

Christian Radio for Russia & Ukraine

Sponsor of the New Life Radio Satellite Network—Odessa, Ukraine
Serving the Slavic world with Christian truth through Biblical programming

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www.CRFU.org

Sharing Christ on the air even as the power goes out: CRFRU staff report from Odessa

New Life Radio (NLR), in its Russian and Ukrainian variants, remains on the air, broadcasting Biblical truth to two nations locked in war, and holding on even as their physical environment is subject to ongoing attacks by Russian forces.

Odessa, Ukraine. In early March, CRFRU's Daniel and Oksana Johnson began a seven week trip to visit NLR's studios in Austria and Ukraine, with the task to encourage the staff, find more workers, and troubleshoot technical issues required for the station to operate in wartime conditions. Manned by a skeleton crew and facing challenges that would cause most media operations to fold, NLR is an example of how God protects and encourages the work of evangelism and discipleship, despite the hardships encountered. We have a role model in the life of the Apostle Paul whose experiences reveal the extent of devotion to the cause of Christ despite the most extreme situations hindering his work and calling.

The first stop was in Linz, Austria where NLR has set up a remote studio to oversee the network and Russian broadcasts. Ivan Zhurakovski, our station manager, has now been gone from Odessa since February 2022, and has proven his dedication to God's calling on his life as he and family have been to four countries in the effort to find a stable place to operate our remote facilities in case the radio network in Odessa goes down.



The Zhurakovski home/studio is a busy place as Ivan is set up in a third floor room next to his daughters' bedroom. When not in school, the kids know to be quiet when dad is on the air or recording Bible lessons. Only Simba the cat roams at will into the control room. At different parts of the day, Yuri in Odessa switches the network signal over to Ivan's studio for his programs as well as the daily *Listener Request Hour*. In an emergency, Ivan can take control at any time, relaying our signal to NLR's *Hotbird* satellite and Internet networks at www.NLRadio.net



Ivan

While NLR's studio in Linz is a stable technical solution, Ivan is having a number of difficulties as he remains in Austria. While the state has given Ukrainian refugees special consideration, Ivan is forced to take language lessons each day which interferes with his work schedule, and new demands to find an official job (Austria doesn't recognize "missionary" as

a category for labor) is causing some uncertainty for the near term. CRFRU provides for Ivan's support, but the state does not recognize this as sufficient. We trust God for a good solution to this issue.

As long as the war in Ukraine continues, Ivan will stay in Linz, unless conditions change to allow him to come home. Pray for Ivan and family, that God's will be done.



NLR studio in Linz

HEADING OVER TO ODESSA



Flying to Moldova, then via bus ride to Odessa, the Johnsons entered a city whose people have settled into a rhythm of life that takes daily bombing and air raid sirens in stride while doing their best to get on with their lives. April was a bad month as the attacks on the city had increased and the general condition of the war worsening.

Making their way to NLR, housed in the Christian EH University, the Johnsons found the facility dark, with the power and heat off, and no students anywhere. A casualty of the war, this Christian institution may not survive but with multiple building owners, we trust NLR will be able to remain in the facility.

Climbing the stairs to the fourth floor, Yuri opened up the heavy metal entry door and a familiar atmosphere revealed itself, full of light, AND heat (due to our separate power connections). The studios are so well hidden, few would know there is a Christian radio station in the building. Yuri and his new wife Olga were busy that morning with Olga live on air for the Ukrainian station and



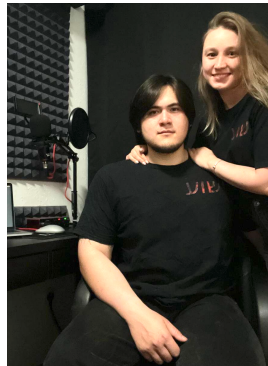
Olga and Yuri in Studio A

Yuri busy editing programs for the Russian. The studios were in great shape and all the radio and transmission equipment working properly.

For people in our global listening audience, few if any, would be able to know the actual conditions of the station, or what the staff deals with to keep the broadcasts going. What they hear, is wonderful Christian teaching and music proclaiming the faith in spirit and truth.

With the broadcasts functioning properly, the next task for the Johnsons was to look for new staff. Since the war started, it has been difficult to find trained people to serve, especially as our normal recruitment sites—seminaries and Bible schools—have stopped operating or severely restricted their work, with students or graduates unavailable or hesitant to relocate to Odessa. For a number of Sundays, the Johnsons went to local church services, scouting the congregation for candidates with no result. They were seeking at least three more people. In the meantime, two former staffers--Lena and Dima--now living in Germany, have returned to our lineup on a part time basis to produce programming in theology and apologetics.

Dima and Lena (right)



Part of the problem now is the impact of Ukraine's military mobilization on the ability of Christian men to work at NLR to serve the nation with spiritual support rather than serving on the front lines. For example, Daniel heard the news of the forced impressment of Pastor Sergey Kovlaka, formerly of our radio staff, who was taken off a train coming home from his Kyiv seminary, with his wife left on the train. Even Yuri, who lives just two blocks from NLR, fears for his ability to stay with the ministry as army gangs are rounding up all men ages 25-60 and they are often just outside his apartment building. This will further be a problem as the army is well short of soldiers at a time when the Russians are increasing their attacks on the east of the country and gaining ground. Since there are no conscientious objector or alternative service laws, there are no options for Christian men who don't want to serve and kill.

Fortunately, Daniel found a 21 year old man named Elesey Vasyanin, who attends Yuri's Baptist church. Coming from a Christian family and engaged in local ministry while working at a post office, Elesey appears to have a number of talents making him a good candidate for radio, including being bilingual and knowledgeable of computers along with good reading skills. So he joined the staff, working primarily on the Ukrainian channel. That gives NLR four full time and two part time staff, but the need for more is evident, noting the work is quite demanding yet gratifying. We continue to seek out those whom God has called to serve. He knows who they are, and we ask for prayer that we might find them soon!

For a look at Odessa, go to: <https://www.kyivpost.com/videos/32390>



Odessa staff in May: Olga, Yuri, Elesey & Oksana

PREACHING with no power...electrical

The last day of the Johnson's visit to NLR was typical. A bomb had hit the center of the city that morning, and at 9 am, they arrived to find the city power cut off in the studios. The Hyundai portable generator was humming away, providing power to Studios A & B. All 7 studios had UPS power supplies working (most with only 15 minutes reserve) Yuri then notified us that the generator could only operate for 4 hours, then be turned off due to overheating. And it eventually went off. Power was down completely, as Ivan in Linz took over the Russian service, but with Ukrainian off the air. City power was down until 12 midnight. A solution had to be found that would keep NLR's Bible teaching on the air regardless of the status of the city power supply. So Daniel and Yuri had a specialist come to devise a new and longer powered backup system, and on that last day, a new system providing electricity to ALL studios, with TEN plus hours of battery backup was purchased for \$3600, giving NLR the assurance of staying on the air, in order to preach **with the power of the Word!**

See backup system at right

CRFRU is grateful to all of our ministry donors who help keep NLR on the air during this time of war and suffering, so we can proclaim the Good News that has the power to transform!



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