

the Gazette



30
YEARS
OF MINISTRY



30

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An Explosion of Light

Roger McMurrin, a Florida-based church music director, is invited to Kyiv, Ukraine, to conduct Handel's *Messiah*. He hires 37 professional singers and a local orchestra for the performance. For many of these musicians, the audiences, and the media, it's the first time they've heard these sacred pieces.

1992

1994

1993

Kyiv Symphony Orchestra and Chorus Is Formed

Roger and his wife Diane make Ukraine their home and begin to organize the Kyiv Symphony Orchestra and Chorus (KSOC). In its first three months, the KSOC performs three classical concerts, three Christmas concerts, and a concert of spirituals and jazz.



New Community of Disciples

The Church of the Holy Trinity is founded after Roger gives the choir Bibles and they ask to know more. Ninety musicians come to Christ at the first worship service.

Music Mission Kiev Founded

Roger and Diane launch Music Mission Kiev to support the music, humanitarian aid efforts, and church work.



Ministry to Widows Begins

The church begins delivering food packets to widows and the humanitarian arm of MMK is birthed.



Telling the Story

Diane's first book, *The Splendor of His Music*, is published. It tells the adventures of two Americans in post-Soviet Ukraine.

Another Faith Community

Roger and Diane plant St. Paul's Evangelica Church in Kyiv, with Roger as its founding pastor. KSOC musicians lead worship through music every week.



1995

1998

2005

1996

2002



The Music Comes to North America

The KSOC embarks on its first tour of the United States. They make numerous return trips.

Teaching Others to Share the Gospel

Evangelism Explosion training through the church begins, along with Bible classes and prayer groups.



A Country at War

The Russian annexation of Crimea and the war in Eastern Ukraine victimizes many. Music Mission Kiev immediately begins to assist those fleeing to safety in Kyiv, wounded victims of war, and those who do not leave the Eastern warzone: orphans, the elderly, families, churches, and those in hiding.



A Second Book

Diane publishes her second book, *The Last Flowers Before Winter*, stories of the widows of Ukraine who have survived many tragedies behind the Iron Curtain.



A Leap of Faith

Wes and Kim Janzen accept full-time missionary positions in Ukraine.

2006

2013

2014

2012

2015

Transitions

Kim Janzen is appointed Interim Associate Director of Outreach Ministries and Wes Janzen is appointed Interim Conductor and Artistic Director of the KSOC. Wes is also named Interim President of Music Mission Kiev.



Celebrating 10 Years of Ministry

Diane's third book, *Curtain Call*, is self-published through Music Mission Kiev. It is a collection of stories and experiences from 10 years of ministry in Ukraine, including trips to a Muslim country to perform Christmas concerts and present Handel's *Messiah* with Muslim singers and players.





Greg Kannon as New CEO

Greg joins the team with a background in music, leadership development, education, and theology. His leadership allows us to shift the mission to be led by Ukrainians and supported by Americans.

Orphan Ministry Expands

Music Mission Kiev begins visits to an orphanage two hours north of Kyiv in Stara Basan. Our team provides fellowship, Bible teaching, and basic humanitarian aid for 86 orphans.



Lead Pastor of St. Paul' Church

Ruslan Marchenko joins Music Mission Kiev as the Lead Pastor of St. Paul's Church.



2016

2018

2020

2017

2019

2022

Open Doors in Georgia

The KSOC performs Friendship-Evangelism concerts and holds classes in Tbilisi, Georgia.



Russian Invasion



Transitions

Serhiy Basarab is appointed to Vice President of Ukraine Operations and Viktoriia (Vika) Konchakovska is appointed Conductor and Creative Director of Kyiv Symphony Orchestra and Chorus.



Celebrating 30 Years of Ministry

By Serhiy Basarab, Vice President of Ukraine Operations

“But if it is from God, you will never be able to stop them.

” - ACTS 5:39

At some point in the spring of 1992, my boss, Episcopalian missionary George McCammon, told me he had invited his American friend to perform a couple of concerts in Kyiv. This announcement was not anything I perceived of great significance or attention-grabbing. After all, we had been hosting visitors from the U.S. and had been receiving humanitarian cargoes from America. I understood this visit to be merely another item in the long list of other “things” we were planning that year.

Little did I know that a meeting with this particular visitor at the end of June 1992 would change the course of my life. What Roger and Diane McMurrin did at that time was simply overwhelming. The way Roger led his first rehearsals of the choir, the way he conducted the first *Messiah* in Kyiv, the way he made comments during the concerts... Later I spoke to quite a few people who were part of the early pioneers of Roger’s groundbreaking mission in Ukraine. They would all use the same adjective—“overwhelming.” They all attested to the same intensity of Godly experience. Conductor Eduard Senko, who attended the 1992 performance of Handel’s *Messiah*, told Diane McMurrin, “*All I could see was light. And I had to be near that light.*” It was this testimony and numerous other testimonies that sealed the deep imprint of Roger and Diane’s spiritual legacy.

In 1993, the McMurrins felt compelled to move to Ukraine and establish the Kyiv Symphony Orchestra and Chorus (KSOC). Its rich, sacred repertoire won popularity with large audiences. But the impact of KSOC went beyond that. At one of the worship services of the newly established church, Roger told musicians and other church members that they needed to help the poor. They immediately responded, “*We are the poor!*” Roger’s response was, “*There are people who are poorer than you.*” Soon after that conversation, 20 lonely widows were identified in the district where

the future MMK office would be located. Some of the KSOC musicians were the first Stephen ministers who delivered food packets to their homes. Today, we have well over 400 people in our Widows Program, which provides both physical and spiritual food, and also attends to their medical needs.

I don't want to get into a lot of detail about the retelling of the early years of the McMurrins' work in Ukraine. Everything has been perfectly illustrated by Diane in her book, *The Splendor of His Music*. However, I do want to emphasize one important fact: Roger would use every opportunity to encourage me and other people to read the Word of God on a daily basis. I must admit, I was slow in responding to that encouragement. But he was persistent, as only Roger could be. If my memory serves me accurately, it was in 1994 that Roger presented me with the *NIV Life Application Study Bible* (which contained some of his markings and hand-written comments). I began to read the Bible and ask questions, and Roger would do his best to enlighten me accordingly. He also initiated daily staff devotions that further deepened our interest in the Bible.

The Word of God is now central to everything we do at MMK—be it a concert, a widows gathering, a children's club, an Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) outreach meeting, or at a Christian summer camp for teenagers. Bible lessons and discussions are an integral part of all these activities.

When Roger gave me the Bible, he drew my attention to one short verse in the book of Philippians. The verse is one of his best life verses. Later I would hear that verse manifest itself in his numerous sermons. Roger's mother, Myrtle, would often tell her son, "*Roger, don't fill your mind with all kinds of vain things, but whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.*"

As I reflect on the intense building years of MMK with all its various seemingly impossible undertakings, I begin to think that the whole Music Mission Kiev endeavor was born out of that short verse—just as the mighty tree grows out of a small mustard seed. But, of course, with Roger, things were never confined to thinking. He was a doer. And he, together with Diane and a staff of committed Ukrainians, actively translated his thoughts into reality.

Some of his ideas were further enhanced and new initiatives have since been developed by those who follow in Roger's footsteps. The continuing work initiated by Matt McMurrin and Wes Janzen are prime examples of Roger's vision in Ukraine. For example, ponder the wonder of St. Paul's Church led by Ukrainian pastor, Ruslan Marchenko, KSOC concert activities and tours, various widows ministries, children's programs, Christian summer camps, and the outreach program at Stara Basan Orphan Boarding School. Aren't these various ministries models of pure, noble, right, and admirable undertakings?

In the course of its history, MMK has always responded to new challenges as they arose. When Russia annexed Crimea and portions of Donbas in 2014, many IDPs began to arrive in Kyiv. Some were housed in the Puscha IDP Center. MMK delivered food, clothes and Bibles to them. We also established an IDP Bible study group which still continues to meet to this day. Partnerships were formed with churches in the cities of Druzhkivka and Toretsk. We stay in touch and help their church members and pastors, even though many were forced to flee to other Ukrainian cities in 2022.

The full-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine has forever changed my home country and my mission. It has brought ruin and devastation to countless cities and villages. It has also shattered the lives of millions of Ukrainians. Yet, at the same time, the war has turned Ukraine into a huge mission field, with many new opportunities to serve people in need. MMK started several new IDP outreaches in the cities of Kyiv, Dnipro and Druzhkivka. We provide medicines and much needed supplies to the wounded at military hospitals. We support the work of Vasil Khimich and other chaplains who serve the spiritual needs of Ukrainian soldiers.

Thirty years later, MMK is alive and well—a testimony to the profound devotion of Roger and Diane McMurrin who took a giant leap of faith and moved to Ukraine back in 1993. The mission is proof to the faithfulness of God who uses His humble servants to accomplish great things in Ukraine and other parts of the world. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve alongside the staff of this benevolent mission with so many exceptionally-gifted and committed people, a very personal, undeniably humbling, experience.

KYIV SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA & CHORUS PRESENTS

Hope For Ukraine TOUR

SEPTEMBER 14 - OCTOBER 16



The Kyiv Symphony Orchestra & Chorus (KSOC) is currently on its 19th tour. Under the leadership of Conductor Vika Konchakovskaya, 30 brilliant women from KSOC are performing a variety of music. Vika and the ladies have worked hard to create a special concert program and deliver a command performance. Due to the war, the men of KSOC are not permitted to travel to the U.S. at this time, but are coordinating their own concert in Kyiv.

KSOC is known internationally and has made countless recordings. They toured the United States for the first time in 1996, performing 27 concerts for over 30,000 admiring fans. In 1998, KSOC was welcomed back to the United States, expanding their tour to 41 concerts. They wowed audiences in prestigious venues such as Carnegie Hall in New York City, Severance Hall in Cleveland, Ohio, Jacoby Symphony Hall in Jacksonville, Florida, Duke Chapel in Durham, North Carolina, and Princeton University Chapel in Princeton, New Jersey. KSOC's 2000 tour (From Sea to Shining Sea) included over 90 performances in churches, schools, and major theaters. 9

Teen Summer Camp Recap

By Yuri Amelin, Youth Pastor



In this difficult time of war in Ukraine, when teenagers are constantly stressed by alarms and explosions around them, what a relief it was to be able to envelope them in waves of calm in a camp setting. Nestled in a cozy mountain town, there was quiet; the teenagers were able to relax for seven days, regain their strength, and spend time together as youngsters again.

Teenagers from our various Music Mission Kiev (MMK) ministries were invited to the summer camp: our Saturday teen club, our Tuesday youth meeting attendees, grandchildren of grandmothers who attend St. Paul's church, children of refugees who moved to Kyiv and attend our meetings, and some children with cerebral palsy who are part of our services. The camp was designed for a small group of teenagers, so unfortunately, not everyone who wanted to participate could. Our vision for next year is to be able to serve and minister to a much larger number of teenagers in Ukraine.

Our spiritual program was designed for children and teenagers and, as kids of all ages love to do, we talked about our various heroes, including the action heroes in Marvel movies. These entertaining and engaging talks led us to discuss and emphasize the differences between fictional

and real heroes. Most notably, the real heroes who lived in biblical times and performed actual miracles by the power of God. We stressed that teenagers today can also do great things and be heroes if they know God and how He works through us in this world.

At the conclusion of the gathering, the camp ministry mentors shared with the group how impressed they were with the significant spiritual changes experienced by the teenagers, how they opened their hearts to Jesus. I personally see these young adults as future leaders and servants of God. The seven-day experience was a wonderful, inspiring time for all. Below is one of many notes of gratitude received from a parent after the ministry outing:

“Thank you very much for the incredible experience, for the wonderful vacation, for distracting our children from the war, for giving them your time and opening your hearts. We wish your entire team health, all the best and a peaceful sky.”

It is satisfying to receive such appreciative feedback as most of the parents are not believers and do not go to church. MMK’s spiritual program, in our perspective, is the most important part of our ministry for both children and their parents.

I am grateful to everyone who helped make the 2023 summer camp happen. My special thanks to everyone who donated money, gifts, and assisted in organizing this awesome spiritual and physical retreat for our upcoming leaders in Christ. Blessings to everyone.



Children/Teen Ministry Update

By Yuriy Amielin, Youth Pastor

Music Mission Kiev's (MMK) Children and Teenage Ministry continues to grow and develop despite all the challenges that Kyiv and all of Ukraine face. In 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, parents were reluctant to allow their children to attend church services. The same situation is repeating itself today with safety concerns due to frequent alarms, sirens, and interruptions in transportation and electricity as consequences of the ongoing war.

But God gives wisdom and strength, even in such turbulent times, to continue spiritual development with our youth. Children and Teenage Ministry meetings are held on Saturdays at St. Paul's Church and every Tuesday at the MMK office.

In addition to having fun together and eating pizza and other goodies at teen meetings, we discuss relevant topics that teenagers face today. We often talk personally with each teenager and pray together. We believe that only God can truly support us in these difficult times.

Victoria R. especially works her "magic" with the teenagers by engaging them in music: she teaches them new songs, how to play instruments, and encourages their performances during church services. The teens are inspired and are making great strides with their lessons. Their impressive performances encourage them to come often and practice, to achieve higher ground.

I thank everyone who prays for us and gives financially to supports us. I believe that with God's help, the sky is the limit.



Joint Church Projects

By Victoria Skryabina, Children's Music Club

St. Paul's Church started the mission project for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the spring of 2023. St. Barnabas' Church has since joined with St. Paul's in this humanitarian joint venture to provide support to families who were forced to leave their homes and relocate to safer areas, such as to the city of Kyiv. When IDPs come to St. Barnabas's and St. Paul's churches, they are greeted with real love expressed not only by words, but also by physical sustenance (staple foods and Fora market food vouchers) and spiritual nourishment that glorifies God.



The demand for generous intervention to IDPs from the heaviness of war is tremendous and growing. Many of our Ukrainian populaces have lost their homes, their personal belongings and their loved ones, due to Russian brutality. MMK supports these war-torn, vulnerable individuals by infusing kindness, understanding, and acceptance to help them regain some semblance of normalcy as they forge ahead to begin their lives anew.

Many thanks to God for His benevolence and to the care and support of American sponsors. Blessings to all who stand with Ukraine!

Widow Stories

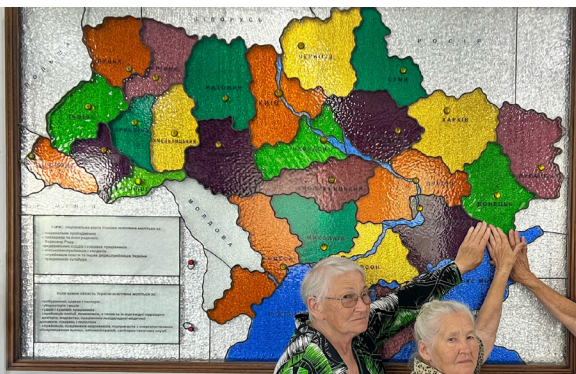
VALENTYNA UDOVIKA

My name is Valentina Udovika, I am 77 years old and retired. I have lived all my life in the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine. After my husband died 11 years ago, I lived alone. I had an apartment and a small summer house where I grew vegetables and fruits for myself. My daughter and granddaughter resided nearby.

On the morning of February 24, 2022, our lives were divided into two parts—before the Russian invasion and after the Russian invasion. I woke up to explosions and chaos. Russia was bombing Ukraine in a full-scale attack.

Being so close to the war zone, I was mostly worried about the lives of innocent children. I quickly realized that we had nowhere to go to wait for help. I did have false hopes initially that we would not have to flee. But when the situation became more hazardous and the odds of being buried alive under the rubble of our own houses increased, my neighbor, daughter, granddaughter, and I were forced to leave for western Ukraine first, and then to Kyiv. We later learned from the news that our homes had been totally destroyed by the explosives. It was clear then that we had lost everything.

We now rent an apartment in Kyiv and have started to rebuild our lives from scratch. I understand with a pang in my heart that the life we had before



will never come back. We cannot undo the cruelty of what happened, but instead we have to adapt and move forward. War is a story of great pain, suffering, loss, unknown futures, and disturbing news from the front, including countless deaths of innocent people who defend their country or are injured by missiles and shells. It is very difficult at times to find a ray of hope in this deep abyss.

In April of this year, a friend invited me to St. Paul's Church for a service. My ray of hope was knocking. I am so grateful to Music Mission Kiev for its support and the opportunity to become part of their Christian family. Since that April day, I have been going to St. Paul's Church regularly. Now, everything touches and inspires me—sermons, prayer, worship, socializing, and children's activities. St. Paul's Church is the place where I can go and feel the calmness of the home that I lost. It soothes me and gives me hope and support that I so desperately need right now. With the help of compassionate fellowship from the congregation and Pastor Ruslan, the pain has begun to subside and hope for a better future is emerging. It also gives me the strength to pray for our people so that they can cope with this enemy.

I now realize that the Lord is in control of absolutely everything, without exception, and that is why I place all my faith in Him alone. I genuinely look forward to our victory and believe that Russian evilness will perish and Ukraine will prosper.

OLEKSANDRA AKSENOVA MYKHAILIVNA

I was born in a village in the Rostov region of Russia on August 15, 1944. My name is Oleksandra Aksenova Mykhailivna. My father died during World War II when I was only four months old, and my brother was six years old. My mother succumbed to multiple sclerosis at the young age of 40; she was in a state of complete paralysis for 10 years prior to her death. I believe her illness was caused by the severe emotional turmoil caused by the war, the death of my father, and the fact that she had two children to raise alone in very difficult circumstances. My grandmother and I took care of my mother during her illness.

Despite this unstable beginning in life, I managed to finish seven grades in school and get a technical education while taking care of my grandmother and great-grandmother. When they died, I was left completely alone. At the age of twenty-one, I received a marriage proposal. I knew that my future husband was sick, but I could not refuse his proposal. Besides, I had a lot of experience in caring for the sick. My husband

suffered from a severe form of bronchial asthma that there was no treatment for at the time. We were advised to move to Ukraine and work in salt mines for treatment (known today as salt therapy or halotherapy). My husband started working in the Ukrainian salt mines in 1970 and, surprisingly enough, he started to feel better. This prompted our decision to relocate to Ukraine. My husband subsequently died of a heart attack years later. All this time though, our son, daughter-in-law, and I continued to work in the salt mines in various roles. We also had land, a vegetable garden, and vineyards. We did not own much, but it was enough for us to make a living.

Then the Russian war on Ukraine broke out in February 2022. At first we didn't pay much attention to it, even as bullets passed us left and right, because we had to work in our garden to support ourselves. But then the shelling started, first to my son's house, and then to mine. The salt mines were blown up by the Russian occupiers. We lost everything and had no choice but to move to Kyiv to survive. However, we discovered that life in the capital city of Ukraine is hard and expensive, but we are persevering with God's guidance and a lot of help from our new friends.

We met people from our village who told me about the opportunity to come to "a" church. The first time I visited St. Paul's, I realized that this was the place where I was destined to stay. All these years I believed in God. My grandmothers had taught me how to read the Bible and motivated me to fulfill God's commandments. I realized that throughout my difficult life, God was always with me on my journey, helping me in the most difficult moments, teaching me to trust Him, leading me out of a place of great danger and giving me the opportunity to know Him better.

I am so thankful for Music Mission Kiev (MMK) and its ministry. I really enjoy interactions with Pastor Ruslan and Vika at St. Paul's Church. I love worship, and I am truly grateful to God for bringing us out of this seemingly dead end situation and showing us His way. Thank you MMK for the gift of salvation that enabled us to become a part of a beautiful Christian family.

HANNA KARPIAK

My name is Hanna Karpiak. I was born in the Bukovyna region of western Ukraine. I have had many life moments throughout my 86 years, although, of course, my memory is not the same. But I do remember very well the times of the Second World War, how German soldiers treated us children with bread and marmalade, how we buried people from our village, how we took care of wounded Soviet soldiers. And I also remember how later,

during the communist regime after the war, the same Soviet soldiers that we had cared for would exile inconvenient Ukrainians—perceived troublesome—to Siberia as prisoners to work in labor camps. Yes, I witnessed this, but it is all in the past.

As a young girl, I was able to finish school, get a technical education, and move to Donbas in eastern Ukraine. There I worked in coal and salt mines all my life until retirement. One of my best memories is when I heard my first sermon at a Greek Catholic Church, which held meetings in a house because churches were banned at that time. Despite the fact that the communist regime prohibited all religious activities, we found opportunities to attend services. The closest church to us was in Bakhmut, and we went there on major Christian holidays, but mostly for Easter.

When the era of independent Ukraine began, it became possible to listen to sermons from the Greek Catholic Cathedral on the radio. This was the most valuable, inspirational experience for me. Through this seed of inspiration, I later realized how God was speaking to me, preparing me for the trials ahead, strengthening my faith.

The Russian war came to us again in 2014. At that time, Donbas was partially occupied, and our son was forced to leave for Kyiv and stay there. When Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, the war came to our home. Russia launched a full-scale military attack and our lives were terribly endangered. My husband, who is 90 years old, and I had to flee and move to Kyiv.

At our age, it is a very difficult undertaking to leave our whole lives behind, all our worldly possessions, all our property, and move into the unknown. But God is faithful and provides. Now in Kyiv, I was able to seek and learn about different denominations and churches. Our search ended after we found St. Paul's Church. St. Paul's became the most peaceful and wonderful religious home for me. There I can hear about God, see Him in the people around us, listen to as many sermons as I want, and read His Word.

St. Paul's Church has become the refuge we needed to begin our new life in Kyiv. I am grateful to Music Mission Kiev for its support and the opportunity to become part of their benevolent Christian family. Now, so late in life, I am truly nurtured in every sense – I listen to sermons, I read the Bible and spiritual literature for myself, and then I also read it aloud to my beloved husband.

Grateful Memories

By Diane McMurrin, Co-Founder

Thirty years ago, we had no idea that a war with Russia was in Ukraine's future. God sent many missionaries in the 1990s to bring the Gospel to this land recently freed from communism. Ukraine was a broken country. The economy was on the rocks. The people were hopeless and sad.

It was to that atmosphere that Roger and I were called to minister to musicians who became the Kyiv Symphony Orchestra and Chorus. From there Music Mission Kiev (MMK) was established, bringing the Word of God first to the musicians and, through their concerts, to the general population. Light into darkness...

We gave our people Bibles and they asked, "When are we going to start a church so we can learn to read this Book?" The group of musicians were joined by widows, and other community members, and the church was born. It is promised in the Scriptures, that "whoever believes in Him has eternal life." As they read their Bibles, the heaviness in their hearts lifted, and they learned to care for one another in Jesus' name.

When we departed Ukraine in 2018, we left MMK in stable hands: Serhiy Basarab, our first translator, is now V.P. of MMK; Vika Konchakovskaya, who was with us musically from the year we arrived is now the conductor and artistic director; Valentina Yenichek, a choir member and an administrator for the widows' ministry; Volodya Berezinets, an orchestra member and comptroller of the mission. We are incredibly grateful that God provided a Ukrainian pastor for our church, who has been so faithful to his congregation amid their present difficulties.

Thank you to the many Americans who provided housing to our musicians on U.S. tours—this played an important role in their spiritual development. Ukrainians witnessed how Christian families lived, loved, and gave so freely of themselves.

I believe that MMK will continue to play a significant role in winning hearts for our Savior Jesus Christ. We ask that you pray for Ukraine, and especially the people of MMK who continue to share their faith with others. It is through suffering that we grow. Patient endurance is our calling as we come face to face with death every day.

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in times of trouble.
Therefore, we will not fear though the earth gives way...

- PSALM 46:1-2





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