

Dear friends in Classis Quinte

Thank you for the opportunity to report on behalf of Reframe Ministries

Around the world, the church of Jesus Christ continues to share the Gospel story to many, many people in their own context and culture. Reframe Ministries, as the media outreach arm of the Christian Reformed Church, works with many partner churches and denominations in that great opportunity to share the Gospel. In this report, I want to highlight the efforts of our Russian ministry team headed by Reverend Sergei Sosedkin. We are all aware of the political and military battles between these two nations, yet Reframe finds itself in a space to reach out on both sides of the conflict to share the Gospel of grace and hope and peace. Please read this report from Sergei:

### **Friends:**

The war in Ukraine, a refugee crisis and sanctions targeting Russia have affected many aspects of Reframe Russian-language ministry, as it continues to reach both nations with the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a rapidly developing story that calls for a prayerful discernment and urgency in sharing our Christian hope.

### **Ministry Changes**

Since the end of February we have gone through some significant changes in our “ministry routine.” Reframe has experienced displacement of our ministry partners on the ground in Ukraine while some ministry infrastructure was destroyed (for instance, two of our affiliate radio stations in Ukraine were reportedly knocked down in fighting). Social media crackdown in Russia and difficulties with fund transfers to Russia-based partners made it more difficult for local media work.

However, the changes were not as detrimental to our outreach as one might think.

We are also observing that the thirst for the gospel message has grown noticeably since the start of the hostilities. This is reflected primarily through the audience numbers and responses that we receive on a daily basis. For instance, a simple call to prayer gets close to 100K views in just a few days.

### **Ukraine Ministry**

All Ukrainian communities have been affected by war, however most of them haven't experienced the war-related destruction. The churches are open throughout the country; most of our radio partners continue operating, Internet access is reliable and widely available in most areas. Our media production for Ukraine is now done mostly in Poland and Portland, OR.

Reframe is reaching out to 3.5-million Ukrainian refugee communities in Europe. Most refugees are women and children, as well as elderly. They are especially receptive to the gospel hope. Reframe partner from Kyiv Lika R., a refugee herself, is in Poland, actively participating as a speaker in the church services in Ukrainian and Russian, various Christian events, public prayers and personal evangelism. She

is also recording audio and video programs for local and international online distribution that covers the audiences back in Ukraine.

Reframe started airing special radio programming for the Ukrainian refugees in the Baltic states on Radio Centras-AM - in cooperation with a Lutheran congregation in Riga, Latvia. We are expanding this outreach with Lika R.'s help. Reframe also intends to air refugee-specific programming on local AM/FM partner stations in Estonia.

## **Russia Ministry**

All our ministry programs in Russia continue. The response to programs on traditional radio and online platforms is very good. Live audio programming and online texts remain particularly popular with listeners and readers.

At this point the Russian government seems to be mostly preoccupied with the “correct” war coverage in the local news media. Some secular news outlets were shut down. However, the Christian media outlets and websites haven’t reported any serious issues so far. The local Christian communicators must be careful and wise about how they are addressing the topic of war. Many do it by quoting and explaining the corresponding Scripture passages on peace, human sinfulness, hatred, etc.

The main operational issue for Reframe in Russia is complications with money transfers to our local ministry partners. Funding of the ministries is now possible through Finland but now it requires extra time and effort.

One of the challenges that should also be mentioned is Russia’s attempt to block Western social media – most notably, Facebook. (We went through a similar crisis in 2017 with Ukraine’s bans of Russian social media and websites.) So far, blocking hasn’t been enforced universally. Many Internet users are adept at using VPN services. Reframe Russia continues using Facebook as one of outreach tools. While operating our Facebook group from within Russia, we are also building communities on the Russian social networks.

Youtube is available in Russia for now. It is an important piece of our outreach to Russia. We hope it won’t be banned there. Platforms similar to Youtube are available but they are not as popular.

## **Ministry Location Plans**

For now, Reframe Ministries had to postpone its plans on establishing a ministry center in Kyiv, Ukraine, although our nonprofit organization in Ukraine is still formally operational. We are now looking at possible ministry locations in the Baltic states such as Latvia, Estonia or Lithuania. Other stable countries with sizeable Russian-language communities and local media or church partners include Finland, Cyprus, Germany, Israel, Spain and Portugal. A decision for a location would require due diligence and planning. Please pray for discernment as we move forward with these plans

Thank you.

Paul Vandersteen ReFrame Ministries Burlington, Ont.

