



Greater Europe Mission

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Serving In Eastern Europe

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Dear Friends,

It has been a busy spring with retreats and conferences and our family is now looking forward to the sunshine of our own yard. The ministry at the seminary has been going well. We have finished another quarter and I am getting my grades finished. As I was looking over the student's homework, I thought that some of the responses would be interesting to you. When we discussed the Reformation and Martin Luther's posting of his 95 thesis, I asked the students to create several of their own thesis statements which they would nail to the door of their home church. Let me share a few with you.

A student from Serbia and Montenegro wrote, *"All the members of the church's congregation should be treated in same way. Poor, rich, white, black, educated, not educated, old, young, sick, healthy, pastor, deacon, and lay people are all equal in God's eyes. We should see each other as God is seeing us."* Those would be powerful words to a church located in an area which is divided by ethnic hatred and currently struggling to find a working economic system after communism. She also had something to say to the insulated churches of Eastern Europe which sometime seem to exist as a private club. Her second thesis stated, *"Our church should be more involved in our society by focusing on witnessing to non-believers and not existing only to enjoy in the safety and blessings of a Christian community."*

A student from Moldova seems to have a clear grasp on the difficulties that face the contemporary church in Eastern Europe. These are eight of their thesis points.

- 1. Serving in the choir, Sunday school or on a mission project does not insure one's salvation.*
- 2. The congregation can not wait for the West to finance for every idea or project. It is our responsibility to accomplish God's will for our people with the recourses He provides.*
- 3. We have to wake up and to see that the cross cultural mission work is not only for westerners but that we have to do it too.*
- 4. Do not spend all of our money so that our buildings look nice. We need to spend our money first for missions and then, after that, for the buildings. Let's keep the priority.*
- 5. Do not wait for the pastor to do everything. We are all part of the common priesthood of believers and therefore everybody has to serve, not just one person.*
- 6. In everyday life we have to worship God, as well as in the church. Do not make a distinction between Sunday and the other days.*
- 7. We can not agree that every faith or world religion is equally good and practical. There is only one way to God and that is Jesus Christ.*
- 8. We must recognize that materialism is evil. It is a tricky weapon which has been used against western Christianity, we must carefully guard against it.*

One of my students is a pastor from Western Ukraine. He stated, *"people should not have segregated seating in the church but that they should be able to sit with their families."* In many of the traditional churches in Western Ukraine, the men sit on one side of the sanctuary while the women sit on the other. This student would like to see family ties built as sons and daughters sit with parents and together, as a family, experience worship. He also stated, *"the pastor's main responsibility is to preach the Word and not to solve all kinds of problems like finding sponsors, restating deacon's decisions and organizing burials."* He was obviously overworked and longed to spend more time in study, prayer, and teaching. But, he does have a sense of humour. He said that if he were in Luther's place, *"he would hang his thesis on the door and in such a way to insure that the door was not damaged."*

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One of my students from Russia directed his points to the leaders of the church. His father is a pastor and he has grown up in the church as a "Pastor's Kid." He has a great respect for his father and has learned much from that example. Some things that he learned from that positive example are reflected in his statements. He wrote, *"If you have not taught your child well because you have spent too much time in the service of the church, do not expect God to do it for you."* He also stated that *"pastors are to remember that God is not your boss for whom you work; He is your father whom you serve."* He as well, has a sense of humour with a practical twist. His ninth thesis was, *"If somebody is sleeping during your sermon, do not think he is sinner."* His eleventh thesis was *"When you are baptising, be sure the water is warm!"* But his final thesis point was the winner, simple yet hard hitting, *"Be honest in front of God's and His people."*

These are some of the things that I have been blessed to read this year. As these students prepare to graduate and return to their home countries, they need your prayers. Pray for them as they return to Israel, Romania, Russia, Serbia and Montenegro, Belarus, Moldova, Bulgaria, Lithuania, and Ukraine. Pray that they will be able to find the ministry that God has prepared for them and resources need to fulfil that ministry. Pray that they will be able to adjust back to their families and culture and that they will be able to communicate the gospel effectively.

Let me close with an update on the family. Debby has been experiencing some problems with her heart. We have been to several doctors who have assured us that it is not life threatening. It seems to be related to certain triggers that cause a sudden increase in heart rate and blood pressure. We are currently trying to identify the triggers. Nicolas has been working on his skateboard skills with his friends. He has also discovered the telephone and instant messaging with his classmates which has added a new dynamic into our household. Selina is growing and developing her own taste in clothes. It is not a big issue because their school has a uniform policy but she is learning to express herself. She is also struggling with her reading and we are providing some extra work with her to help her with phonetics and her ability to visually follow the lines of type. I have been busy with various projects at the seminary including managing some short term teams, teaching, and mentoring the residential male students.

Please continue to pray for us and the work here in Eastern Europe.

In Christ,

Gregory Nichols

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