



The GROSS Family

serving Christ in

Moldova



"...pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified..." - II Thess. 3:1

FEBRUARY 28, 2022

We are still trying to exit the fog of all that has occurred this past week. On Thursday morning, February 24th, we heard some odd rumbles around 6 am. When I looked at my phone a little later on, I saw several messages from my co-worker asking if we are getting out of Moldova due to the hostilities. I immediately looked on the news websites to see what had happened. That rumble we heard was the same sound that others in Moldova had heard during the Russian airstrikes on Ukrainian runways and arms deposits. At first we were puzzled at how we would have heard the effects of the bombing run with being so far from the SE conflict zone in Ukraine. While in Soroca later that morning, we saw "V," the border police who trusted in Christ over a year ago. He showed us a picture of where there were reports of airstrikes. We were stunned that the strikes were not just in the SE part of Ukraine where Luhansk and Donetsk are but at spots all around the country. According to the map he showed us, one of the strikes was 80 miles from our house. Soroca is situated at the river that separates Moldova from Ukraine. I see Ukraine every day I go into town. This was a very different situation than we had expected. This was all by 9:00 am on Thursday.

We had already taken a number of preparatory steps over the past month due to the talk of a possible invasion, but I was amazed at how unprepared we felt at this point. We began packing and preparing so that we would be able to leave quickly if things were to get worse. We were waiting to hear if the US Embassy in Moldova gave news recommending an evacuation. Even as of right now (Monday, Feb. 28), they have not issued that. So the plan was to stay.

To complicate things, our Moldovan residencies and license plates on our van expire March 10th. We can't pick up our new residency cards till March 7th. After I have that, I can apply for the new plates. Thursday was filled with paying church rent, paying bills, and a host of other preparatory steps. All of our passports were 2.5 hours away in the capital city with our lawyer. I decided on Friday to drive down, pick those up, meet with some friends, and get powers of attorneys made on our house and van in the names of two men I trust. By Friday evening, after being in contact with my pastor, field director, and family, we were highly advised to take our family across to Romania as soon as possible. I felt somewhat sheepish leaving this early, but several factors presented to us. We live on the border with Ukraine and the airstrikes are covering all parts of that country. Moldova already has over 1,000 Russian troops and loads of armament stationed in the separatist region in the east called Transnistria. We are about 12 miles from the northernmost border of that Russian occupied part. The stories of people staying for over a day at the Ukrainian customs to get out is not fiction. We met people from Ukraine that spent days traveling and then over 20 hours at the border to get in to Moldova. If we wait too long, we end up at a border over night when temps are still dropping below freezing at times. There are many who believe that if Russia takes Ukraine, Moldova will be the dessert after that meal. Moldova is not part of NATO and does not have the means to ward off an attack like Ukraine is doing. Our counselors wanted us to get out. I made reservations across the border in Romania for a week to see if things settle. We finished packing and cleaning on Saturday and left Sunday.

This has been hard for me since my heart is for the people in Moldova and a great door of ministry is open for the refugees flooding into Moldova. The other missionary families haven't left yet and are doing a great job serving the Lord in this crisis. Where do I fit in this puzzle? When we arrived at the border, there were 76 cars in front of us (Stephanie went for a walk and counted). At least 90% were from Ukraine. I was able to hand out tracts and witness to a some of them. When we asked if they need any food or anything, they said they did not due to the Moldovans' generosity upon entering Moldova from Ukraine. I am so proud of the people of Moldova. After 5 hours, we made it through and on our way into Romania.

In route, we found out that Eric Chapman and his wife are trying to get to Moldova to help setup his camp for refugees. Flights into Moldova were canceled so he was stranded right before his last flight. He is flying in to the city where we are right now in Romania. I will be leaving my family here and picking them up on Thursday to drive them into Moldova. I plan to help in any way I can, then head up to lead the service on Sunday in Bulboci, come down to the capital to hopefully pick up my residency permit on Monday the 7th, apply for new plates, and hopefully get those in a day or two after that. I will then head back to Romania and re-evaluate things from there. All of this is a matter of prayer.

Thank you to all who have contacted us, offered us help, and have been praying for us. Though the past week has been overwhelming, it is nothing compared to what the Ukrainians have been enduring. Keep praying.