



Bulletin From Bulgaria

News from Tom and Terry Myers

International Ministries

Missionaries to Bulgaria

September 2016

Vaska's Story

By Terry

Over the years I have shared numerous stories about Vaska, a young woman who has been coming to Sofia Baptist Church since she was a small child. Although she did not go to school, she participated in the literacy program at the church for many years, learning some basic literacy skills. She came regularly to Sunday worship, and she was baptized in the church a few years ago.

While still a teenager, she “married” (a rather loose, non-binding term in her culture) and had two children, a girl, now six, and a boy who is three years old. Her husband is in and out of jail, and is not involved in their lives. After a long, unexplained absence in church, she showed up again one Sunday a few weeks ago. She told me she had been in England for some months as a “mail order bride” (or “e-mail order bride”, best as I can describe it). She had gone there to meet a man who had paid for her ticket, get to know him and decide if she wanted to stay with him. She decided she did not, so she returned to Bulgaria. After this shocking news, she continued to tell me that she was leaving the following week to go work on the island of Cypress. A “friend” promised her that she could work in a restaurant there and make 800 euros per month, a vast fortune for Vaska. This sounded too good to be true to me, and I warned her about the huge possibility that this was a trap to get her there to work in prostitution as many Bulgarian women are trafficked to Cyprus, but she insisted it would not be. When she told me the following week that the “friend” had arranged and paid for her ticket to Cypress, I was pretty sure what she’d be getting herself into. I’ve not heard a word from her on Facebook since she left, which is

another ominous sign.

She had basically abandoned her two children—the girl to her former mother-in-law who talked of selling the girl when she was first born, and her son to her sister who has no job and already has many children to care for in the Roma ghetto—so that she could go to both England and Cypress unencumbered. Vaska's decision to go to Cypress will change her life, and I fear not for the better. It will also have a huge impact on her children's lives, whom she may or may not ever see again. This is the kind of situation that makes me wonder what I should have said or done differently to keep her from going, and a feeling of helplessness remains. Please pray for Vaska's safety, and if she is trapped in the web of human trafficking, that she will realize it and be able to escape. Pray for the safety of her two children, and that they may someday be reunited with their mother.

WHAT IS FIRST AID ARTS?

By Terry

It's not art therapy or counseling---I'm not qualified to do that! In their own words, First Aid Arts is using "arts-based interventions to help survivors of trauma begin the process of recovering from experiences like abuse, violence, or natural disaster." Training from First Aid Arts is based on psychological and neurological research that shows how symbols, movement, sounds, colors and images can be used to start to bring healing from traumatic experiences that are very often difficult to process verbally.

In June, I had the opportunity to attend a four-day training in Vienna, Austria offered by First Aid Arts, a group of folks from Seattle, Washington who train others to bring beauty and healing to survivors of trauma. I was excited to learn about this because of my background in graphic design, and because I wanted to see if it could be effectively used with the children in our church's literacy program, as well as with women coming out of the trauma of sexual slavery.

It was four days of intense training: learning about different types of trauma, what happens to the brain during and after trauma, how the various arts—drama, crafts, dance/movement, art, music, writing, symbolic imagery—can help in the healing process. By the end, we had all the tools necessary to facilitate a Healing Arts Toolkit group, a sequence of culturally sensitive, intentional activities that can be used flexibly in various settings and aftercare programs. Each time the group meets, the new group activity builds upon the previous week’s activity. Each activity focuses on providing a safe space where the participants can develop their self-awareness, emotional regulation and interpersonal skills. It was new and interesting to me, and am very grateful that I was given the opportunity to attend. Many thanks to all of you who give to our ministry funds account—you made it possible for me to go! Now, I will see where God leads me to use these new skills and my love of art!

“Everyone is creative!” “Beauty matters!” “Do what you love to fight what you hate.” “You make the world more beautiful.”





Every fall American Baptist Churches have the opportunity to support International Ministries through the World Mission Offering. Healthy, sustainable mission relies on “both/and” support. Personalized support alone is not sufficient to sustain global workers in their ministries. Support of the World Mission Offering (WMO) is equally vital. Here are a few reasons why:

- The WMO provides financial support for current global workers as well as additional funding, training and services for those with greatest need.
- The WMO helps International Ministries (IM) recruit, train and send new global workers. This includes crucial security training. More than 100 aspiring global workers are in the vocational development process at any given time.
- The WMO gives IM the capacity to maintain over 240 global Christian partnerships worldwide, nurturing relational networks within which global workers are invited to serve and allowing IM to identify, evaluate and develop new ministry areas.
- The WMO enables IM to promote, monitor and evaluate strategic mission and development projects identified by our global workers and international partners. With a 10% increase in undesignated WMO giving this year, we can fund outreach projects for youth in Cuba and the Dominican Republic.
- The WMO helps IM facilitate long-term partnering networks between churches in the U.S. and Puerto Rico, IM global workers and overseas ministries.

These are just five of the reasons why support of WMO is vital to International Ministries and to the work we do in Bulgaria. If you want to find out more about this year’s emphasis on Cuba or to give online, you can do so by following this link where you will find many resources.

<http://internationalministries.org/drives/42#TR>

Prayer requests:

- Protection for Vaska, whatever her situation may be, that God will guide her to the right people if she finds herself in a dangerous situation.
- That Terry will find ways to use the training she received through First Aid Arts.
- That all the necessary paperwork for the cafe will steadily move through all the various agencies.

In our next newsletter:

September 15 marks the start of the Bulgarian school year and with it the start of the Literacy program which will begin on September 20. The teachers are all looking forward to seeing the children again and are excited to see how they progress throughout the year.

After many delays we have finally started the preliminary work on opening the new coffee shop. The lease has been signed and a contract with the architects is in place. In our next newsletter we will have a more detailed update, including a reveal of the name!

After a quick trip to Colorado in June to celebrate A.J.'s graduation from the University of Denver, we were blessed to have both boys with us in Bulgaria for a couple of weeks in August. We enjoyed visiting some new areas of Bulgaria together!

If you would like to support the ministry of Tom and Terry Myers please send contributions to:

International Ministries

P.O. Box 851

Valley Forge, PA 19482-0851

Please indicate that your contribution is for the support of Tom and Terry Myers in Bulgaria

You can also give electronically by going to International Ministries' web site at:

www.internationalministries.org and follow the "Giving" link.

