

BCMWorld

An Inside Look at BCM Global Ministries





FIRE LOSS IN MUNTINLUPA CITY BECOMES ETERNAL GAIN

By: Gerlyn de Jesus (Director, BCM Philippines)

It was just after midnight, February 3, 2016, when fire broke in Bagong Sibol, a neighborhood of Muntinlupa City located in the southeastern part of Metro Manila, Philippines. Within three hours, at least 100 homes were destroyed, leaving 120 families homeless. Ten of these families are members of a local Bible Centered Ministries (BCFi) church.

Bagong Sibol is for the most part a very poor community. Some professionals have purchased land there to build more substantial homes. But in general the residents are vendors, tricycle-cab drivers, domestic servants and other low-income professions. Their simple homes are made largely of wood and other highly flammable materials, crowded together along

the banks of a very polluted stream so that the area looks like a giant maze.

Sixteen years ago, BCM Philippines started a Bible study cell group in the area with one family under the leadership of Pastor Frax Napole. This eventually grew to a full church, BCM Bagong Sibol, where members gather for regular worship services

and prayer meetings. The church has also started additional cell groups in the area.

Receiving word of the fire, I (Gerlyn) rushed to the site. My thoughts were with our people. I was desperate to know their situation. I also wanted to know if our church building had destroyed. To my disappointment, I discovered that the street leading to



the church had been blocked, due to the fire. By 3:00 am, I received word from a church member that the fire had been stopped just three houses short of where BCM Bagong Sibol Church stood.

That no deaths had been reported was reason to rejoice. But my heart sank as I saw our church families who'd lost their homes scattered in the street, crying out in desperation, hurting and in need. I gathered together with church members, and we prayed for God's presence to bring comfort and peace. As news spread about the disaster, others in the Philippines and across the globe joined us in prayers as well, including our BCM family around the world.

An investigation indicated that the fire had started in a vacant house being used by vagrants

who'd left a candle unattended. We made an immediate appeal for clothing, food, and water for affected members of the church. Our local BCM churches and the homes of some church members were opened to serve as temporary shelters. Meals were also provided for our affected church families. But the cry for help from the other fire victims outside the household of faith could not be ignored.

Because we did not have resources to meet the needs of all the affected families, BCM Philippines contacted Operation Blessing Foundation, which is the humanitarian arm of CBN Asia, the ministry that produces a Christian TV program, "The 700 Club Asia". In partnership with OBF, we were able to begin distributing aid by the following afternoon to all of the 120 families who'd been burned out of their homes. Each aid packet included

food, water, clothes, milk, biscuits and hygiene kits.

The fire victims came to receive supplies because of their immediate and urgent felt needs. But we recognized as well that their greatest need was for a Savior to redeem them and provide them eternal salvation and hope. So along with distributing relief, we also presented the gospel to each person who came to us. *During the distribution, 92 men and women surrendered their lives and accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.*

Though the fire is now out, the victims still face ongoing challenges and needs as they rebuild homes and lives. BCM Philippines continues to minister to the affected families through prayer, visitation, counselling and some medical help.

Ten days after the fire, February 13th, 2016, BCM Philippines

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1. Visiting victims 2. Praying with fire victim 3. Delivering aid
4. Young volunteers unload aid 5. Sorting aid donations



5



4

invited all the fire victims to a worship service in BCM South Green Heights, another BCFi church just a short distance from the fire zone. With financial aid from the BCM International global family as well as the BCFi churches within the Philippines, BCM Philippines was able to purchase clothes, rice, canned goods, eggs, toiletries, milk and other commodities for the fire victims.

As families arrived, I had the opportunity to visit with a number of individuals who'd been affected by the fire. One woman named Arlyne is a mother who gave birth to her second child by cesarean section just last November. A month later in December, her husband, who is a bus driver, was involved in a serious accident and is

now in a coma due to brain injury. After all this tragedy, Arlyne had now lost all her possessions in the fire. She had become very bitter towards God and life. During one of our earlier visits to her home, she would not even allow us to pray for her. But now through the love and help she experienced from BCM Philippines church members after the fire, she has committed her life to Christ and found hope to keep living.

After the worship service, we distributed the aid among the 120 families whose homes had been burned. We could see how experiencing God's love in a tangible way had uplifted their spirits. One father approached to thank me, not for what he had just received, but for being there

for them. A grandmother could not hold her tears as she thanked us for the prayers and the goods she received. BCM has impacted a community by responding to people's felt as well as real needs.

Today BCM Philippines continues to minister to these affected families as they rebuild their homes and their lives. We ask for your prayers as we follow up with new believers and find ways to extend material help as well as provide ongoing livelihood to the people of Bagong Sibol.

If interested in donating to ongoing fire disaster relief in Bagong Sibol, more information and instructions for giving can be found at www.bcmintl.org/a-brother-in-need/.



COMING HOME TO AFRICA'S HEARTLAND



By Jeanette Windle with Lois Lass

BCM missionary Lois Lass was just turning thirteen years old the last time she'd set foot in her birthplace—and her heart home. Lois was born in the Belgian Congo (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) to missionary parents Ray and Wanda Florence. Lois remembers her childhood growing up along Africa's Great Lakes, both in the Congo and neighboring Burundi, as idyllic.

"It was a happy time in my life, and I didn't see the poverty. It was just how people lived. Mud houses with grass roofs, dirt floors and just one room. No beds or furniture, just mats. No running water or bathrooms. No electricity or stoves to cook food on, just an open fire that you had to collect wood for every day. The villagers had to walk to wells to get their water every day. But I also saw people filled with joy and the love of God. When they smiled, the joy shone through their eyes."

When Lois headed to her parents' homeland for her secondary education, she always planned to return one day to equatorial Africa. After college, she married a widower with two small children, Jim Lass, who was also preparing for missionary service in Africa. But mission leadership recommended the couple adjust to their newly blended family for at least two years before heading overseas. Jim and Lois began working in inner-city neighborhoods, first in Muskegon, MI, then in Atlanta, GA. As time passed, they recognized God was calling them to continue in this ministry. Lois' dream of returning to Africa remained on a back burner.

The Lass family joined BCM as missionaries in 1980. Over the next decades, they taught Bible clubs, adult Bible studies, teacher training, served in BCM camp ministries, along with raising three additional children. When God called Jim Lass home in 2002, Lois continued serving with BCM, both in children's clubs and in summer camps. And though she'd never had opportunity to return to her childhood home in



Africa, she was once again involved in ministry there.

This connection began when Lois attend a concert of Ugandan Thunder, a children's choir from a Ugandan Christian orphanage that was on its annual tour in North America. Ugandan Thunder is part of a children's ministry, Pennies for Posho, that feeds and houses around 6000 orphans in some twenty orphanages and feeding stations across Uganda, a country of almost forty million population just across the border from the Congo where Lois grew up.

Uganda was called the pearl of Africa by Winston Churchill because of its beauty. But it is also one of the planet's poorest countries with 80% of its population earning less than \$2 a day. Almost half the population is under 14, of which two million are orphans. HIV-AIDS has been a major contributor to this statistic as well as malaria and war. A cheap corn gruel called "posho" is the staple diet of the poor. The ministry name comes from children's Sunday school classes and VBS offerings (not just pennies!) collected across North America to help feed these children.

Lois first got involved with *PfP* as a sponsor. A sponsorship of only \$9USD can provide a Ugandan orphan with three nutritious meals a day. But in October, 2015, God opened doors for her heart dream to come true when Lois was able to join a mission team traveling to Uganda to minister for two weeks in 19 different orphanages.

The team's main priority was delivering food and supplies to each locale as well as meeting with the

local pastor in charge of each orphanage and feeding program. Lois was deeply touched by the sacrificial lifestyle of the pastors and teachers involved, many of whom had given up secular careers to dedicate themselves to this ministry. One pastor fixes thrown-out sewing machines and sells them in order to pay his teachers. Another holds a professional position out-of-town from which he pays his teachers as well as supports his own family. The orphanage schools have few supplies, with children sitting on a concrete or even dirt floor for lack of desks or tables.

And yet, as Lois remembered so well from her childhood, the children exhibited a joy that was at complete odds with the poverty of their surroundings. She shares, "Everywhere we visited, we were greeted by children running alongside beside our bus, singing. As we stepped off the bus, 3 or 4 children would grab each of our hands to lead us where we were supposed to go."

At each stop, the children would put on a program with singing and dancing, after which a pastor on the mission team would share a salvation message with the children. Any extra time the team had was spent playing games with the children and giving them one-on-one attention and love. Since English is Uganda's official language, Lois and her teammates could communicate with older children without a translator, sharing God's love and a gospel message with them.

One entire day was less pleasant as Lois and her teammates helped a medical team remove jiggers from



children and adults. Jiggers are sand fleas common to equatorial areas that burrow into bare feet to lay their eggs, leaving behind blister-like sores that can cause permanent damage if not removed.

"I washed dirty little feet and some feet that weren't so little," says Lois. "What a humbling experience." Once jiggers were removed, each child and adult received a pair of new shoes to help protect feet from further infections.

But during her two weeks in Uganda, Lois was impacted most by one 12-year-old girl named Angela. The little girl had held Lois' hand the entire time the team was touring her feeding program. As the team got back on the bus, Angela begged Lois to consider providing her school fees. It was evident just how difficult the request was for the little girl, but also urgently she felt about it. Schooling isn't free in Uganda. This is particularly exigent for the girls, since without education, they are typically locked into a cycle of servitude at best and sex traffic at worst. Even at elementary age, if the education is sub-par, they have no hope of passing the Level 7 (post-primary) exam required to be able to continue on to secondary education.

Lois promised to pray about the request, but couldn't get Angela off her mind. She discovered from the local pastor that Angela's father had abandoned the family and her mother was disabled, so couldn't work. While middle school fees of \$250USD and \$450 for high school per year seem modest by North American

standards, it is far out of reach of a child like Angela.

"This weighed on my heart," Lois shares. "What future does she have without an education? So I'm paying her school fees for this year at least, and she will be my third child to sponsor."

But Angela is only one of thousands. Lois asks prayer for these children that they will grow into godly adults and especially for the girls that God will protect them against sexual abuse. While Lois is now back to working with BCM children's ministries in North America, part of her heart has remained in Africa, and it is her hope to return again to be able to share God's love in the region of her birth.

"Being able to go to Uganda was such a blessing from the Lord," Lois expresses. "It's much more than helping children in poverty on the other side of the world. It's a heart thing. The orphans of Uganda now have a permanent place in my heart."

Picture page 5:
Welcome children's performance

Pictures left to right:
Lois washing feet for jigger removal; Uganda typical village home; Orphanage school classroom; Typical dormroom - Uganda orphanage

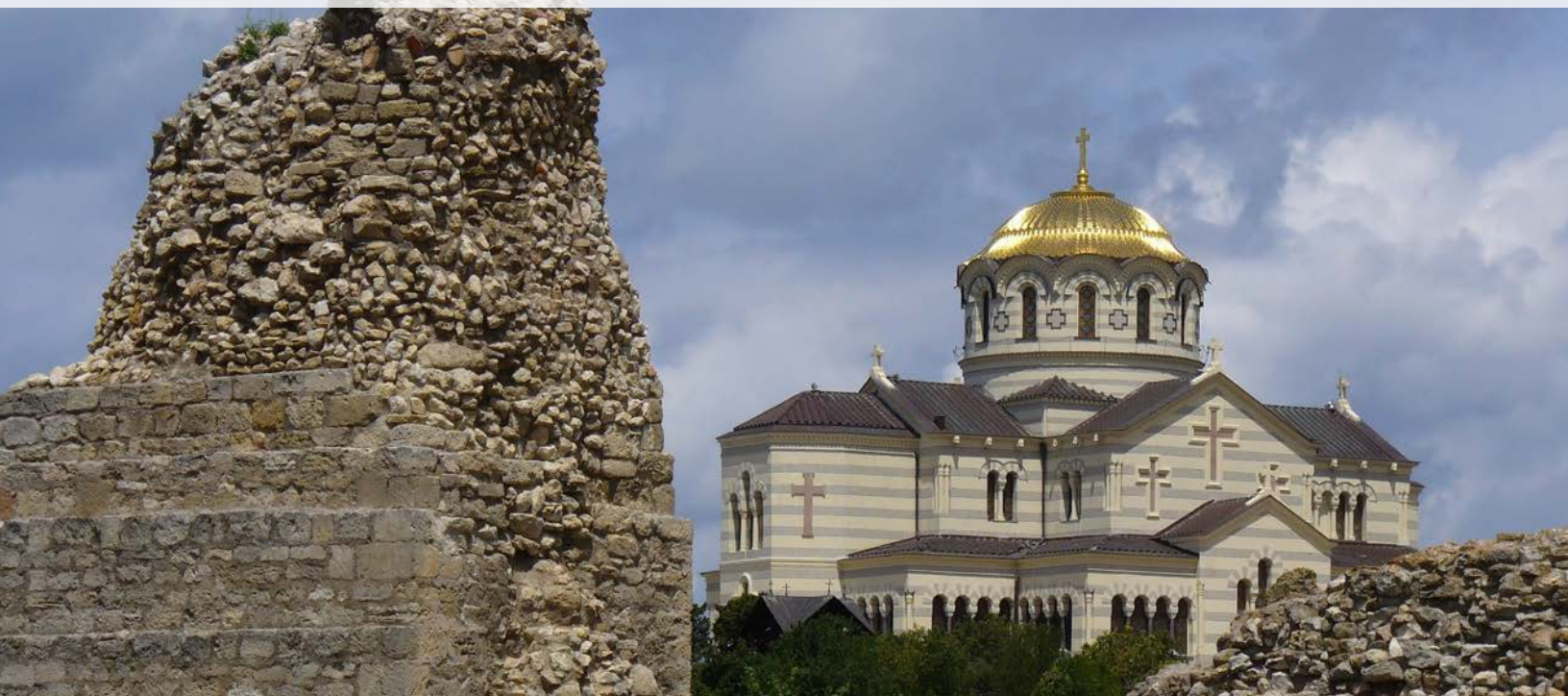


BCM UKRAINE: SPEAKING UNCHANGING TRUTH TO AN EVER-CHANGING NATION

By: Lisa Biegert

While BCM ministry in the Eastern European country of Ukraine has existed since 1993, political circumstances have recently changed, re-shaping ministries to meet needs of the Ukrainian people in their present circumstances. Because of ongoing conflict with Russia, some ministries such as the Mariupol orphanage have required temporary relocation. Also due to the conflict, outreach to soldiers and refugees

has become a priority. Ukrainian youth continue in need of guidance, discipleship, and mentoring, which has opened doors for youth centers and additional camps and Bible clubs. Church plants are blossoming, and new opportunities arise regularly for BCM Ukraine's fifteen full-time missionaries to reach their compatriots. Read on to catch a glimpse of what God is doing in and through BCM Ukraine.



KIEV-BCM DIRECTOR DR. IGOR KOTENKO

Director of BCM Ukraine Dr. Igor Kotenko came to know Christ as Savior in the early 1990s after spending half a week's salary on a Bible. Read more of Igor and Oxana's testimony here ([Changing Ukraine, One Heart at a Time](#)).

www.issuu.com/bcmworld/docs/bcm_world_-_2009_spring_web/10

Igor's love for God and concern for his fellow Ukrainians initiated the various ministries of BCM Ukraine in 1993. Outreaches through Bible clubs, camps, and universities have now multiplied and spread across borders into Russia. Igor is also one of five pastors who oversee the church the Kotenkos attend in Ukraine's capital city of Kiev, which has an attendance of about 1500. Igor's main responsibility is to disciple those new believers preparing for baptism. His newest ministry is developing chaplains for hospitals and war zones along with BCM missionary Alex Tominsky.

Another of Igor's top priorities is to follow up those teens who come to know Christ in camps. This is carried out through "roundtable discussions", teen Bible clubs, and Bible studies. BCM's teen outreach in the Ukraine began in the year 2000. Igor now reports: "After 16 years, we have a new generation rising up to take over—teenagers who are working in ministry."

Pray for Igor and Oxana as they continue to reach their own people of the Ukraine with the good news of Jesus and as they mentor a new generation to take over the ministry in coming years.

Pictures top to bottom:

Page 8: Flag of Ukraine; St. Vladimir, Cathedral

Page 9: Eugen, Oxana, Dr. Igor; Discipleship with teenagers; Baptismal Service; Teen ministry group photo



CHURCH PLANT



Mukachevo, a city located on the far western side of Ukraine near the borders of Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania, is the location of a new BCM church plant pastored by BCM missionary Rev. Timothy Dymchenko. The church property was purchased in 2008. Rev. Dymchenko remembers standing with Bob Evans, president-emeritus of BCM, near a tree on the empty lot and asking Bob to pray that God would provide means to build a church there. God answered prayer, and that tree has now been dubbed the “Bob Evans tree”.

Unable to hire outside help for the build, the Ukrainian church members built the church with their own hands. In 2010 when volunteers cleared the land of brush and trash, they discovered electrical lines below the surface that would prevent breaking ground. Rev. Dymchenko explains: “We were praying about this problem when a friend stopped by to ask how things were going. I said, ‘Great, but we have this problem with buried electrical cables.’ He replied, ‘I have a friend who can help.’ That friend turned out to be the director of the electric company. Within one week the cables were removed. Praise God!”

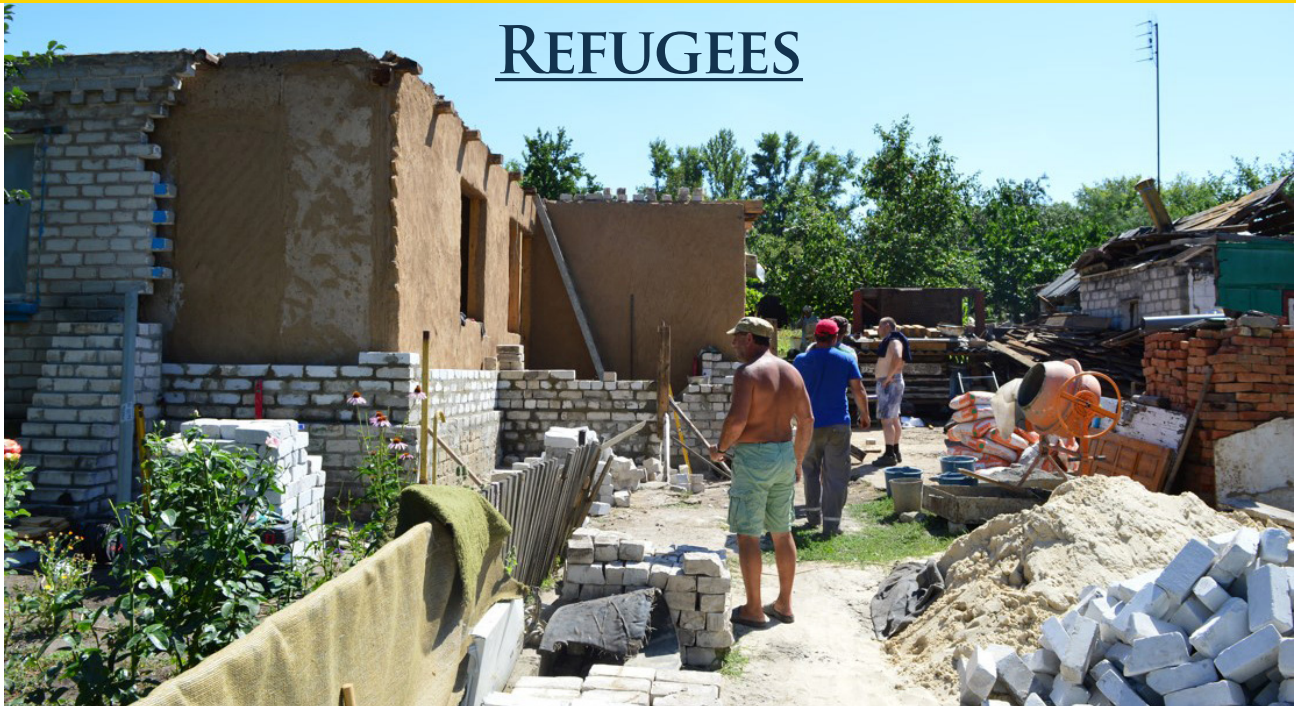
Short-term ministry teams also came to help build, even supplying some of the funding. Four years later in 2014, the church was completed. The front door now stands where the “Bob Evans tree” originally stood. What began as a small group of believers has grown to more than 80 adults along with an additional 60 children. The church has already outgrown their Sunday School wing and needs to add on additional classrooms.

Pray for this church plant to continue expansion in numbers and in space.



Pictures left to right and top to bottom: Breaking ground; Volunteers; Finished church; Bob Evans tree where first prayed for church plant; Church service; The Dymchenkos

REFUGEES



The crisis in eastern Ukraine has created many refugees, opening new doors for ministry. The Mukachevo church plant cares for more than forty refugees by providing food and helping them find jobs. These include families with children who are poor, hungry, homeless, and victims of war. One example is a family from the war zone. The father was riding his bike home one day and was almost there when his pants leg got caught in the bike chain. He had gotten off his bike to free himself when three missiles hit his home. If he hadn't stopped, he would likely have been killed. As it was, the house was badly damaged, and his mother—thankfully, a Christian with great faith in God—was killed. As winter set in, the damage left the family without adequate shelter against the cold, but they had nowhere to go.

“I visited him that winter,” says Timothy Dymchenko, “and saw his need. God gave me no rest until I returned home and shared his needs with our church. We raised money, and in August a team from our church came and helped him rebuild the house. We worked until the house was finished, including running water and electricity. Then I had peace.”

Pray for the ongoing work with the refugees—that the church would be a light and would have the means to care for as many refugees as possible, physically as well as spiritually. Pray as well for Rev. Tim Dymchenko and his family as he gives leadership to the church plant and BCM ministries in that region.



Pictures top to bottom: Church team rebuilding bombed house; Bombed family in front of rebuilt house; Aid for war refugees

CHAPLAIN MINISTRY

BCM missionary Alex Tomnitsky is a veteran of the Afghan war who came to Christ in 1996. He shares: "As the war with Russia started, not only was the army not ready, but neither was the church. Nobody here had any practical experience running a chaplaincy ministry. But the Ukrainian churches took on the challenge, sending out church members who would be able to fill in this gap in evangelism to servicemen. This is how I stepped into this service."

Since Alex is a war veteran himself, he understands the traumas of war. He has also studied Christian counseling, so he is able to counsel fellow soldiers. He explains, "We realize that just as the best ministers to addicts are former addicts, and those who can speak best to the hearts of the handicapped are also handicapped, so soldiers are more open to listen to other soldiers. So we started an organization that unites former soldiers who are Christian with soldiers in need of counsel."

Alex visits the borough of Mariupol, which has seen most of the battle, and has been able to establish contact with servicemen there in order to share the

Gospel. Now he and other chaplains are establishing a rehab center for Christian counseling in the city Zhitomir, not only for those who have fought, but also for widows of war, injured soldiers, and those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

Chaplaincy is not yet an established position in the Ukraine's military, but a volunteer service. This means chaplains not only do not earn a salary, but must provide their own uniform, helmet, bullet proof vests, and anything else they may need for protection when entering the battlefield to minister to those on the frontlines. Only recently have chaplaincy programs been included among seminary curriculum in the Ukraine. It is his hope, explains Alex, that this service will eventually be established within the Ukraine military as it is in other armies around the world. In the meantime Alex will continue to work alongside other volunteer chaplains to bring the gospel to Ukrainian soldiers and widows of war.

Pray for the chaplaincy program to take root and flourish and that more Christians would join this ministry, especially in the midst of this ongoing conflict.



CAMPING



BCM Ukraine offers a variety of camps in different locations and different time frames (day camp or full-week). Camps for teens and children take place throughout the summer months, including among war victims and orphans. An exciting additional ministry outreach is camps for handicapped children, for whom programs and resources are very rare in the Ukraine. BCM missionaries Alexander and Sveta Tomnytsky, who have handicapped children themselves, help run these programs from their home base in Zhytomir. They are joined by BCM team members Corosten Anton and Katia Rozvodovsky. These “handicamps” are held in the beautiful setting of the Carpathian Mountains. Most campers attending are from unchurched families.

The Tomnytskys and the Rozvodovskys approach pastors throughout the Ukraine, presenting the opportunity to attend camp for handicapped children within their congregations. This strategy has worked

very well in providing ongoing discipleship for campers. Alexander Tomnytsky explains, “We share the Good News with campers, spend time with them at camp. Then they go home, and it is the local church’s responsibility to do follow-up work. We are also planning a training camp with pastors to prepare them for working with handicapped.”

Many of the regular and handicamp programs use rented facility. BCM Ukraine currently has land for a permanent camp facility, but the recent crisis has prevented development of the new camp property. **Please pray for a new vision for the camping ministry, especially in regards to facilities.**

Pictures above left to right: Handicamp; Summer camp group shot; Camp activities

Picture below: BCM missionary Nellie Semenov with her son

INTERNET MINISTRY

Birthered from the handicamp ministry has been another active and growing outreach through BCM missionary Nellie Semenov. Nellie lives in a remote village. Because of current needs of her own handicapped son, she can’t currently attend camps or travel for ministry. However, internet access has allowed her to establish an interactive blog (link – www.gracegleeful.blogspot.nl), through which she is able to share the gospel and assist many in their spiritual problems.



YOUTH CENTER

Dysfunctional families are a common problem in Ukraine, which can result in children and teens growing up on the streets. BCM's desire is that no child be forgotten or left behind. Keeping this in mind, BCM missionaries Vitali and Valja Lechs began a youth center in the city of Zhytomyr, located in the north of western Ukraine. They began by simply inviting children to come. About thirty now attend regularly.

"We teach them the Bible, play with them, do sports. We also feed them lunch because these children don't have three meals a day," explains Vitali.

The youth center is not just limited to children, but also reaches out to teens who are at risk. The youth center started about three years ago, so the original children who attended have grown into teenagers—hence the need of a teen ministry as well. Vitali shares: "I rent a sports hall for teenagers to play basketball. Several times a year we have competitions. At the last tournament, we had about 70 teenagers, 90% of whom were not believers. Teens love sports, so we have put together a sports ground next to the day center so they can come and do sports as well as other activities. The day center is open during the school year. Over the summer months, we run camps for them."

Along with the sports, they teach a Bible club for teenagers. Currently, twenty teens attend. They are seeing tangible fruit from this ministry as multiple teens have to be baptized. Already fifteen teens who grew up in the youth center now help minister to other children.

Vitali explains their vision: "My city is very large. It is our desire to start a second center in another area of the city. We already have a team of people interested in getting involved—teenagers saved at day camp and other co-workers."

Pray for the youth centers in Ukraine to be able to multiply- soon!

Pictures top to bottom: Vitali & Valja Lechs family ministry;
Sports ministry; Providing meals



CHILDREN'S HOMES



In 2000 BCM missionary Tima Anokhin helped found a ministry to homeless children on the streets of the small village of Velikopolovecke. Volunteers would find homeless children, bring them into the ministry center, and give them food and showers. This grew into a full children's home that consists mostly of "social orphans"—children who have parents, but who for a variety of reasons have been abandoned. Tima explains that the goal for these children is to "help them grow spiritually and physically and also to help them to fit in socially when they graduate from school."

Another orphanage is located in Mariupol, in the eastern part of Ukraine (read more about their story here: <http://www.bcmintl.org/good-samaritan/>).

The most difficult part of the ministry for both children's homes is once teens graduate. Many fall into dire circumstances because they have no support network once they leave the program. Tima's goal is to change that statistic by building into these teens' lives and continuing relationships long after graduation.

Pray for Tima and his wife, Natasha, as they themselves would like to become foster parents. Pray for safety for the children's homes during the Russian conflict and that they would be able to reach more abandoned kids and teens. Pray they would find a way to foster Christian relationships with the teens so they are not lost after graduation from high school.

Pictures left to right: Mariupol orphans-funtime barbecue; Velikopolovecke orphanage; Tim and Natasha Anokhin



A BORDER CROSSING FOR BCM PERU

By: Shantal Artieda

The neighboring countries of Ecuador and Peru share many things in common. The friendliness of their people. The Pacific Ocean. The same national language. A similar Latin culture. More pertinently, the same great need to reach one of their nations' most valuable resources—their children.

This shared need was the motivation behind a joint Peru-Ecuador training event that took place in the coastal city of Guayaquil, Ecuador, February 12-14, 2016. While much of the

planet was preparing to celebrate Saint Valentine's Day, BCM Peru field director Jonatan Odicio and wife Shantal, in conjunction with the Alliance Church of Centenario in Guayaquil, were planning three days of intensive training to encourage, equip, and prepare local Christian believers to work more effectively with children.

This opportunity came about thanks to a contact from former BCM Peru field director Carlos Odicio and his wife Marion, who are now serving with BCM in the United States in a ministry directed to that country's sizeable

Hispanic population. The couple met Silvia Cid, who is originally from Ecuador, at the church they are currently attending. Silvia has a heart for reaching children and for helping churches back in her birth country be better equipped for children's ministry. Silvia had completed the training to teach *In Step with the Master Teacher* (ISMT), BCM International's children's ministry teacher training curriculum. Then a year ago in February, 2015, as Silvia was preparing to travel to Ecuador in order to visit her family, Marion Odicio encouraged Silvia to share



the ISMT training with her home church, the Alliance Church of Centenario. During her visit, Silvia was able to complete a basic training covering ISMT's four core sessions. That training session left church members wanting to learn more.

"What caught their attention at the beginning," shares Silvia Cid, "was realizing that children really are important to God. Here [in Ecuador], children are generally kept to the side and are not considered to be of much importance. Church outreach is usually focused towards youth and adults, not children."

A year after the first Guayaquil ISMT workshop, plans were made for a second training, this time inviting BCM missionaries Jonatan and Shantal Odicio from across the border in Peru. Nearly seventy people from various local churches attended the two days of training, which began Friday evening and continued from 9am to 5pm on Saturday. Those who had attended the original training received advanced sessions on effective evangelism and discipleship with children.

New trainees received the four basic core sessions which teach children's ministry leaders to 1) develop a biblical attitude towards working with children; 2) practical ways to build spiritually significant relationships with children; 3) teaching for response; and 4) using time effectively as children's workers. All attendees received additional hands-on training in preparing a Bible lesson for children.

Among those in attendance, three stood out because of their young age. Though ranging from only 9-12 years old, they participated with enthusiasm. One named Karla, a 10-year-old girl, already demonstrated just why she felt it was important to take the training. As her mother shared, "She wants to take the training because she too wants to learn to be able to work with children."

On Saturday evening, after the long day of training, Jonatan

1 2 3 4

1. Guayaquil welcome 2. Jonatan leads ISMT workshop 3. Shantal Odicio teaching puppetry 4. New ISMT graduates



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and Shantal carried out a second workshop geared towards the Centenario church youth group. The purpose of this workshop was to train the youth to carry out a “Pennies for Peru” event. Pennies for Peru is the children’s evangelism outreach program that BCM Peru missionaries and youth volunteers conduct all over Peru. The goal of this program is to go out to streets, parks, and plazas to share the gospel with children in a creative way through songs, dramas, puppets, and much more.

On Sunday morning, the entire church service was dedicated to the children. Through songs, games, puppets and a drama, the youth showcased what they had learned the previous night along with presenting a salvation message to the children. Meanwhile the adults had the opportunity to witness the program and be challenged to consider investing their efforts as a church to reach children.

Jonatan Odicio then shared a

message from the Parable of the Lost Sheep: “Just as the shepherd in the parable left the ninety-nine sheep to go find the one that was lost, so we need to go out there to bring lost children to salvation because they are important to God.”

Already the Centenario church is considering how they can follow up on this opportunity. Pastor Walter Tapia expressed: “We are losing our children. The world is getting to them. If we don’t rescue them now, we will never be able to rescue them. We need to go out to the streets and reach the children like we once did.”

BCM Peru has been invited back to offer further training among more than 200 churches across Ecuador. Our prayer is that this event become an open door to an ongoing ministry partnership with the ultimate goal of reaching and discipling Ecuador’s next generation for Jesus Christ.

Pictures top to bottom:

Preparing practice Bible lesson; Jonatan coaches youth in puppet drama; Centenario Youth presenting program





“HERE I AM, SEND ME —TO HUNGARY?”

By: Jeanette Windle with Damaris Grauer and Birgit Karsch

“Dear God, bless Hungary. Help the Hungarian people come to know Christ as Savior. Send missionaries to their country to bring them the gospel.”

When Damaris Grauer and Birgit Karsch joined the Eastern Europe missions prayer band at their Bible school in western Germany to pray for Hungary and other Eastern European nations, then just emerging from Communist rule, the last answer to their prayers they expected was for God to call them to full-time ministry in Hungary with BCM International.

“God is funny that way,” smiles Damaris. “You pray for God to meet a need. Then God decides you are the answer to that prayer.”

Damaris and Birgit were unlikely choices for the mission field, above all because both suffered chronic poor health. Damaris grew up in a Christian home, her parents Bible camp leaders. She was 11 years old when she accepted Christ as Savior. Though she struggled with a genetic blood disorder, later on developing lupus as well, she managed to complete nurse’s training and went on to study at Bibelschule Brake (Brake Bible School).

Birgit in contrast knew little of a loving God until her non-believing parents sent her to a Bible club as a child. Through hearing the Bible stories, she

“fell in love with Jesus,” as she shares now. Her first severe illness, believed to be leukemia, came at age 14. During her illness, she began searching earnestly for God, reading the Bible even though much of it did not make sense to her. Her symptoms eventually went away, but she continued to seek after God, checking out many different philosophies. Birgit had won a much-contested place in nursing school when a Christian colleague invited her to an evangelistic meeting.

Birgit shares: “God spoke to my heart, and for the first time I understood Christmas and Easter. At that moment I decided that if Christ died for me, then I wanted to live for Him. It was so deep in my heart that I wanted to tell everyone I met.”

Over the next years, Birgit finished her nurse’s training, but also became involved in children’s ministry. She eventually took a job at an Intensive Care Unit in Mainz, where BCM field director Dale Sigafoos was pastoring BCM Germany’s first church plant. Birgit began attending the Mainz church and there was first introduced to BCM International. Dale also encouraged Birgit in her desire to serve God, even writing a reference letter for Birgit to attend Bible school.

That Bible school was Bibelschule Brake, where Damaris was also attending. Birgit and Damaris ended up in the same class and on the same dorm floor. To this point, Birgit’s earlier health issues had never returned. But by the end of her first year of

Bible school, she began experiencing serious neck and back pain. A specialist informed her that two of her vertebrae were out of alignment and that she would likely be paralyzed and in a wheelchair by age thirty. Miraculously, this never happened, though this would remain a constant health battle throughout coming years.

By this time Damaris and Birgit had become good friends, their mutual interest in serving God as well as health struggles forging a close bond. They worked well together in their practical Christian outreach training. A wise faculty counselor encouraged them to consider missionary service together as a ministry team.

After graduation, Damaris and Birgit began investigating possibilities for missionary service. By this time they were both working as nurses in Mainz as well as attending the BCM church there. Many of the mission fields that interested the two young women were not practical with their health limitations. Then they met a German Christian who had grown up in Hungary and was involved in ministry there. He suggested Damaris and Birgit consider Hungary as a mission field. The two young women had never stopped praying for Hungary since their Bible school days. In 1993, they visited Budapest and other Hungarian cities for the first time.

By now the Iron Curtain had fallen, and Hungary was wide open for Christians to obtain visas. But few missionaries had to this point entered the former

Soviet bloc nation. Another impelling draw for Damaris and Birgit was that Hungary had a good medical system, which would provide for the two women's health needs. As Damaris and Birgit began to pray about this opportunity, God brought several other Hungarians across their paths in Mainz. The two women soon had no doubt that God was calling them to Hungary. Their home church in Mainz mobilized behind them, commissioning them in 1994 as missionaries to Hungary under BCM International.

Once they arrived in Hungary, Damaris and Birgit were shocked to discover how few Christians there were. Even more distressing was the lack of Bible training and discipleship even among Christian leaders, the result of seven decades of Communist rule when access to the Bible and Christian study materials was interdicted. Though Hungary was now free of Communist rule, its economy was in shambles and its people struggled with alcoholism and depression. Hungary ranked highest in Eastern Europe for suicides.

The two women found a house in Szeged, Hungary's third largest city on the southern border near Serbia and Romania. Their first priority was language study, but since both women spoke English as well as German, they began outreach through English classes and a German conversation club. By the end of the first year, they were able to hold their first children's camp and had begun women's meetings as well as Bible clubs in various locales.



Seeing the need to reach men as well, Damaris and Birgit began praying for a male co-worker. In 1995, God brought László, a Hungarian national, into the ministry. László had come to Christ while living in Germany and was currently studying German at the university in Szeged. That he could speak their language as well as fluent Hungarian was an added blessing for Damaris and Birgit. The three have now been working together as a team for more than twenty years.

By the end of five years, their rented residence in Szegred was no longer adequate for a ministry center. The team, together with supporters, family and friends, had been praying for a more permanent location to host camps and other ministry events. Then God opened the doors to purchase a large, if run-down, country estate on two hectares of land halfway between the two main cities where BCM Hungary was holding Bible studies and children's clubs. Both local volunteers and short-term mission teams helped refurbish the property for ministry use. In 1999, the refurbished buildings became Elim Center, headquarters, retreat center, and camp site for BCM Hungary. The center also serves as a Christian guesthouse and hosts a small church.

Among BCM Hungary's ongoing ministries are children's and women's clubs, day camps, evangelistic family days, discipleship, student outreach, and a growing counseling ministry. Elim Center hosts a variety of church and leadership training events. BCM Bible curriculum *Footsteps of Faith* has also been translated into Hungarian for use in children's ministries across the country.

Still, ministry in Hungary remains difficult, church growth slow. Several ministry partners have had to leave due to health and other issues. Damaris and Birgit themselves continue to battle serious health issues. Several times the BCM Hungary ministry has come close to being shut down.

"We've experienced everything that happens to frontline soldiers," expresses Birgit. "At times we feel like Paul and his co-workers in 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 when Paul says, 'We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.'"

And like the apostle Paul, Damaris and Birgit have refused to give up, trusting that "what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord" (2 Corinthians

4:5). Their prayer is for God to raise up both a new generation of missionaries and national Hungarian Christians to carry forward the ministry. Also on their wish list are male counselors to work with men and young boys as well as helpers with practical handyman skills to take over maintenance of Elm Center.

For more information on BCM Hungary and ministry opportunities there, contact BCM Hungary at bcmdabi@gmail.com



1 2 3 4

1. Bob Evens with Damaris and Birgit in front of the center
2. Baptism
3. Children's Bible Club Hungary
4. First copies FOF in Hungarian



Take a peak inside to see how the Lord is using the ministries of BCM International to build His Church!

President

Dr. Martin D. Windle

Editor

Jeanette Windle

Graphic Designer

Brian Biegert

Contributors

Shantal Artieda

Lisa Biegert

Gerlyn de Jesus

BCM International is a global Bible-Centered Ministry dedicated to making disciples of all age groups for the Lord Jesus Christ through evangelism, teaching, and training so that churches are established and the Church strengthened.

BCM International

201 Granite Run Drive
Suite 260

Lancaster, PA 17601 USA

www.BCMINTL.org

1-888-BCM-INTL



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