



# Manna Messenger

Mike & Judy Manna, Youth Ministry Trainers  
Eurasia Director, Youth Ministry International  
Kiev, Ukraine



Letter # 12  
December 2003

**Mailing Address:** Майк Манна, Драгоманова 17, кв. 149, Киев, 02068 Ukraine  
**Support Address:** YMI, 1300 Envoy Circle Suite 1306, Louisville, KY 40299  
**Email:** [manna@youthdiscipler.com](mailto:manna@youthdiscipler.com) or [manna@i.kiev.ua](mailto:manna@i.kiev.ua) **Website:** [www.youthdiscipler.com](http://www.youthdiscipler.com)

## Ukrainian Christmas Traditions and Facts

- ◆ Christmas is celebrated on January 7th according to the Gregorian calendar as in most Orthodox countries.
- ◆ During the Soviet time Christmas was not officially celebrated in Ukraine. Instead the communist government tried to substitute Christmas with the holiday of New Year. But people did not forget their traditions. After gaining its independence in 1991, Ukraine started to celebrate Christmas officially as well.
- ◆ Ukrainians normally give gifts on New Year's Eve.
- ◆ Halloween is not celebrated in Ukraine but some similar traditions are performed here for Christmas. Children sometimes go around to their neighbors in costumes.
- ◆ St. Nicolas (Santa Claus) is also called "Grandfather Frost" and is supposed to bring some gifts under the Christmas tree. He does not have a wife but has a daughter called the "Snow Princess."



**Did You Change Your Email Address?**

Twice per month, we send out an email update of our ministry and family life. If you changed your email address or have never received it, request it by writing us at [manna@youthdiscipler.com](mailto:manna@youthdiscipler.com).

## Approaching our Second Christmas

from Judy

We send our love with this greeting, along with a great big hug from our family. We wish you all a very merry Christmas. We hope you enjoy the closeness of family and friends as you celebrate the Lord's birth. It's hard for us to believe that we are about to celebrate our second Christmas here. We are thankful to report that as we approach this Christmas, we are feeling a lot more comfortable in Ukraine than we did last year. We have many blessings to be thankful for:

- We have learned enough basic Russian to at least get the main gist of what someone is saying, as well as being able to get our own point across. We do have a long way to go

before we are conversational.

- We have a home of our own that is large enough to enjoy personal space in the midst of this huge city.
- We've been blessed with a wonderful church home across the street.
- Our children are happy and healthy.
- Mike loves teaching his 9 students in their youth ministry courses at the seminary. (They take all their Bible and other classes from the other seminary teachers.)
- Language school is going well for Mike, but I had to quit in November. We've had workers in our home for several weeks, replacing our wood floors that ended up warping badly after our "flood". Here is another

## Training a Network of Youth Leaders from Mike

During American Thanksgiving, our mission president came to lead an Advanced Youth Leaders Seminar with Gena and myself. Randy spoke about the stages of a youth pastor's life. We had the youth ministry directors from 21 of the 25 regions of Ukraine. Most of these committed men have been serving in youth ministry for the past 3-4 years and have a Bible college education which is very unique for youth ministry here. These men could be the youth ministry seminary teachers in the future. But they have had no youth ministry college courses since they have not been available until now. So we are planning on starting another program next year at the seminary teaching just our youth ministry courses for men who already have a bachelor's degree. Pray for us as we begin planning for this certificate program.



Mike (middle row – center right), YMI President Randy Smith (to the left of Mike), Gennadiy Lutsenko (Ukraine Baptist Youth Director – to the left of Randy) and regional youth ministry directors from all around Ukraine.

## Approaching our Second Christmas – continued



Norwegians founded Kiev in AD 480. Mary & Joyce (Judy's sister and mother) with Judy are pictured in front of the Founders of Kiev statue. Joyce is 100% Norwegian.

blessing to count—the work may be finished in the next day or two!

- A missionary friend from Iowa whom we became very close to at missionary training school in NC is coming to spend Christmas with us. Cindy is a missionary to Moscow.
- Speaking of guests, we also had the precious blessing of a wonderfully timed visit from Mom Weiss and sister Mary in October. Mom had a fall from our shower and broke her wrist on their second night here. That was such a shame, but it didn't slow us down or diminish the thrill of having them here. They were in our home! They met our friends, saw our ministry, met Mike's students, went to the kids' school and soccer games, and got to know Kiev a bit. It was just a joy to have them! We shared a lot of love and laughter. They really ministered to us, as it is hard to be so far away

from home. The visit was wonderfully timed because my dad suffered a heart attack in November, when Mom was home again. Doctors found it was his third heart attack. He is scheduled for open heart surgery on Dec. 16th. This has been very hard for us. We feel like we are a million miles away, but it has made us very thankful for Dad and the rest of our family. They are all believers, so their futures are secure with the Lord.

- A final blessing that we continually thank the Lord for is our supporters. You have blessed us with your prayer, encouragement, and financial gifts this year. We pray for you always, that God would bless you with His love and provision. We are here because of you. He has used you in our lives in such amazing ways, and we thank you. Thank you for not forgetting us. God BLESS you, friends and family.

## A Letter from Sammie, 9 years old

Hi everyone,

What is your life like, now that I am gone? I can't wait to come back home to America. Sometimes I get tired of living in a big city and I miss living in the country. I have 2 friends, Oksana Slade and Kayla Sullivan, who live in private houses...kinda in the country. It is at least in a village. We went to Kayla's house for Thanksgiving. I taught Kayla how to play dogs...the way I played it with my friends in America. We always had a lot of fun, you know.



Missionary Kid buddies: Kayla Sullivan, Sammie, and Megan Stoddard. Kayla and Megan are children from the other 2 families of our unofficial missionary team.

Did you hear that my dog in the U.S. died? It was really hard for me to hear that Katie was dead. I had been thinking about her a lot and looking forward to seeing her when we got home. Sometimes I cry and miss her. I want to touch her and feel her.

So what have you been doing? I have been doing a lot of things. We have met a lot of new people – especially at New Hope Christian School. I have 11 kids in my class this year, counting me. We had 8 last year. Mandie had 10 in her class last year and has 15 in her class this year. Luke had 12 last year and this year, too.

How much fun have you had? I have gotten lonely a lot of times. On weekends, I usually play by myself. A couple weekends ago, I stayed with my friend, Oksana. Their family is from Canada. She will home school until she is in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Oksana is a neat person. She is also a missionary kid and speaks Russian really well. She's been here for 9 years and she is 9 years old. (She was born here.) At her house, we like to go for walks and her mom even let us build a fire in the yard. That was fun. I love to stay with Oksana, but I miss my family when I do. I actually don't feel as safe in the village as I do in the city where we live. The men who wander around there scare me. Oksana is scared of the city men! I'm not scared of the city men.

I had a lot to say to you. My mom is typing for me. That's why I don't have any spelling mistakes. J

Love your friend,  
Samantha

PS...Please write back soon. I really like having my own room in our new apartment. Chloe is such a great dog and friend. She makes me feel better, like Katie did. She loves to play with me. We hope we can bring her with us to America, so maybe you'll get to meet her.