

Dear praying friends and family: (most of you for some 23 years)- Wow!

It is March 31 - the night of Resurrection Day 2024 and I need to share my heart with you. This past month we had a fire in the bell tower of our church here. The building is 170 years old and is the only church left on church street in this little town. In light of this tragic event - there is actually many things to be thankful for. First off - no one was hurt. We had 8 fire departments come out to rescue the building. It seems that an extension cord must have been chewed into by some wild varmint and then the wire, sometime on Monday morning, March 4, began 'arching' as they call it and it got hot enough to start the steeple on fire. Praise the Lord that the church has another small block building across the street that we can meet in. I call it the Jr. Chapel. We almost fill it now -- with room for about 10-15 more people. Now remember, we only had 12 ppl here when we came and today there were 29 in the auditorium - Praise the Lord for His sweet blessing on the work here. Praise the Lord as well, (regarding the fire) we have been able to be a big witness to our community here and met lots of Restoration folk who, for now, work at the church - a great pool for 'fishing.' God has sent us a great crew of workers and directors - I have been receiving an education on the side regarding insurance, church fires, and restoration companies and policies.

We appreciate your prayers regarding this work and the restoration and honestly some fixing of major neglect (especially in the wiring and lights downstairs). The electrician called it a nightmare and said that THERE COULD BE another fire - I don't know if insurance will fix what was lacking before the fire or only restore it to it's previous state. The electrician said that repairs on the things he mentioned with led lights installed down there would run us about \$1,200 - please join us in prayer for this project to secure safer things for the future in this church.

Ok, another matter on my heart and that is: We have received a few calls and letters this year (in the last 3 months) regarding what we are doing now -- So somehow it is still not clear to some what's going on with the Hess' in our current ministry. Let me drop in here what I wrote a pastor in FL.

*Good evening, sir. I know you are a very busy man and so I'll cut to the chase. I was helping the church in NC (People's BC) - and hoping it would work out ...OR to give more time for the war to stop and so we could perhaps get back home. Then, I kept waking up at 3:30 in the morning and the Lord WAS NOT GIVING ME PEACE. (Col. 3:15) I was sure hoping something might work out there: we love the folks, the church needed our help, our*

family was CLOSE, they gave us a place to stay (in the mission house)... LOTS of pluses, but NO PEACE. My thoughts kept coming back up to this little church up here in PA (close to Erie) that was about to close its doors and it's the last Gospel witness in this town. I couldn't get these folks off my mind. So.. long story short, after visiting again, we eventually moved NORTH - 10 hours north. That brings us to where we are now. **In our Russian ministry** - well, I didn't want to leave. My heart is still there. I do 4 services a week with them. They need a national pastor and we pray towards that. In the meantime, I do what I can. **I cannot leave them without leadership.** I love and soooo miss those folks. If possible that's where I would be today. The Lord has, through BIMI AND OTHERS made it clear that we needed to move on for now. So honestly- this is all I know. I am bearing my heart with you. I so want the Lord to use us to revive and get THIS church up here BACK on solid ground, **growing, grounded, making disciples and training/raising up** their own servants for Christ. As we did overseas, we desire the work here to flourish. We are working to that end. The church cannot afford a pastor, so it's a good thing we have mission support. It is truly a RE-START.

When can/will we return?? Unfortunately , I cannot answer that because I have no leading or definite peace from the Lord to do anything other than what I'm doing NOW. I would just be kinda making something up and **that's not who I am** . I am living with the light God gives day by day. Actually, looking at it like this - JESUS IS COMING SOON, so I will do all I can for Him TODAY and making plans only for this year. We are working as though Jesus has me on a 'timer.' I do know this though: real ministry takes time, lots of prayer and effort - evangelism, discipleship, feeding the flock with anointed preaching, etc.. I LOOSE MYSELF IN THESE THINGS and trust that if the Lord Jesus wants us back overseas (which I want), then **HE WILL MAKE IT HAPPEN** and MAKE IT CLEAR. I try to keep my heart yielded. FOR NOW, God has given me **2 churches to look after**, love and lead in "paths of righteousness for His names sake."

So I know some of this sounds, less than 'noble' perhaps - but I know it's more important to be **REAL** over just looking/sounding pretty. Mrs. Hess and I deeply appreciate how your church has helped and so strengthened us in and for ministry. YOU ALL MEAN A GREAT DEAL TO US and OUR MINISTRY.

I do hope this helps clarify some things and I'm so glad you wrote me. You guys down there inspire us every time to do a little better for Christ. Thank you again for being the blessing you always are.

**Let me as well update you on our other church/ministry in CRIMEA.** One Friday, after Timothy Class - I sat down and jotted in my journal: SUCH AN **AWESOME** TIME SINGING WITH OUR TEENS IN Tim.Class today--- it brought tears to my eyes SEEING THEM continue on and in singing and **NOT wanting to quit** and how they sang out!! WHAT A JOY seeing the FRUIT OF THE MINISTRY from these many years. **It is SOOOOOOOOOO worth it.**

Thank you, **Jesus** and EACH OF YOU WHO ENABLE US TO KEEP DOING THIS--- if i was working down at the factory today -there's no way I could be here when the class meets. Again, THANK YOU, JESUS!! Love you, church family.

*[I know this is a loooong letter - like 2 in one], but take a break if you need to and come back if you must to get this last highlight.*

A few Sunday's back - a man stood up in CRIMEAN CH. and shared a testimony. He said that Tony Hess had shared Christ with him some 8 yrs. ago and then .."I haven't seen him since" -- SOMEHOW HE FOUND OUR LITTLE SMALL CH. WHICH MEETS **OUTSIDE THE CITY** in our personal house. HE SAID THAT I LED HIM TO THE LORD, even though I didn't directly do that - I just sowed the seed and **God** gave the increase... HE IS NOW SAVED, a CH. MEMBER (a different ch.) AND PREACHING THE WORD IN CRIMEA THERE -- praise God!!! SOOOOO ENCOURAGING right??? Wow! - Don't give up. Be faithful. Trust the Lord.. especially in the valleys and watch Him work! THIS GOOD NEWS MADE MY DAY - maybe yours too.. LOVE YALL!

Yours for the Harvest,

*Bro. Tony & my sweet Dawn Denise Hess*