

FALL 2022

# CULTIVATE

LANGHAM PARTNERSHIP USA

## Hope for Eastern Europe



# About Langham

**OUR VISION**—to see churches in the Majority World equipped for mission and growing to maturity in Christ through the ministry of pastors and leaders who believe, teach, and live by the Word of God.

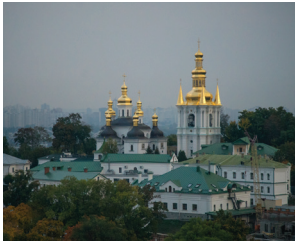
**OUR MISSION**—to strengthen the ministry of the Word of God through (1) Nurturing national movements for training in biblical preaching (Langham Preaching), (2) Multiplying the creation and distribution of evangelical literature (Langham Literature), and (3) Strengthening the theological training of pastors and leaders by qualified evangelical teachers (Langham Scholars).

## Get involved: Visit [langham.org](http://langham.org)

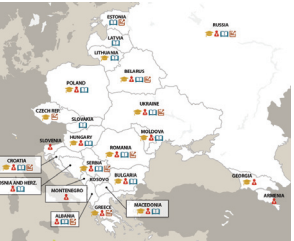
**PHOTO**—Langham Scholar Sergiy Tymchenko served as pastor of this church outside of Kyiv. (For security reasons, we are not naming the church.) In this photo taken prior to the recent Russian invasion, two women eagerly follow along in their Bibles as God’s Word is taught. Sadly, Sergiy informed us that the woman pictured at right recently lost her daughter and 13-year-old granddaughter. They were killed by Russian soldiers as they tried to flee the fighting. Down the street from the church is a counseling ministry Sergiy started to train more Christian leaders “to help society see what it means to have the reality of Christ in everyday life.”



## CULTIVATE



4 Letter From the President



6 A Snapshot of Langham’s Work in Eastern Europe



8 A Christian Perspective from Ukraine



12 Road to the Slavic Bible Commentary



14 A Cornerstone of Faith for Romania



16 Meeting Needs and Multiplying Workers in Southeastern Europe



18 Mission of the Trinity

“Eastern Europe needs many things, but it most definitely needs God’s Word—and followers of Jesus who prioritize Scripture above nationalism, like Sergiy and Dariusz.”

## A Letter From the President

Dear friend of Langham,

Langham’s deep, trusted relationships across many decades in Eastern Europe led to an amazing invitation more than ten years ago. Would Langham help facilitate the first ever one-volume Russian-language commentary, one written by contemporary evangelical writers from the Slavic region and aimed at local pastors? This “Langham commentary model” had shaped the ground-breaking *Africa Bible Commentary*—and, since then, many such commentaries. We accepted the invitation, and God provided the financial resources to begin the work.

Then Russia invaded and annexed Crimea in February/March 2014. Our team remembers it well since they were gathered in a third country working on the publication.

Yet what should these writers and editors do in light of respective governments going to war?

### A miraculous publication

They rolled up their sleeves and got the work done. Intent on the vital and important goal of a whole Bible commentary to help pastors prepare sermons that are clear, relevant, and faithful to the text, they kept at it. They prayed. And they took communion with one another, saying, “We will model the unity of the Lord’s people.” In record time, the publication was formally celebrated and released in October 2016. I know. I witnessed the public launch of the *Slavic Bible Commentary* on a crisp autumn evening in Kyiv that I will never forget—a commentary that will endure the tensions, strained relationships, atrocities, and war that have scattered the Ukrainian church, destroyed church and seminary buildings, and killed thousands of civilians, including Langham-trained pastors.

### God’s Word will not be stopped.

Amid unimaginable pain and desperate separation from loved ones, there is hope for the future in this region because of Langham Scholars such as Dr. Sergiy Tymchenko. Sergiy is intimately familiar with the history and culture of Ukraine, and

now, since receiving his PhD with support from Langham, he speaks to Ukrainian realities from a biblical perspective and continues to train church leaders to shepherd God’s people in the midst of war and volatility.

During my visit to Kyiv, I met church leaders trained by Sergiy. His impact is palpable, and I hope you sense how your investment in the “Sergiys” who serve in hard places are literally on the front lines, applying biblical faith in difficult, conflict-laden contexts.

### But wait, there’s more!

I think also of my dear friend Dariusz Brycho in Central Warsaw. He founded and leads a ministry in Poland that, borrowing from the language of Augustine’s conversion, urges people to “take and read” Scripture. Why? As Augustine received God’s Word, he was flooded with indescribable peace. He confessed his faith to others and began a new life in Christ.

And, thankfully, Sergiy and Dariusz are not the only Langham Scholars in the region.

Eastern Europe needs many things, but it most definitely needs God’s Word—and followers of Jesus who prioritize Scripture above nationalism, like Sergiy and Dariusz. Every church deserves a well-trained pastor, especially in hard places. As you read about the work God is doing in Eastern Europe in the pages ahead, please know it is possible because of faithful partners like you.

Grateful,



Benjamin K. Homan  
President,  
Langham Partnership USA



Ben Homan (left) with editorial board member Yevgeniy Ustynovych at the *Slavic Bible Commentary* launch in Kyiv, Ukraine.

# A Snapshot of Langham's Work in Eastern Europe



## 50 Scholars Supported Through PhD Studies



## 1,123 Pastors Trained



## 49 Bible Colleges and Seminaries Receiving Books



## 14 Publishing Partners



\*The figures on this map represent the following timelines for each respective Langham program:  
Scholars: 1976-2022  
Preaching: 2011-2021  
Literature: Snapshot of 2021

# Bottom of the Well Theology: A Christian Perspective from Ukraine

BY ROMAN SOLOVIY

During this war, I have become increasingly aware of how emotional and geographic proximity relates to the perception of information. For our friends abroad, the news of the Ukrainian tragedy could remain just a piece of information about events in a neighboring country. For us, it is the destruction of our world, our families, and our futures. Even the most sympathetic cannot experience what we are experiencing here on an existential level. Peering into a well and being at the bottom of one are two completely different experiences!

- Who knows how to pray with a woman who was raped by a Russian soldier for a week and then watched him shoot her sick mother when the woman refused to go with him to Russia?
- What words can be said to the elderly residents of an assisted-living facility that was ruthlessly turned to rubble by a Russian tank?

- How does one comfort a wife whose husband ran to get help as she went into labor but was killed outside their house?
- How do we mourn over nameless civilians who have been tortured beyond recognition and even identification?

Theoretical answers I might have formulated prior to this war didn't adequately prepare me for the actual words and deeds required in reality.

So allow me to provide some Christian perspective from the bottom of the well—the most important lessons we, the Ukrainian Evangelical believers, have learned through facing the challenges brought by this war.

**1. The Beauty of Solidarity.** The vast majority of Ukrainian Christians have chosen “to share ill-treatment with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin”

(Hebrews 11:25 NRSV). In times of great suffering, followers of the crucified Messiah cannot preach the gospel at a safe distance from a hellish reality. Those who haven't seen sunlight for months, hiding in basements from Russian bombs and rockets; those who flee; those who seek healing for their physical and mental trauma; those who lost all they had built and their loved ones; and those who have been victims of physical violence do not need triumphant preaching or endless moralizing. They need Christ, who will drink with them the bitter cup of loneliness and abandonment and who will go with them all the way to the end. That is the Christ we try to preach and embody in acts of solidarity and self-denial, descending, as He does, to the last depths of human suffering.

For years, my colleague Anya P., a Ukrainian philosopher in Poland, has provided assistance to Ukrainian families with children who needed palliative care. Since the beginning of the war, she has been working hard to evacuate children from the fighting zone. Each evacuation requires coordinating many people, transport, funds, fuel, and so on. Together with my friends, we helped Anya through several complicated evacuations, each bearing witness to the incredible cooperation and beauty of solidarity. In one instance, evacuating an oxygen-dependent child from Kharkiv to Lviv (1017 km, 632mi) required special transport. Through social media and privately approached friends, we collected all the necessary funds for this evacuation within two hours!

There are different types of beauty. During these months of war, I have seen absolute beauty time and time again, the perfect incarnation of God's love in our imperfect and war-torn world. I pray that this present experience of compassion and co-suffering in solidarity will open us up to the pain of other people, regardless of their location and circumstances, so that we would be distressed in their distresses (Isaiah 63:9 AMP) and bear their burdens as far as is possible (Galatians 6:2 ESV), showing forth the beauty of solidarity to the world.

**2. The Need for Humility.** I also pray that sharing our experience can foster humility in the church at large. From the very first days of the war, many of our international friends, surely with the best intentions, started to encourage Ukrainian Christians to forgive and reconcile with Russian Christians. Despite their orthodoxy and biblical vocabulary, I believe such appeals are terribly untimely. With the onset of the war, we in Ukraine have entered a Gethsemane, overwhelmed by loneliness and despair from the horror of the heinous violence suffered by innocent compatriots and friends and from the daily reports of the deaths of friends, colleagues, and co-laborers.

Deathly sorrow overcomes hearts with the thought that the hardest times are still ahead. Although we certainly believe that after Calvary will come the Resurrection, for now, today, we are here in Gethsemane. The time came when the risen

## How we got here:

The last two centuries in Central and Eastern Europe saw empires collapse and modern nations emerge. The entire continent of Europe defeated the Nazi regime, enabling the western part of the continent to solidify its geopolitical unity. However, the alliance never extended eastward across the continent, leaving some nations under the influence of the Soviet Union. When the Soviet Union collapsed, those nations gladly formed their own identities. However, post-Soviet Russia has proven to be no respecter of national boundaries and has advanced a new series of military conflicts to reclaim former Soviet territory. In 2014, Russia invaded Donetsk and Luhansk in Eastern Ukraine. In February 2022, that incursion turned into a full-scale war. Ukraine resists, asserting its unique identity and its desire to remain a self-determining state. But Russia's aggression has led to the devastation of Ukraine's cities,<sup>1</sup> brutal war crimes being investigated and documented by the UN<sup>2</sup>, and the forced flight of 5.2 million Ukrainians,<sup>3</sup> leading to Europe's largest refugee crisis since World War II.

## Why it matters:

For the thirty years of Ukraine's existence as a sovereign state, we neither took our statehood seriously nor made every effort to build it up. Frankly, not everything was great. But despite the problems, Ukraine remained a stronghold of freedom in the post-Soviet landscape. Here, anyone could practice their religion or none at all, read any book or nothing at all, hold various political views or be apolitical. This imperative of freedom at the metaphysical level has been woven into the genetic code of Ukrainian statehood. So the possible loss of freedom is what mobilizes the entire Ukrainian society today. And the Ukrainian Evangelical churches mirror the imperative for freedom. Having enjoyed some of the most favorable religious liberty laws since 1991, Ukraine hosts a large network of evangelical churches and theological schools, and Ukrainian missionaries serve in dozens of countries. The threat of losing religious freedom and returning to the Soviet totalitarian system motivates Ukrainians of all faiths to take all possible measures to help their country in these darkest days of our history.

<sup>1</sup> Ruby Mellen, “Ukrainian Cities See Massive Destruction,” *The Washington Post*, 17 March 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/interactive/2022/ukraine-before-after-destruction-photos/>.

<sup>2</sup> Nell Clark, “What a U.N. Team Has Seen While Documenting Possible War Crimes in Ukraine,” *NPR*, 28 April 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/04/28/1095277848/ukraine-russia-war-crimes>.

<sup>3</sup> “Situation Ukraine Refugee Situation,” *Operational Data Portal*, 13 July 2022, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine/location?secret=unhcrrestricted>.

Jesus met with the apostles in Galilee and had a difficult conversation with Peter. He sent out His disciples to preach the gospel throughout the world, even to the oppressive Romans, at whose hands He had been crucified. But that was later. In the garden, His request was simple—to share His pain with Him, just to be near Him with no appeals and admonishments. That is the kind of humble solidarity we long for from the global church.

**3. The Challenge of Truth.** War from the thick of it and war from the news look different. Experiencing the war from the thick of it, you unconsciously strive for accurate wording. There is no “conflict in Ukraine,” not now and not in 2014-2015. Ukrainians are not at war with Ukrainians. There is no “special military operation,” as Russian propaganda calls this war. A war was started, armed and led by the Russian military and special services. And the purpose of this war is not some mythical “denazification”—unless by this notion one means the physical destruction of us, our culture, and our identity. Vague wording distorted by political correctness or propaganda is not only an epistemic fallacy but also an ethical mistake. Such word choice not only gives distorted information but also justifies and perpetuates the horrific injustice done to the victims of war.

Precise wording matters not just descriptively but also prescriptively. Abstract prayers for peace in Ukraine may suggest that Ukrainians must accept their fate of an “error of history” and return to the fold of the Russian empire. What is the way to real peace? We seek the peace that will allow us to remain free people with the right to choose our path. Therefore, to pray for peace in Ukraine and to be fair to Ukrainians means to pray for Russia’s military defeat and for the collapse of its economic power, which empowers this bloody war. Only if this happens can Russia agree to a peace deal which will not include the subjugation of Ukrainians.

To live through war is to experience anew the reality that truth is necessary and will set us free (John 8:32 ESV). It makes us long for the truth of the war to be known, and even more so for the sustained freedom to make the truth of Jesus known!

**4. The Power of Hope.** As some military experts predicted, the war is in a protracted phase with no reasonable expectations of cessation. For us in Ukraine, war is not a fragment of reality; it is the whole reality. It penetrates everywhere—determining the themes of our prayers and our perspectives on Scripture.

I used to wonder why many Holocaust survivors committed suicide later on—remembering poet Paul Celan, philosopher Jean Amery, and Primo Levy, grand witness to the horrors of Auschwitz (in which my own grandmother also died). But today,

I understand that the level of violence and human evil they experienced deprived them of ways of returning to normal life, to healthy relationships, and the ability to trust people.

After the end of the war, one of the most difficult challenges for all of us will be to switch to peaceful life and return the war to its proper place - a fragment in the totality of our existence. For Christians, this liberation from the totality of war must begin now.

How can this happen? It happens when we experience the hope that the infinite reality of the Kingdom of God inaugurated on the cross overcomes any totality on this side of eternity. I am very grateful to my friend, Pieter Kwant (Director of Langham Literature), who brought the attention of Ukrainian believers to this liberating truth at a recent seminar on the book of Revelation. All earthly totalities, even one as terrible and deadly as war, will one day give way to the infinite glory, peace, and love of the Kingdom of God. In prayer, in the Lord’s Supper, in the solidarity of the ecclesia, and in the beauty of sacrificial love, we experience the life of the age to come in which there will be no more death, no more tears, no more suffering. What a hope we have! That hope can get us through. ♦



### About the Author

Roman Soloviy is the Director of the Eastern European Institute of Theology in Lviv, Ukraine. He also serves as editor-in-chief of *Theological Reflections: Eastern European Journal of Theology*, a chief editor of the book series “Contemporary Protestant Theology,” and a regional commissioning editor for Langham Literature.



Listen now at  
[langham.org/podcast](https://langham.org/podcast)

# Road to the Slavic Bible Commentary



November 15, 2011 –  
*"I have a feeling I am standing in front of an iceberg."*

When Taras Dyatlik scribbled those words in his journal from his home in Ukraine, he could not have known how true they would be.

Over the years to come, his journal would serve as an outlet for his prayers as he coordinated work on a Langham-sponsored project that had never been done before: a one-volume Bible commentary written in Russian by a team of 94 local scholars for Slavic pastors and believers.

Today, his journal is a testament to how God was at work making what seemed impossible possible.



This ground-breaking commentary, one of Langham's key initiatives in the region, developed during a time of deep conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Published in 2016, its content and its story are more relevant than ever.

December 26, 2013 –  
*"Lord Jesus, I still have so many doubts about its success now."*

Work on the *Slavic Bible Commentary* would bring together Reformed, Armenian, Baptist, and Pentecostal Christians from Slavic countries including Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine. One of the project's main objectives was to "create an interpretative community of Eastern European theologians who could respect theological differences."

As if that wasn't challenge enough, tensions between Russia and Ukraine were escalating. In early 2014, as the editorial team was gathered together, Russia invaded and annexed Crimea. Ukrainians gathered to protest in Kyiv, and thousands of Ukrainians were injured and hundreds killed.

June 8, 2014 –  
*"Lord, lead us."*

How did this team of writers and scholars, which had already worked through many theological and ideological differences, respond as their governments went to war?

They took communion together. They prayed. They pressed on.

Taras recalls, "The Bible for these 94 authors became the real source of looking for God's will for contemporary Slavic Christians. They asked, 'What is God's mission to nations torn by the war and military conflicts? What is a Christian church leader's mission to representatives of the nations that are considered to be enemies?'"

Because of their commitment to unity in Christ and with support from generous donors, the *Slavic Bible Commentary* was published in October 2016. Today it is in the hands of pastors and lay leaders across the region, helping them biblically answer those questions even as their context becomes more challenging.

Dr. Peter Penner, one of the commentary's editors, shares, "There is a need for qualified leaders to prevail in this context... Literature is especially needed, and the *Slavic Bible Commentary* will provide people across eleven time zones with God's Word for their lives."

October 1, 2016 –  
*"Christ has risen. The commentary presentation is like a resurrection for me... Wow, Lord!"*

The *Slavic Bible Commentary* story doesn't stop there. The initial 10,000 copies printed sold out, so early this year, a revised second edition was published in Russian. Work continues on an English translation, expected to publish next year. The commentary is being adapted and contextualized for Central Asia, with translations into Uzbek, Kyrgyz, and Kazakh languages, extending its impact beyond the region.

"This commentary, in the current socio-political challenges of Eastern Europe, is a witness of unity in Christ between Ukrainian and Russian Christians around the Lord and His Word," Taras said when the commentary was published.. "Langham's investment wasn't just in a commentary, but also in strengthening the relationship between evangelicals from countries in a state of hybrid war. The Lord is the architect of history, and we're thankful to Him for our partnership with Langham during all these years when the commentary was written." ♦

**53,598 people received  
 Langham-sponsored books  
 written and published  
 indigenously in 2021**



**A picture of unity: The *Slavic Bible Commentary* team (Taras Dyatlik pictured third from right)**

# A Cornerstone of Faith for Romania



With Langham's help, Florin Dumitrache (at right) is investing in a new generation of Bible teachers.

On a Thursday night in Cluj, a small city in northwest Romania, a group of young people gathers at the home of one of their friends. They crowd onto sofas and sit cross-legged on the living room floor. What happens next is not typical of a gathering of young twenty-somethings in Romania: They take out their Bibles and prepare to study God's Word.

Today, more than thirty years after the fall of communism, pastors lack the training they need to connect God's Word to the challenges and doubts their people face, especially for a younger generation. Faith often remains nominal in this primarily Christian nation, and many churches lack young people who long to study God's Word or to go into ministry.

Florin Dumitrache, a preacher in Cluj, shares, "You can live within the church all your life without actually having a personal, meaningful relationship with Christ."

The burden weighs heavy on Florin, and it's why he started the Thursday night gathering for young leaders from his church. He's teaching them how to share the gospel with others in their community.

"There are good preachers in Romania at the national level. But [most] haven't raised up anybody. So, as they grow old, if they haven't invested in anybody, the next generation of gospel proclaimers will be a very weak one," Florin warns.

Because Langham invested in Florin, he invests in a new generation of leaders who touch churches across the city, helping them rediscover the gospel and share it with others.

**"Langham remains a cornerstone of my faith."**

Florin attended Langham's preaching training seminars, which he says, "remain a cornerstone of my faith." There he learned to

study and teach Scripture with faithfulness, clarity, and relevance. He took what he learned back to the small group he was mentoring, and today he trains even more preachers and lay leaders who proclaim the gospel in their pulpits, workplaces, marketplaces, and living rooms.

**91% of pastors who complete Langham's preaching training go on to train 64 others, on average, with sound Bible study skills.<sup>1</sup>**

**"My hope and vision is to grow new preachers."**

Pastor Ionica Martonfi is one of these leaders equipped by Florin. Ionica planted Relevant Church with a vision to make disciples.

"When we laid the foundation, we said, 'This church cannot be dependent on one guy on a platform.' So, we will honor the Lord by having more people able to teach others," he says.

To achieve this, Ionica asked Florin to help him train lay leaders within his church using Langham's training methods. They formed a Langham Preaching Club, where today forty people regularly gather between trainings for ongoing mentoring and practice teaching Scripture.

"I believe that what Langham brings to the church is that the church has a stronger foundation in the Word. It's God's Word on display now and multiplied," Ionica says. "My hope and the vision for this church is to grow new preachers, especially through Langham. Langham is God's tool for us."

Across Romania, Langham invests in equipping local church leaders like Florin who take the training forward into their own cities, towns, and villages. Since 2011, 523 preachers have been trained with support from our generous donors—truly a new generation of gospel proclaimers for Romania! ♦



Ionica Martonfi uses Langham's pastor-training method to equip leaders within his church.

<sup>1</sup>Data from an independent study of Langham's ministry impact by Excellence in Giving, 2015-2022.

## Building Up the Next Generation

Meet some of the young leaders equipped by Florin:



**Daniel Pop**  
*Seminary Student*

"There's a lack of deep biblical preaching ... that's what we need most. Langham trains ministers who then go and preach and raise the [standards] for the whole church."



**Daniela Demin**  
*Teacher and Youth Leader*

"Before, I was searching the Bible for verses. Langham is helping me understand how to connect the way God loves us with how we should live."



**Traian**  
*Church Elder and Preacher*

"Before Langham, I would read fifteen commentaries, and after that I'd be in the shadows, not knowing what to preach. After putting on Langham glasses, I stay within the text. Every time I go up and preach, I preach because someone invested in me."

# Meeting Needs and Multiplying Workers in Southeastern Europe



Myrto Theocharous is one of more than 315 Langham Scholars equipped to address cultural realities with biblical solutions and to train others to do the same.

**H**er father was Greek Orthodox and her mother was an evangelical. To find her way, Myrto Theocharous engaged in a deeper study of the Bible. Her commitment to God's Word ultimately led her to launch an outreach ministry to the victims of human trafficking. Her parents took their faith seriously, and today Myrto takes the Bible seriously, especially when it comes to issues of injustice in the southeastern corner of Europe.

Growing up with one foot in each of the religious communities of her parents created an urgency for her to go to the Scriptures to figure out, as she put it, "who I am, what I believe, what is the truth." Ultimately, her quest led her to the University of Cambridge in England where, with financial support and mentoring from Langham, she earned her PhD in Old Testament studies. Myrto was the first ever evangelical woman in Greece to earn a PhD in biblical or theological studies! Now

she applies her deep biblical and theological knowledge to practical issues and trains others to do the same.

## Meeting Needs

In her own words, Myrto articulates the biblical understanding that led her to serve the vulnerable and oppressed in her city:

*If we know who we are in God's world, where God is, what our purposes, our goals, and our full identity are, then we are able to place all our actions within that identity. Deuteronomy (and not only Deuteronomy) keeps repeating this famous phrase: "For you were slaves in Egypt, therefore ..." So, the mandate for action comes from the identity of being liberated, of having been liberated by a liberator God. For me, I couldn't see any other way of being other than discovering, tracing, seeking the people who are not enjoying the same liberation that*

*I am and finding them and inviting them to taste the same liberation from this God.*

Consequently, Myrto leads New Life (Nea Zoi), a ministry to victims of sex-trafficking in Athens. She is president of the board and has been involved in all aspects of the ministry, including brothel visits, arranging rescue interventions, counseling, and teaching the Bible to those stuck in or coming out of prostitution.

With that kind of impactful, life-changing ministry available, why bother to teach at a Bible college as well? Myrto's words again:

*Because only the truth sets people free. We are in the business of cultivating people in the liberating depths of God's truth. But I cannot do that alone. I have to do it through my students if it is to multiply.*

*I am grateful that God has placed me in theological education because I find that it's the ministry that builds and feeds all other ministries. It prepares the leaders who will head all the other ministries ... who will take his word to more souls that I could never reach.*

## Multiplying Workers

Indeed, Myrto's students from Greek Bible College are widely and fruitfully dispersed. They plant and pastor churches in Athens and throughout Greece, lead ministries to refugees and the Roma community, run New Life's anti-trafficking ministry, and work at a refuge center for those who've escaped prostitution. One Afghan refugee who came to Christ and studied under Myrto now leads a church among the heavily Muslim Afghani and Iranian populations in Greece with a dream to return and minister among his people in Afghanistan.

And Myrto has further dreams, too, for the serious study and application of God's Word:

*My vision is to build a team of scholars in Greece so we can start building indigenous theology. We can start writing Greek evangelical theology in our own contexts. This will not happen unless we have trained scholars to do that. That is my vision: one day I will have colleagues, and we will do this together.*

Just as John Stott envisioned it when he founded Langham, the Word of God is active in Eastern Europe—and around the world—through courageous and committed scholars like Dr. Theocharous. ♦



## In Her Own Words—

Listen to Myrto's conversation with Chris Wright on the *On Mission* podcast: [langham.org/podcast](https://langham.org/podcast).

Scan here to listen to Myrto's episode. >



# Mission of the Trinity

BY VLADIMIR UBEIVOLC



It is impossible to undertake studies in contemporary mission without studying the relationships in the Holy Trinity because this is the foundation for all kinds of church missions. "To speak about the *missio Dei* is to indicate, without any qualification, the *missio Trinitatis*."<sup>1</sup>

The church's mission reflects the relationships between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. God becomes not only the Sender, but simultaneously the One who is sent.<sup>2</sup> The Blessed Trinity constitutes the first ultimate foundation of the missionary nature of the church.<sup>3</sup> As we reflect the relations in the Trinity, we are involved in God's mission. God is the founder of his mission.

Sending is, therefore, an expression of His presence at work in judgment and grace. Thus the *missio* becomes the testimony

of His deity.<sup>4</sup> Further, "God reveals Himself in that He performs the sending Himself. If there were no *missio Dei*, then we would also have no revelation. He sends His Word to man and reveals Himself in such a way that, in His Son, He Himself comes to them through the Holy Ghost (John 3:16; Rom 1:16)."<sup>5</sup>

When we think of God the Father and mission, the theme that emerges is that He is the source, the originator, and the end of all things, including mission.<sup>6</sup> A. Fernando assumes that the model of the Father is a participation in all the processes of the world.<sup>7</sup> God's redemptive activity, or the *missio Dei*, does not begin with Jesus. Rather, the Bible tells a story that finds its unity in the mighty acts of God that culminate in the sending of Jesus Christ. God's love for the world is demonstrated in the long road of redemption that He walks with Israel. Jesus is conscious of being the one sent to complete and make known

the purposes of the Father.

The Father sent the Son to make visible the kingdom. This kingdom mission of Jesus was unfolded in communion with the Father. His life was that of an obedient and loving Son. The work of the Father was the pervasive atmosphere for the mission of the Son.

So, God's mission can no longer be perceived as a one-way path. It is an encounter with people where change takes place. Mission cannot fulfill God's will unless it is open to the work of the Holy Spirit and the challenge of mutual change.<sup>8</sup> God works through His church, through His faithful people in mission, and much more than that—He works with them in their mission. Sometimes, missionaries cannot say where the results are better—in them or outside of them.<sup>9</sup> One of the ways God works with His people is that sometimes He closes the doors for mission in concrete places, regions well defined by Him for an interval of time.<sup>10</sup> The *missio Dei*, embracing the entire activity of God, can therefore also be equated with the lordship of God.<sup>11</sup> Christian mission is not first *Christian* mission, but *God's* mission (*missio Dei*).<sup>12</sup> Only the Triune God can finish God's mission and fully establish God's realm.<sup>13</sup> ♦

from *Rethinking Missio Dei among Evangelical Churches in an Eastern European Orthodox Context* by Vladimir Ubeivolt (Carlisle: Langham Global Library, 2016), 197-98, 200-01, 207.

<sup>1</sup> J. A. Kirk, *What Is Mission: Theological Explorations* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2000), 25.

<sup>2</sup> G. F. Vicedom, *The Mission of God*, translated by A. Thiele and D. Hilgendorf (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing, 1965), 7.

<sup>3</sup> A. Wolanin, "Trinitarian Foundation of Mission," in *Following Christ in Mission: A Foundational Course in Missiology*, ed. S. Karotemprel (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1996), 49.

<sup>4</sup> G. F. Vicedom, *The Mission of God*, translated by A. Thiele and D. Hilgendorf (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing, 1965), 10. [Note: Shortened form could be used: Vicedom, *The Mission of God*, 10.]

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>6</sup> A. Fernando, "God: the Source, the Originator, and the End of Mission," in *Global Missiology for the 21st Century: The Iguassu Dialogue*, ed. W. D. Taylor, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000), 192.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> N. Kassab, "Partnership in God's Mission: Community of Women and Men in Church Today," in *Partnership in God's Mission in the Middle East: The Papers and Report of the Consultation of Women and Men of Reformed Tradition in the Middle East*, Ayia Napa, Cyprus, 2-8 June 1996, edited by J. D. Douglass and P. Réamonn (Geneva: World Alliance of Reformed Church, 1998), 18.

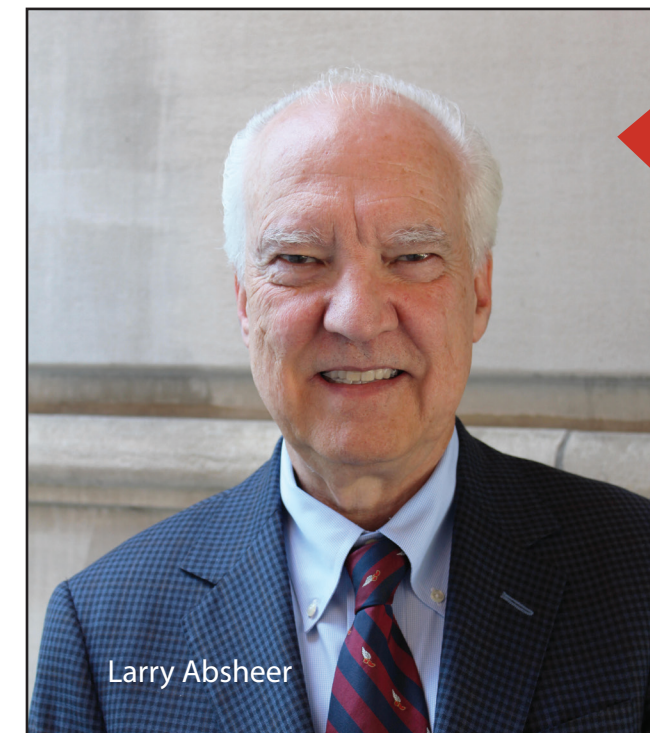
<sup>9</sup> F. Raytchinets, Unpublished sermon, Sarka-Valey Community Church, Prague, January 30, 2006.

<sup>10</sup> J. H. Kane, "Role of God in Mission," in *Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective*, edited by J. H. Kane (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), 104.

<sup>11</sup> G. F. Vicedom, *The Mission of God*, translated by A. Thiele and D. Hilgendorf (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing, 1965), 11. [Note: Shortened form could be used: Vicedom, *The Mission of God*, 11.]

<sup>12</sup> J. Pasztor, "God's Mission Taken Up as the Mission of the Church," in *Hope for the World: Mission in Global Context: Papers from Campbell Seminar*, edited by W. Brueggemann, 137-150 (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 17.

<sup>13</sup> S. K. George, *Called as Partners in Christ's Service: The Practice of God's Mission* (Louisville: Geneva Press, 2004), 64.



Larry Absheer

## Leave a Legacy

"Because of its solid evangelical foundation and integrity, Langham Partnership is worthy of my support. By including Langham in my estate plan, I can help the ministry have the funds they need for the future. Having had the opportunity to meet John Stott at his church in London when I was a college student, I feel a unique connection to Langham and appreciate being able to support his vision and this ministry."

Join Langham friends like Larry Absheer by including a gift to Langham Partnership in your will or trust. Your future gift will strengthen the global church for decades to come.



LEARN MORE AT  
LANGHAMLEGACY.ORG



FOUNDED BY JOHN STOTT

**Langham**  
PARTNERSHIP

P.O. Box 189  
Cave Creek, AZ 85327

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



LANGHAM

**VOICES**

## Learn from the Global Church

Start your day with biblical insights  
from church leaders around the world.

**READ. WATCH. LEARN.**



[langham.org/gvsubscribe](https://langham.org/gvsubscribe)