



## February 2021 Update: Investing in “The Church’s Most Valuable Resource” in Ukraine

At 2:45 a.m. on Saturday, February 6, at a hotel in Jacksonville, FL, Tania Martin, Convergence International Ministries’ Director of Mobilization, logged into a Zoom meeting on her laptop. In Central Illinois, Bob Marsh, the Impact Team Leader for the Europe and Mediterranean Region, joined her. In Central Arizona, Matt and Onalee Swartz came aboard. Six thousand miles (*and nine time zones!*) away, eighteen people gathered to participate in a much-anticipated training session. The topic: Becoming disciples who make disciples, who make disciples. The path to this Zoom call, in the wee hours of a Saturday morning, began months before in Rivne, Ukraine.

When Tania accepted the call to serve as the Director of Mobilization for Convergence, she was certain of God’s leading – and she was equally certain that she would not abandon the eleven years of work she had done in Ukraine. When the time came for her departure in June of 2020, coordination of future ministry in the second largest nation in Europe shifted to Bob Marsh, the Regional Impact Team Leader. Impact Teams are specifically charged to come alongside indigenous gospel movements and movement leaders and discern how Convergence might help them complete the mission to which God has called them.



On a return visit to Rivne in August, Tania introduced Bob (via Zoom) to Volodya Gavriluk. Volodya is a local dentist who had become a believer at age 15. After setting up practice in Rivne, he and his wife felt led to begin reaching out to University student in their community. He and his wife began a Bible study that brought dozens of students. “When I first saw lives being transformed,” he said, “it changed my whole world!” That first Bible study soon grew to three studies, and eventually the new believers expressed a desire to worship as a church. A group of 12 leaders had emerged, and they selected Volodya to be the pastor of the newly formed Salvation Church. Lives were transformed, disciples were made, leaders were developed, and a second church was begun.

In his first call with Bob, Volodya expressed his desires for the future of the church in Ukraine. “The most valuable resources in the church are not its finances or properties,” he said, “it’s people who will risk everything to bring the gospel to the world.” He then asked, “How do we develop young men who will spend their lives for the kingdom, rather than chase the trinkets of the world?”

From that discussion, Bob began to search for a curriculum that might be used in the Rivne church to equip disciples for an ever-expanding movement of the gospel. That search led to Matt and Onalee, and Foundations Global. Foundations has crafted a disciple making model that has been used extensively among Spanish-speaking groups and has recently been translated into French for use in Africa. After reviewing the materials, Volodya agreed that it would be ideal for their use, and the search for a local translator of the printed material and PowerPoint presentations got underway.

All of which led to the Saturday morning gathering of 18 disciples in Rivne, with Matt teaching the materials, aided by a local translator, with Tania and Bob observing and encouraging. The group was fully engaged; actively participating in break-out group activities, asking for clarity, and specifically requesting that each biblical text in the material be looked up and read by the group rather than simply referenced. The first half of the 5-hour workshop was spent presenting the biblical mandate that all believers are called to make disciples. Then the group was introduced to a Bible study curriculum entitled “Come”, which gives basic introduction to the Gospel. Each student was challenged to identify one person that they will lead through “Come” over the next 3 months; to be followed by “Grow,” “Serve,” and “Go” studies over the next year.

Five hours later, after Tania, Bob, Matt and Onalee had signed off, the Ukrainian group remained together into the afternoon, excitedly discussing what they had learned and the challenge they had been given...and committing to continue. The work of God in the workshop was so compelling that, following the meeting, the translator contacted Tania to let her know that she, too, was moved to find a person to lead through the material! Workshop 2 of the four-part curriculum is scheduled for late May, when Tania, Bob, Matt and Onalee all hope to attend in person.

Pray for pastor Valodya, and local pastors like him around the globe. Most of them are bi-vocational, struggling to balance work, family and ministry, often in impoverished or hostile environments.

For more information, or to support our work, from the USA or Europe: Go to <http://bobcarolmarsh.com/>