future when my son, Christopher, will turn eighteen. This will require us to leave the field for a while to file for his own missionary visa. In the past, when one of my children were about to turn eighteen, I would leave my wife and family in the country while accompanying them out of the country to obtain their own missionary visa. That is not an option this time. We would all have to travel. It doesn't make sense to spend anywhere from \$15K to \$18K on plane tickets twice instead of once. We do not have that kind of money after financing our evangelistic trips out east.

The second reason involves our ability to function as a family and ministry in Ukraine. By the end of last summer our local power company in Ukraine began announcing that the electricity would be cut off many hours each day. It was not hearsay. This is currently the case. My current setup would cost me \$75 to \$100 each day to heat and power my house. Many Ukrainians have switched to solar power, inverters, and generators. We need a better power source to stay warm and function. There was work that had to be done on the wiring in our house before we could even purchase and install a reliable cost-efficient backup power source. This was an unexpected curveball thrown at us that required us to delay our return. It is not God closing the door on us making our return impossible.

Both of the above-mentioned reasons together required additional time and fundraising. Our supporters have been generously giving towards the refugee work we've been doing since the war began. In fact, the past four trips into eastern Ukraine have resulted in more people being saved than my last ten years living on the field. I believe these trips are preparing the ground for future church planting when peace is achieved. The first two of these trips were financed out of the love offerings collected during my deputation/furlough meetings, which cost around \$14,000 each. Most of these offerings could have been used in other ways that would have helped us return to the field earlier, but given the delays, I decided to put those love offerings into these trips. It was obvious to me that we could accomplish more on the mission field in the long term by waiting on the Lord's timing. The last two trips cost \$20,000 each and were supernaturally commissioned and provided for by God working through pastors who took the initiative to call me stating their desire to help finance them.

**What Needs To Be Done:** There are four basic things that need to be in place before we can return to the field: 1) documents; 2) a functional home; 3) no escalation of the war to our region; and 4) a way to get my family to safety in case the war spreads to our region in the form of a reliable vehicle. I would like to speak to each of these needs briefly. First, the need for documents. We plan to submit all necessary paperwork in early April. This should take care of everything we need in this area. There are no problems here. No closed doors. Second, a functional home. Not only has the wiring in our house been completed but the Lord literally provided all the funds needed for a backup energy source two days before the new year! The equipment will be installed soon, allowing us to function as a family and ministry once we arrive. Again, this was a delay, not a closed door. Thirdly, the war has not spread to our region and I've gotten enough inside information to no longer be concerned about the Russian "peacekeeping" troops stationed in Transnistria (see the map on the first page). Lastly, the Lord provided for a vehicle which is already purchased and sitting in my garage in Ukraine and ready for our return.

Please continue to pray for us and our ministry. My family and I would like to thank you all for your friendship, fellowship, prayers, and support of us in this work that God has given us.

That Ukraine May Know Him,



Christopher Rue  
Phil. 3:10