



The
Mission
for
Biblical
Literacy
"Opening The Bible"

MBL MISSION NEWS

Reporting events taking place in Russia, Armenia, Nicaragua, Haiti
and at home
John Novikoff, editor

The Mission for Biblical
Literacy

Volume I issue 5
May-June 2007

THE HIGH COST OF CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

This newsletter normally reports events in four countries and also here in the USA. However I would be remiss if I did not report the article written by Darlene N. Bocek who has urged the spreading of the tragic news event that took place in Turkey last month and who has asked us to pray for those practicing Christian Believers who live in that culture.

Most of us do not have to sacrifice much to share our faith or to have the freedom to worship God as we desire. But there are those who have paid dearly with their lives.

The following pages of this newsletter carry the story of Tillman Geske, a German missionary in Turkey, a pastor named Necti Aydin, and a man named Ugar Yaksel. All thought they were going to a bible study but there the Enemy had set them up for massacre.

Please read this story that begins on page 2. This shocking event is not out of the past or from early medieval times. This is a story that has happened in our time. It happened a month ago.
-John Novikoff

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Important notice!

This announcement appeared several times in previous issues of the MBL Mission News. This will be a final one.

During 2006, an attempt was made to move the office of MBL to Savannah GA. Unfortunately, the new location did not work out and consequently, it was decided to retain the office in Atlanta at the Peachtree Christian Church. The Board of MBL is grateful to Peachtree CCD for this privilege. Hence, all correspondence and gifts will need to be sent to MBL at the Peachtree Christian Church address. If you have any **postage free business reply envelopes** addressed to the Savannah address, please discard those envelopes. Thank you. John Novikoff

Announcements and itineraries

April 22	Attended the SE District meet at Camp Kicklighter
May 6th	Short Term Mission (Russia) training, Savannah GA
May	Sally Haas to Haiti
May 7-13	Visit to Woodstock VA and Richmond VA
May 27	Novikoff to preach at 1st Christian Church Savannah
June 4-6	Annual Meeting of the Mission for Biblical Literacy, Atlanta GA
June 10	Novikoff to Evergreen Christian Church, Walterboro SC
June 18-Jul 01	Russia Mission '07 Tambov Russia
July 18-25	General Assembly at Ft. Worth TX
August	Visit to Churches on West Coast, USA
October TBA	Visit to Kansas and Mississippi Churches

2007 Russia Mission

At this writing, there are six team members going to Russia and who will be joined by six Russian team members to carry out a Vacation Bible School type mission to 65-80 children at an orphanage north of Tambov Russia.

The team leaves for Moscow on June 18th and returns on July 01, 2007. The team is departing one week earlier than planned.

Team members as follows: Betsy Haun, Heyward Gigniliat, Andrew Wright and yours truly from Savannah. Also, Sharon Kay Banks from Utica MS and Christine Cole of Newberry Park, CA.



A letter to the Global Church from The Protestant Church of Smyrna

Dear friends,

This past week has been filled with much sorrow. Many of you have heard by now of our devastating loss here in an event that took place in Malatya, a Turkish province 300 miles northeast of Antioch, the city where believers were first called Christians (Acts 11:26).

On Wednesday morning, April 18, 2007, 46 year old German missionary and father of three Tilman Geske prepared to go to his office, kissing his wife goodbye taking a moment to hug his son and give him the priceless memory, "Goodbye, son. I love you."

Tilman rented an office space from Zirve Publishing where he was preparing notes for the new Turkish Study Bible. Zirve was also the location of the Malatya Evangelist Church office. A ministry of the church, Zirve prints and distributes Christian literature to Malatya and nearby cities in Eastern Turkey. In another area of town, 35 year old Pastor Necati Aydin, father of two, said goodbye to his wife, leaving for the office as well. They had a morning Bible Study and prayer meeting that some other believers in town would also be attending. Ugur Yuksel likewise made his way to the Bible study.

None of these three men knew that what awaited them at the Bible study was the ultimate testing and application of their faith, which would conclude with their entrance into glory to receive their crown of righteousness from Christ and honor from all the saints awaiting them in the Lord's presence.

On the other side of town, ten young men all under 20 years old put into place final arrangements for their ultimate act of faith, living out their love for Allah and hatred of infidels who they felt undermined Islam.

On Resurrection Sunday, five of these men had been to a by-invitation-only evangelistic service that Pastor Necati and his men had arranged at a hotel conference room in the city. The men were known to the believers as "seekers." No one knows what happened in the hearts of those men as they listened to the gospel. Were they touched by the Holy Spirit? Were they convicted of sin? Did they hear the gospel in their heart of hearts? Today we only have the beginning of their story.

These young men, one of whom is the son of a mayor in the Province of Malatya, are part of a tarikat, or a group of "faithful believers" in Islam. Tarikat membership is highly respected here; it's like a fraternity membership. In fact, it is said that no one can get into public office without membership in a tarikat. These young men all lived in the same dorm, all preparing for university entrance exams.

The young men got guns, bread knives, ropes and towels ready for their final act of service to Allah. They knew there would be a lot of blood. They arrived in time for the Bible Study, around 10 o'clock.

They arrived, and apparently the Bible Study began. Reportedly, after Necati read a chapter from the Bible the assault began. The boys tied Ugur, Necati, and Tilman's hands and feet to chairs and as they videoed their work on their cell phones, they tortured our brothers for almost three hours*

-cont on page 4

Dear Partner,

There are many needs here in Nicaragua. While most of our ministry has been focused in the bush away from the town of El Rama where I live, there is one area of ministry here that really touched my heart. There are two areas that are the places of the "Picas Piedras" or little rocks. They are rock quarries where gravel is for sale. They are places of great need. The gravel is made by breaking rock with a hammer. They sit all day and put a rock about the size of a hand or larger and break it with the handheld hammer. In one of the areas is the city dump.

The people who work in the quarries are from the ages 4 or 5 years old to the elderly. Some of the children will work half a day and go to school half a day. At times, an entire family will work all day long to make ends meet. They will break these rocks into the size of gravel to sell to people who are doing construction work with concrete. For a 5 gallon bucket that is "full," they will be paid the sum of thirty cents. It is a hard way to make enough to feed the family. But in a society where work is extremely hard to find, they make a living any way they can

Our ministry consists of going to the area in the middle of the day when they can take a little rest. We take in a sandwich, a drink, and the gospel. We do a children's program and let these precious souls know that Jesus loves them and there is hope in Him. While most believe that these are insignificant people, I know that they are very significant in the eyes of God.

Please pray for favor for us as we work in this area as well as our other projects. God has been so good to us. Many doors are opening for us. There is much to do.

Thank you for your continued prayers and your continued giving. As I have said so many times before; you are an equal partner with us as we do the work of our Lord. May God continue to bless you is my prayer. As always I am:

Amazed by Him, Thom



A young girl takes some time from "work" to study.

PLEASE PRAY FOR

- * OUR SAFETY**
- * OUR ABILITY TO HEAR CLEARLY FROM GOD**
- * OUR HEALTH AND STRENGTH**
- * OUR FAMILIES**

Getting out the MBL message:

I-r Volunteers Lawrence Lehr, Betsy Haun and John Novikoff fellowship together while preparing the MBL Mission Newsletter for mailing.



[Details of the torture-- from page 2

* Tilman was stabbed 156 times, Necati 99 times and Ugur's stabs were too numerous to count. They were disemboweled, and their intestines sliced up in front of their eyes. They were emasculated and watched as those body parts were destroyed. Fingers were chopped off, their noses and mouths and anuses were sliced open. Possibly the worst part was watching as their brothers were likewise tortured. Finally, their throats were sliced from ear to ear, heads practically decapitated. Neighbors in workplaces near the print house said later they had heard yelling, but assumed the owners were having a domestic argument so they did not respond.

Meanwhile, another believer Gokhan and his wife had a leisurely morning. He slept in till 10, ate a long breakfast and finally around 12:30 he and his wife arrived at the office. The door was locked from the inside, and his key would not work. He phoned and though it had connection on his end he did not hear the phone ringing inside. He called cell phones of his brothers and finally Ugur answered his phone. "We are not at the office. Go to the hotel meeting. We are there. We will come there," he said cryptically. As Ugur spoke Gokhan heard in the telephone's background weeping and a strange snarling sound.

He phoned the police, and the nearest officer arrived in about five minutes. He pounded on the door, "Police, open up!" Initially the officer thought it was a domestic disturbance. At that point they heard another snarl and a gurgling moan. The police understood that sound as human suffering, prepared the clip in his gun and tried over and over again to burst through the door. One of the frightened assailants unlocked the door for the policeman, who entered to find a grisly scene

Tilman and Necati had been slaughtered, practically decapitated with their necks slit from ear to ear. Ugur's throat was likewise slit and he was barely alive.

Three assailants in front of the policeman dropped their weapons.

Meanwhile Gokhan heard a sound of yelling in the street. Someone had fallen from their third story office. Running down, he found a man on the ground, whom he later recognized, named Emre Gunaydin. He had massive head trauma and, strangely, was snarling. He had tried to climb down the drainpipe to escape, and losing his balance had plummeted to the ground. It seems that he was the main leader of the attackers. Another assailant was found hiding on a lower balcony.

To untangle the web we need to back up six years. In April 2001, the National Security Council of Turkey (Milli Guvenlik Kurulu) began to consider evangelical Christians as a threat to national security, on equal footing as Al Quaida and PKK terrorism. Statements made in the press by political leaders, columnists and commentators have fueled a hatred against missionaries who they claim bribe young people to change their religion.

After that decision in 2001, attacks and threats on churches, pastors and Christians began. Bombings, physical attacks, verbal and written abuse are only some of the ways Christians are being targeted. Most significant is the use of media propaganda.

From December 2005, after having a long meeting regarding the Christian threat, the wife of Former Prime Minister Ecevit, historian Ilber Ortayli, Professor Hasan Unsal, Politician Ahmet Tan and writer/propagandist Aytunc Altindal, each in their own profession began a campaign to bring the public's attention to the looming threat of Christians who sought to "buy their children's souls". Hidden cameras in churches have taken church service footage and used it sensationally to promote fear and antagonism toward Christianity.

In an official televised response from Ankara, the Interior Minister of Turkey smirked as he spoke of the attacks on our brothers. Amid media and official comments ring with the same message, "We hope you have learned your lesson. We do not want Christians here."

It appears that this was an organized attack initiated by an unknown adult tarikat leader. As in the Hrant Dink murder in January 2007, and a Catholic priest Andrea Santoro in February 2006, minors are being used to commit religious murders because public sympathy for youth is strong and they face lower penalties than an adult convicted of the same crime. Even the parents of these children are in favor of the acts. The mother of the 16 year old boy who killed the Catholic priest Andrea Santoro looked at the cameras as her son was going to prison and said, "he will serve time for Allah."

The young men involved in the killing are currently in custody. Today news reported that they would be tried as terrorists, so their age would not affect the strict penalty. Assailant Emre Gunaydin is still in intensive care. The investigation centers around him and his contacts and they say will fall apart if he does not recover.

The Church in Turkey responded in a way that honored God as hundreds of believers and dozens of pastors flew in as fast as they could to stand by the small church of Malatya and encourage the believers, take care of legal issues, and represent Christians to the media.

When Susanne Tilman expressed her wish to bury her husband in Malatya, the Governor tried to stop it, and when he realized he could not stop it, a rumor was spread that "it is a sin to dig a grave for a Christian." In the end, in an undertaking that should be remembered in Christian history forever, the men from the church in Adana (near Tarsus), grabbed shovels and dug a grave for their slain brother in an un-tended hundred year old Armenian graveyard.

Ugur was buried by his family in an Alevi Muslim ceremony in his hometown of Elazig, his believing fiance watching from the shadows as his family and friends refused to accept in death the faith Ugur had so long professed and died for.

cont on page 7



Test your Bible skills with BVC**

PROVERBS NIV CHAPTER 11:16-31

(Complete each verse)

- 16. A gracious woman attains honor, and violent men.....riches.
- 17. The merciful man does himself good, but the cruel man.....harm.
- 18. The wicked earns deceptive wages, but he who sows righteousnessreward.
- 19. He who is steadfast in righteousness will attain life, and he who pursues..... death.
- 20. The perverse in heart are an abomination to the Lord, but.....His delight.
- 21. Assuredly, the evil man will not go unpunished, but thedelivered.
- 22. As a ring of gold in a swine's snout, so is a beautiful woman.....discretion.
- 23. The desire of the righteous is only good, but.....wrath.
- 24. There is one who scatters, yet increases all the more, and there is one who.....in want.
- 25. The generous man will be prosperous, and he who waters will.....watered.
- 26. He who withholds grain, the people will curse him, but.....who sells it.
- 27. He who diligently seeks good seeks favor, but he who searches after.....come to him.
- 28. He who trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous.....green leaf.
- 29. He who troubles his own house will inherit wind, and the foolish.....wise hearted.
- 30. The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who is wise.....souls.
- 31. If the righteous will be rewarded in the earth, how much moresinner.

SOME PERSONAL HISTORY I WANT TO SHARE

My grandparents on both sides immigrated from Russia and Armenia to the USA in 1905. My father Michael who was born in Kars, Armenia (now a part of Turkey) came over as a five year old kid. My grandparents made their way to Los Angeles where they settled except for my mother's parents. Because Mexico at that time offered a land grant in Baja, they settled in a village east of Ensenada called Guadalupe. My mother Hazel was born in that village. Years later, she met and married my father and moved to Los Angeles. The religious group that my folks belonged to are called "Molokans". This is a group that in some ways resembled the Pentecostal church but It was also in continuous conflict with the Russian Orthodox Church while in Russia. For that reason, they were forced to leave Russia and settled in the Caucasus Mountains of Armenia and Georgia. Some years ago, the author John Sherrill wrote a book about this group after they had settled in Los Angeles and referred to them as Pentecostals. Also, related to this group was the outgrowth of the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International begun by Demos Shakarian whose father also came out of the same area of Armenia.

These Christian folk knew that if they stayed in Armenia, they would also be subject to the third genocide that the Armenian Christians and Jews experienced in 1915. An earlier genocide killed 200,000 Armenians in the 19th century but did not take the toll of casualties and dead like that of 1915. But Armenia lost nearly 1.5 million men, women and children in that period. At that time, Molokan prophets of the church warned of the coming Armenian tragedy by the Turks.

My grandparents journey to America started from the city of Tambov, Russia. - John Novikoff

My Way to Christ

My way to Christ started at the graveyard where I found myself searching for better life after visiting witches and sorceress. Then I found a good friend for me – a bottle of alcohol – and the graveyard was my favorite place to be at. Slowly I was getting addicted to vodka, every time I got drunk my life seemed bright and rainbow again. However, coming back to reality would bring me realizations that everything was not that good.

In that time I already was divorced with my husband and lived with my children – Katya, 15 years old, and Lyosha, 13 years old. My oldest daughter Natasha did not want to deal with me. I lost my house, my friends left me. My children could not sleep well because they were afraid I could harm myself. I did not want to come back to reality.

During that dark time Ekaterina Andreyevna came to my life. She was attending an Evangelical church and she would tell me about Jesus and His life a lot. She tried to show me the exit from the dead end that I was facing. In one evening I was drunk and I felt completely desperate and helpless. I called her and asked to bring me to the church that very moment. I was afraid that I would be dead next morning.

We came to church when there was a special prayer meeting of the pastors from various evangelical churches of our town. It was my first time when I saw people who were praying and were blessing people and the whole world. “Are they lunatics – I thought? – Why do they care for people and why their God cares for people if nowadays people do not care for each other. They were standing in the circle and I came to everybody in that circle and asked the same question: “Do you believe in it?” I was drunk.

After all, brothers led me out but one of the pastors from Sergiev Posad stayed with me and told me that God really cared for me, that He loves all people including me. Next Sunday – it was Easter 2002 I accepted God as my Savior. And that was the beginning of my hard but joyful way with Christ.

I went to Rehabilitation Center for half year. I left my children with my friends. I needed that time to find myself again, to get answers for a lot of questions that were important for me. I realized that in the world where human life cost nothing. There was One who had given His life for all people and for me. Jesus Christ gave me back my life and He filled it with His presence and love.

I got new Christian friends and new family – my brothers and sisters – the church of God. Also the big surprise was awaiting for me at home – my daughter and son started attending the church as well. In half a year we reconciled with my oldest daughter. She got married and now her whole family including my granddaughter Katya attend the church.

God gave me everything new in my life. I started attending home group and also I started to pray and read the Bible with my children at home. Soon we had a home church. However, my heart was burning with desire to help street people, whose life cost



nothing – like my life before getting to know Jesus. I knew that for those people the Son of God was suffering on the Cross and that those people needed to know about love of Jesus.

We started cooking food for the homeless and destitute people. Also we prayed with those people and showed them *Jesus* film. My family and my home group joined this ministry. We are happy that we can warm these cold hearts with love of Christ. He fills us with His love but this love is open for everybody.

We know that we have a lot to do. There are so many people who need help. We pray that we may serve them more productively. I thank my God who made my life real life.

The building of our church in Alexandrov, Vladimir Region is situated near the railroad station. Often homeless people stop by to get some help. They need shoes, clothes, food. Sometimes they want to get warm or just to stay at the place where people do not look down at them.

“Decent” people do not want to have anything in common with them. The best thing for them is to pretend that homeless people do not exist. Many understand that there is simply no place for such people in this world.

Organization of food pantries for destitute and homeless people was built on our great desire to serve the Lord and on our pain for those people who live in poverty or on the street. Our sisters from the church hold these ministries. The leader is Galina Anisimova. She had hard life, the devil was leading her to the death but Jesus Christ saved her and had the plan in store for her.

The whole family joins Galina in her ministry. It is the great example that is written in God’s Word: “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved and your household” (Acts 16:31).

Already for more than a year, every Saturday from the early morning is dedicated to cooking food. Sisters come together, pray to God to pour blessings on those people who come. We understand that our goal is not simply to feed people but also to tell them about God’s love that God showed us through Jesus Christ.

Galina Anisimova, from the town of Alexandrov, Vladimir Region

Necati's funeral took place in his hometown of Izmir, the city where he came to faith. The darkness does not understand the light. Though the churches expressed their forgiveness for the event, Christians were not to be trusted. Before they would load the coffin onto the plane from Malatya, it went through two separate xray exams to make sure it was not loaded with explosives. This is not a usual procedure for Muslim coffins.

Necati's funeral was a beautiful event. Like a glimpse of heaven, thousands of Turkish Christians and missionaries came to show their love for Christ, and their honor for this man chosen to die for Christ. Necati's wife Shemsa told the world, "His death was full of meaning, because he died for Christ and he lived for Christ... Necati was a gift from God. I feel honored that he was in my life, I feel crowned with honor. I want to be worthy of that honor."

Boldly the believers took their stand at Necati's funeral, facing the risks of being seen publicly and likewise becoming targets. As expected, the anti-terror police attended and videotaped everyone attending the funeral for their future use. The service took place outside at Buca Baptist church, and he was buried in a small Christian graveyard in the outskirts of Izmir.

Two assistant Governors of Izmir were there solemnly watching the event from the front row. Dozens of news agencies were there documenting the events with live news and photographs. Who knows the impact the funeral had on those watching? This is the beginning of their story as well. Pray for them.

In an act that hit front pages in the largest newspapers in Turkey, Susanne Tilman in a television interview expressed her forgiveness. She did not want revenge, she told reporters. "Oh God, forgive them for they know not what they do," she said, wholeheartedly agreeing with the words of Christ on Calvary (Luke 23:34).

In a country where blood-for-blood revenge is as normal as breathing, many reports have come to the attention of the church of how this comment of Susanne Tilman has changed lives. One columnist wrote of her comment, "She said in one sentence what 1000 missionaries in 1000 years could never do."

The missionaries in Malatya will most likely move out, as their families and children have become publicly identified as targets to the hostile city. The remaining 10 believers are in hiding. What will happen to this church, this light in the darkness? Most likely it will go underground. Pray for wisdom, that Turkish brothers from other cities will go to lead the leaderless church. Should we not be concerned for that great city of Malatya, a city that does not know what it is doing? (Jonah 4:11)

When our Pastor Fikret Bocek went with a brother to give a statement to the Security Directorate on Monday they were ushered into the Anti-Terror Department. On the wall was a huge chart covering the whole wall listing all the terrorist cells in Izmir, categorized. In one prominent column were listed all the evangelical churches in Izmir. The darkness does not understand the light. "These that have turned the world **upside down** are come hither also." (Acts 17:6)

Please pray for the Church in Turkey. "Don't pray against persecution, pray for perseverance," urges Pastor Fikret Bocek.

The Church is better having lost our brothers; the fruit in our lives, the renewed faith, the burning desire to spread the gospel to quench more darkness in Malatya ...all these are not to be regretted. Pray that we stand strong against external opposition and especially pray that we stand strong against internal struggles with sin, our true debilitating weakness. This we know. Christ Jesus was there when our brothers were giving their lives for Him. He was there, like He was when Stephen was being stoned in the sight of Saul of Tarsus.

Someday the video of the deaths of our brothers may reveal more to us about the strength that we know Christ gave them to endure their last cross, about the peace the Spirit of God endowed them with to suffer for their beloved Savior. But we know He did not leave their side. We know their minds were full of Scripture strengthening them to endure, as darkness tried to subdue the unsubduable Light of the Gospel. We know, in whatever way they were able, with a look or a word, they encouraged one another to stand strong. We know they knew they would soon be with Christ.

We don't know the details. We don't know the kind of justice that will or will not be served on this earth.

But we pray-- and urge you to pray-- that someday at least one of those five boys will come to faith because of the testimony in death of Tilman Geske, who gave

his life as a missionary to his beloved Turks, and the testimonies in death of Necati Aydin and Ugur Yuksel, the first martyrs for Christ out of the Turkish Church.

Reported by Darlene N. Bocek (24 April 2007)

Please please please pass this on to as many praying Christians as you can, in as many countries as you can. Please always keep the heading as "From the Protestant Church of Smyrna" with this contact information: izmirprotestan@gmail.com // <http://www.izmirprotestan.org>

ANNA NERKARYAN TO ARMNIA

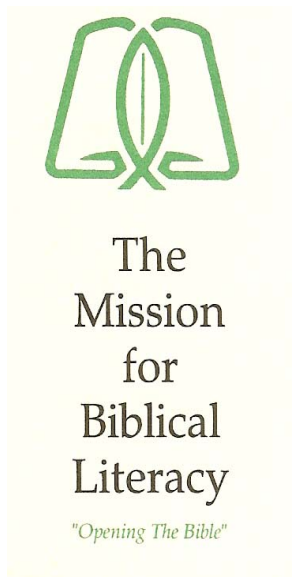
In August, Anna will again take a team of Russian/Armenian men and women to the area of Vonadzor to conduct a mission to orphans.

The team will be flying from Moscow to Yerevan and then by auto or bus to the mountainous city that was partially destroyed by an earthquake. Though many years have passed since that quake that took thousands of lives, the city continuous to struggle to rebuild. Many still live in temporary quarters supplied by relief agencies but "temporary" has given way to "permanent" housing.

Anna is still in need of financial resources to conduct this mission to about 100 children. If you are of the mind to send a donation to MBL, please earmark your gift "Armenian mission." Thanks John N.

The Mission for Biblical Literacy
1580 Peachtree St. NE
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“Opening the Bible in other lands”



YOU'RE BLESSED

When Jesus saw his ministry drawing huge crowds, he climbed a hillside. Those who were apprenticed to him, the committed, climbed with him. Arriving at a quiet place, he sat down and taught his climbing companions. This is what he said:

“You’re blessed when you’re at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.”

“You’re blessed when you feel you’ve lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you.

“You’re blessed when you’re content with just who you are-no more, no less. That’s the moment you find yourselves proud owners of every thing that can’t be bought.

“You’re blessed when you’ve worked up a good appetite for God. He’s food and drink in the best meal you’ll ever eat.

“You’re blessed when you care. At the moment of being “care-full”, you find yourselves cared for.

“You’re blessed when you get your inside world -your mind and heart– put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.

“You’re blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That’s when you discover who you really are and your place in God’s family.

You’re blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God’s Kingdom.

“Not only that - count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens—give a cheer, even! - for though they don’t like it, *I do!* And all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble. *Matthew 5:1-13* from **THE MESSAGE** by Gene Peterson

.....> **please cut along this line**<.....

Dear Pastor John,

I am pleased to support the work of the Mission for Biblical Literacy in Russia, Armenia, Nicaragua and Haiti. Therefore, I am providing my contribution of \$35 ___ \$50 ___ \$100 ___ \$250 ___ \$ ___ other for ministry in the checked country or countries:

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Please use the enclosed envelope

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