

~ March 25, 2007 ~ Ben & Kristy Williams ~ Josiah Venture ~ L'viv, Ukraine ~

It's almost April! We just turned our clocks ahead last night, and it was a good reminder that we need to update everyone on what we've been doing here in L'viv. We just reread our January update—what a great reminder of how far God has taken us in the past 2 months! Thanks for staying patient with us. Still no internet connection. We miss you.

Our New Home

We've had some major changes since our last update, the most comforting being that we've finally settled in! Getting mentally settled will take us about 2 yrs., but physically, we've unpacked all of our boxes (every single box arrived securely), hung every last picture, painted the turquoise hall and the lime green bedroom, and are happy renters of a "3-room" (kitchen+bath+livingroom+bedroom+guest area) renovated apartment in the High Castle area of central Lviv.



Photos: Signing our Lives Away on the Ukrainian Lease; Welcome to our New Home!

Josiah Venture Missionary Care

In February, we each spent 5 days on a Josiah Venture (JV) retreat. Ben attended a JV guy's ski retreat in Slovenia, and Kristy went to Rome w/ 30 JV missionary women. These trips helped us refocus on the Lord, and to gain knowledge from more experienced missionaries. We feel very cared for in our organization. Both trips were very memorable. So were the ridiculous experiences of getting from Lviv to these retreats. We (mostly Ben) experienced 9-10 hr. waits at the border, a flat trailer tire, being pulled over by cops 7 times in 1 hr., denied the right to leave Ukraine, accusation of a fake passport, traveling overnight w/ a cigarette smuggling caravan, etc. Never a dull moment.



Photos: Ben in the Austrian Alps; Kristy in the Vatican City w/ JV Czech missionary friends

Lessons Learned

In the Bible, the book of John shares many stories of Jesus caring for people with physical needs (hungry, thirsty, lonely, poor, sick) but His primary focus was on their spiritual health. *Was God their first priority, in spite of their hardships? Were they seeking God's will and not their own? Did they have faith that God would provide and care for them?* Recently we've felt that it is **so** easy to get caught up in the physical needs of moving to the Ukraine (finding an apartment; getting a car; dealing w/ the Internet company...). These are legitimate needs that require attention and time, but we constantly remind ourselves that we are really here to be used by God to share the message of eternal life and salvation from sin through His Son, Jesus. Life on earth is short; material cares are temporary. But each person's decision to follow or reject Christ will last forever. These are some quotes in John from Jesus about spiritual health: (17:3) *"Now this is eternal life: that all people may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you've sent."* (12:46) *"I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness."* (14:23) *"If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will make our home w/ him."*

Making Friends

One of our biggest prayers has been to make friendships here. The Ukrainian language barrier doesn't make it easy. We want to keep expectations realistic and see where God leads us. We've been attending the New Life evangelical church. We've really enjoyed just being a part of their youth group. So far we've been at almost every Monday meeting (sometimes Ben gives the message); brought friends to their weekly Christian outreach café; went ice skating together; hired 2 of the leaders to help paint our apartment; attended a day-long youth spiritual purity conference, etc. They have good translators, students who are serious about their faith in Christ, and are kind to us. Would you pray for these young men and women to be bold in their Christianity? And for what God's plan may be to use us to serve them?



These photos are of our new Ukrainian friends from New Life church: Roman, Syava, and Svieta.

Cultural Awareness

Here are some of the latest "not weird, just different" culture moments here: counterfeit money; a pastor preaching in slippers; chocolate butter; we have barred windows; no yellow mustard; poor customer service; serving beet soup as the preschool snack; eggs come in 10s, not 12s; flowers sold only in odd-# quantities; our washing machine in the kitchen; negotiable apt. rent; sharing a "party" telephone line w/ neighbors; gorgeous wood floors; using skeleton keys; padded doors; garbage pickers; 5 stray cats in our bldg., maxing out ATMs (some banks don't have even \$500 on hand), etc.

Want more stories/details? Read our blog! www.benandkristy.com/blog Crazy things happen here almost daily!

Upcoming Events & How to Pray

- Now that we have survived winter and have an apt., we must find a van. Prices and mileage are very high; reliability is low. It is common practice to roll the odometer back and lie about its condition. We have a Christian mechanic, but we are still nervous. May God lead us quickly to the right car.
- Summer is just around the corner! We have so much to plan for summer English camps. Pray for our college kids who will live w/ us this summer, for the American high school kids coming for 2 week trips, for the Ukrainian churches hosting the camp, and for our leadership preparation conference for camp. April & May are busy months, and then we go into full-speed camp mode from 5/29 – 8/16. Talk about full time work!
- Our request for a private phone line & high speed Internet was rejected by the telecom company. We feel this is not an impossible setback, but pray that the company will be willing to cooperate or find us an alternative.
- We are so thankful for the smooth transition thus far. God has faithfully walked with us side-by-side.

With sincere thanks and appreciation for standing by us here in Lviv!

Ben & Kristy Williams ~ www.benandkristy.com

New Address! (Address letters/packages in caps, just like this)

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UKRAINE

Financial Support Address: Josiah Venture PO Box 4317 Wheaton, IL 60189

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