

The RMI Report

Ridgway Ministries, Inc.
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Autumn 2010

*"Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord, O my soul I will praise the Lord all my life.
I will sing praise to my God as long as I live." - Psalm 146:1-2*

Dear friends,

It seems such a short time ago, but more than sixteen years have passed since we arrived in Bulgaria to serve as music missionaries with the Bulgarian Baptist Union. God has continually blessed and expanded our work, just as He "established the work of our hands" (Psalm 91:17).

This year marks the tenth anniversary since we left the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention and created Ridgway Ministries, Inc., and Bulgarian Child, Inc. Most people understand this by now, but some are still confused about the distinctions since both of us are deeply involved in both ministries. RMI is the organization through which we relate to the churches and do evangelism. BCI is the organization through which we minister and provide humanitarian aid to dozens of orphanages and children's homes in Bulgaria. A separate newsletter chronicles the work of BCI. If you do not receive it, too, please let us know and we will gladly add you to its mailing list.



We have been blessed by many friends and churches who have joined us on the journey of faith. Volunteer teams have extended our hands far beyond our own reach. Many support us through encouragement, prayer and finances. Our board of directors assists in governing the organizations, advising and assisting in planning, promotion and professional services.

The month of November we spent in the States, thanks to **Green Acres Baptist Church**, Tyler, TX. We participated with more than twenty other missionaries in their first missions conference. We "came early and stayed late" and managed to work many events into our schedule: in Tennessee our annual Ridgway Ministries and Bulgarian Child board meeting, doctor appointments, visits to friends, sponsors, and our home church (First Baptist, Morristown). In Arkansas we saw Anthony's senior art exhibit. In Illinois we spent Thanksgiving week with Judy's mother and extended family. In Texas we took donated materials to the Buckner warehouse for eventual shipment to Bulgaria. We also visited churches, friends, and Zachary and Meredith.

Before we left Bulgaria, Judy started preparing the children at our church for their Christmas program. We also rehearsed with our small professional choir for a Christmas concert we will do in Plovdiv the week before Christmas. Both programs will require a lot of polishing as soon as we return. - Paul

Annual Choir Concert

After months of preparation this year's choir concert was a definite success. Sunday night, May 2, 105 singers and 33 instrumentalists joined together under Paul's direction to present a program of praise and witness to a crowd of nearly 1200 people in Sofia's prestigious Bulgaria Hall. This was the sixth such concert we have organized and sponsored since 2005.

Church choir members from eight churches in Sofia and Plovdiv participated, in addition to individual singers from nine other churches. Most of the instrumentalists are also believers. Most are professional musicians or students in the Music Conservatory or Music High School in Sofia. **Verka Stefanova**, former concertmistress of the Sofia Philharmonic, served as concertmistress for our orchestra. One lady whom we did not know called a few weeks before the concert and said that she heard we were going "to play for the Lord" and she wanted to join in! She is a violinist recently retired from the Sofia Opera and played very enthusiastically. This year **Stephan Vrachev**, pianist for the Sofia Philharmonic, played the piano for the performance and most of the rehearsals. Since Judy has been so occupied with the Borovtsi Training and Transition Center project, this was a relief to her. In the past she has played for many of the rehearsals and some of the performances, but this year she played for the preliminary rehearsals with our church choir and for one of the joint ones.



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The worshipful mood was set with the very first piece, "Majesty." Our pastor **Tedi Oprenov** and one of the Pentecostal pastors read scripture as the orchestral accompaniment slowly but dramatically built to the entrance of the choir singing "Majesty." You cannot appreciate the fact that scripture was read in the most famous hall in Bulgaria! The hall managers had balked this year at letting us have the concert there. Just a few days before the performance, they even asked for a copy of the registration of the Bulgarian Evangelical Alliance - to prove we were not a sect.

The combined choir sang arrangements of traditional hymns such as "Holy, Holy, Holy," in which Judy and another lady sang a duet section. Other selections were: "Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus," "Face to Face," "Here I Am to Worship," "Behold the Lamb of God" from Handel's *Messiah* and an old choir favorite "Joy in the Morning," which Paul translated into Bulgarian.

Our select sixteen-voice choir sang six numbers, including John Rutter's "For the Beauty of the Earth," a contemporary setting of "My Jesus, I Love Thee," a beautiful a cappella setting of "As the Deer," and a popular Southern gospel song "Days of Elijah," which Paul also translated for the concert. **Andrew Ridgway** did an outstanding solo arrangement of "Amazing Grace," and Paul was part of a men's quartet that sang "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands."

Eight of the children and youth from the home for handicapped in Berkovitsa (Berk IV, as we call it) sang three songs. As always, they touched the hearts of the audience. We had advertised the program as a benefit concert for that home. The audience and performers donated over three thousand leva. That is well over \$2000, a very impressive sum for our people.

Initial preparation for the concert began last year with the selection of repertoire and preparation of the scores with the Bulgarian texts. Paul uses a computer program to insert the Bulgarian texts into the music, then prepares "special editions" without the accompaniments for the choristers. Paul

and Judy record the individual voice parts along with accompaniments so that the choristers can listen to the parts and learn them before beginning rehearsals. The first of four weekly joint choir rehearsals was at the end of March. On Monday and Friday before the concert, we had preliminary orchestra rehearsals. The choir came a little later each time to rehearse with them. Dress rehearsal was Saturday afternoon, giving us an opportunity to really polish the pieces.

Our select choir began weekly rehearsals as soon as we returned from the States in February. Several people who have sung before were not available, so we had to find replacements. For many rehearsals Judy was the only first soprano. Especially with such a small group absences are really noticed, and there were absences up to and including the dress rehearsal! But the group finally came together and sang well.

Of course our primary goal for these concerts is to proclaim the gospel through music. The concert gives people from the churches an opportunity to invite relatives, friends and neighbors to a non-threatening public place. Obviously these events are great encouragement for the believers, but there were many non-believers in attendance. In order to help the audience understand the texts of music which may be somewhat strange to them, the texts are displayed on a screen on the stage. We hope and pray that the music and the words of Scripture touched their hearts and will continue working in them to bring them to faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Audio and video recordings were made of the concert. The influence of the concerts is extended through these CD's and DVD's, which are a witnessing tool to people outside the churches and are sometimes played on the Christian radio and television station. Some of the music and pictures have been posted on the RMI website (www.ridgwayministries.org).

The sole financial sponsorship for these concerts comes from Ridgway Ministries, Inc. So we thank you for your ongoing financial and prayer support of our ministry in Bulgaria. It provides the possibility of reaching out to the deep spiritual needs in this country.



Church-based Medical Clinics

“Touching the spirit as we attempt to heal the body.” These are the words of our doctor friend **Yavor Pavlov** of the **Sandanski Baptist Church Medical Clinic**. The Sandanski Clinic is the largest in facilities, staff and patient volume of the six clinics sponsored by a Texas family through Ridgway Ministries. Dr. Pavlov is a full-time GP at the clinic and treats over two thousand patients during each three-month reporting period. His practice has expanded so rapidly in the area because of his reputation as a caring person and an effective physician. In addition to his work load and family with three little children, he directs the youth ministry at the **Sandanski Baptist Church** and leads one of the church's many mission points in the region.

A full-time dentist, part-time pediatrician and gynecologist round out the medical staff. The clinic also has a full-time laboratory which has earned an excellent reputation in the area. Many patients from physicians outside the clinic have their tests done here. Last year they were able to purchase a used ultrasound machine which gives expanded opportunity for diagnosis of various conditions. The 7-story hospital facility which has been under construction for over three years is now complete and awaiting a certificate of occupancy. There is space for additional physician offices, a surgical facility, x-ray facility and rooms for around 25 short-term bed patients, for which the clinic already has approval.

The clinics in the other five churches are smaller, but they continue to minister to the needs in their areas. In the towns of Kazanluk and Dupnitsa the clinics see around 800 patients each during a three-month period. In Varna the clinic organizes seminars on various topics or examinations with visiting doctors or specialists. The clinics in Berkovitsa and Sliven, though smaller, service many people who cannot afford regular medical care. Much personal time is devoted to the patients by the doctors and nurses, and members of the churches are often on call to sit with the patients, welcome them to the clinic and make them feel comfortable about being in an evangelical church. Several of the people who come to the clinics for the first time have begun attending the churches and some have accepted Christ. The clinics have also greatly enhanced the reputation of the churches in their respective communities.

This year again we were able to provide flu vaccines for over 1200 patients through the clinics. This is a much sought-after program and many people express their appreciation for this service. Until just a few years ago there was no flu vaccine available in Bulgaria. Even though it is available now, not many people can afford it, so the clinics are making a strong impact on the health of their patients.

The generous support given by a faithful Texas family for the work of the medical centers will begin to phase out next year. Please pray for the ongoing ministry of these medical centers and for the financial support that will be needed to maintain their current level of operation and success.

Educational Ministry

After a couple of years absence from teaching piano, Paul has begun again with five young students, all from families associated with our church. They all show talent and interest, so we hope that they will develop these skills and eventually take responsibility for worship leadership in some of our churches. Again this year Paul taught a course in Church Music and Worship at the evangelical

seminary in Sofia. It is offered as a one-week modular course, so he spends nearly all day for a week with the students. His course gives them some basic knowledge of music, but he especially encourages them to examine closely the depths of worship practice in their churches and in other churches as well.

Unfortunately the number of students at the seminary has been decreasing in recent years. Bulgaria's churches need your prayers for God to call out young talented pastors and workers to serve Him through the churches. We have many fine young people in our churches, but few of them are willing to serve as church leaders when they know that the salaries and benefits the churches can pay are extremely limited.

The Adopt-a-Pastor program that we inaugurated eight years ago to assist Baptist churches to be able to offer a salary to their pastors has dwindled to just a few pastors being supported. But these churches and the **Bulgarian Baptist Union** are appreciative of those who continue to support this ministry. The gospel still needs to be preached to this nation in spite of the world economic crisis and financial difficulties experienced all over Bulgaria. If you are interested in finding out more about how you can help support a church and pastor, please pray about it and write us.

Conferences with the Bulgarian Baptist Union

In July pastors and leaders from the Baptist, Methodist and Congregational Unions participated in a weekend conference sponsored by our Dutch friends at **Kom Over en Help**. The Dutch folks have long been involved in ministry in Bulgaria. During the Communist times they smuggled Bibles and Christian literature into the country. Since then they have helped support pastors, built church buildings and have helped with many social projects in orphanages, senior citizen homes, and families. The program was dedicated to children and family ministries through the churches in Bulgaria, with special emphasis on the orphanages and how churches can become involved in assisting. Judy presented a lecture on the current status of the institutions in Bulgaria, which opened the eyes of many of those present. Paul assisted with the worship times. Many of the attendees went away inspired by the fellowship, but determined to get their churches more involved in ministering to the needs of the people of Bulgaria.

On the first weekend of October the Bulgarian Baptist Union held a conference to celebrate its 130th anniversary. It was held in the city of Ruse on the Danube River, the site of the first Baptist church in Bulgaria. Well over one hundred people were in attendance from all over Bulgaria. It was a joyful event to see so many of the friends we have made over our sixteen-plus years here. There were times of worship and challenging messages by our dear friend **Teo Angelov**, former President of the Bulgarian Baptist Union and retired General Secretary of the European Baptist Federation. He spoke about the survival of the church during the Communist years because of the Lordship of the Head of the Church and because of God's mercy and grace. **Tony Peck**, current EBF General Secretary, and **Neville Callam**, Baptist World Alliance General Secretary, also gave great challenges to the assembly. During both the conferences we had opportunities to distribute Judy's Sunday school materials and family Christmas book, the new children's hymnal published by RMI and CD's and DVD's from the concerts.

The RMI Report
A newsletter about the ministries of

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Family News

Andrew continues to work with us in Bulgaria. He has a greatly expanded role this year, especially due to the massive amount of work involved in the Borovtsi Training and Transition Center which BCI is establishing and which is occupying most of Judy's time. Andrew tentatively plans to return to the US for graduate work in the fall of 2011.

Zachary and **Meredith** are settled in San Antonio, where they both teach piano at the University of the Incarnate Word and at the Musical Arts Center. Zachary also accompanies the University Choir and is pianist for Trinity Baptist Church and St. Peter's Catholic Church. The University Choir performed a concert in Carnegie Hall over Thanksgiving weekend, receiving a standing ovation. Both Zachary and Meredith participated in the concert and had a super time in New York City.

Anthony is approaching graduation from Ouachita Baptist University in May. We were very proud of him for his senior art exhibit which is one of the graduation requirements for his degree in graphics design. He will be looking for a job after graduation.

We wish for everyone God's blessings during the upcoming holiday seasons and to recall the wondrous miracle of His coming into the world as a baby born to be the Savior of the world. He is the One we worship and serve here in Bulgaria, and we ask you to continue to support us in prayer and through your giving to the ministry to which He has called us.

Ways you can get involved in our ministry:

- ◆ Pray.
- ◆ Write notes of encouragement.
- ◆ Volunteer time.
- ◆ Organize a volunteer team.
- ◆ Come teach a course for training and developing our pastors and church leaders.
- ◆ Share our newsletters with others.
- ◆ Promote Ridgway Ministries, Inc., and Bulgarian Child, Inc., in your church.
- ◆ Make regular contributions.
- ◆ Have your contributions matched by your employer.

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