



The Thomases to Ukraine

...Preaching, Planting, and Perfecting
in the Slavic-Speaking World!

June 16, 2026

Dear Praying Friends,

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, much of our energy and focus has necessarily centered on *Compassion for Ukraine*, our registered charitable fund. Through this ministry, we have helped distribute nearly **21 million pounds of humanitarian aid** and over **1 million New Testaments**. During this time the Lord has used these efforts—together with our national partners—to open doors for the gospel, strengthen churches, and even plant new ones in ways we never imagined. Yet the ministry that first brought us to Ukraine, and the one Derek has led since 2013, continues its vital work as well: the **Slavic Baptist Institute**. For 30 years, through war, political upheaval, and even a global pandemic—SBI has remained faithful to its founding purpose. When Dr. Neil Cadwell established SBI in 1996, his vision was clear: to come alongside local churches and help them train leaders grounded in sound doctrine, equipped for ministry, and aflame with a passion to reach the lost. Three decades later, to the glory of God, more than **200 graduates** have returned to their churches better prepared to serve as pastors, teachers, and faithful laborers.

At our recent May session, SBI held graduation services for **seven new graduates** as we celebrated SBI's 30-year anniversary. Their testimonies reflect the heart of this ministry: **Anna Baklytska**, a veterinarian from Poltava, shared, *"I am infinitely grateful to the Lord for the time I studied at SBI... God worked in my heart in each session, preparing me for ministry and life's challenges."* **Victor Kharchenko** wrote, *"SBI is a great platform for training God's workers. It has all the conditions to gain the necessary knowledge for ministry and to receive spiritual education."* **Volodymyr Tsap** testified, *"SBI is the best time to know God and grow spiritually. The Word of God is an inexhaustible well of living water, and SBI helps to dive deeper."* We praise God for these recent graduates and look forward with anticipation to how He will use their lives for His glory.

As we reflect on these three decades of God's faithfulness, we echo the words of Psalm 115:1: *"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, **but unto thy name give glory**, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake."* It is the Lord who has sent students, sustained this ministry through this war, a pandemic and other trials, and has borne lasting fruit. May He continue to use SBI to train many more laborers for the harvest in Ukraine—a harvest that is great, white, and ready. We thank God for your partnership. It is your prayers and gifts that make the ministries of SBI and CFU possible. Thank you!

Your friends and fellow servants,

Derek and Julie

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