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THURSDAY, APRIL 7, 2022

Isanti pastor asks for prayers as he shares chilling details of Ukraine friend's current situation

by Nikki Hallman

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Pastor Lee Scheumann, of Oxlip Evangelical Free Church in Isanti, has many friends and contacts in Ukraine that he hears from every day.

"I get communication daily from friends in Ukraine," Scheumann said.

One of Scheumann's close friends, Leonid, shared in an email on March 30 just a few of the things he and his family have gone through.

"We had an opportunity to help people from the Berdyansk region, too. We found an opportunity to send them money and bought food for them. Now it is too difficult to do this because



See **UKRAINE** on page 15

Pastor Lee Scheumann from Oxlip Evangelical Free Church received this photo March 23 from Father Nicholi of his church in Kotsiubynske, Ukraine. Bombs fell behind the church, but luckily it was not disturbed.

Photo submitted

Smorgasbord of talented Scandinavian-American performers highlights April 23 showcase in Cambridge

by Rachel Kytonen

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For first-class music, storytelling and comedy, you will not want to miss the Scandinavian Showcase.

The Scandinavian Showcase features a smorgasbord of talented Scandinavian-American performers and will be held at 7 p.m. Saturday, April 23, at the Hardy Performing Arts Center at Cambridge-Isanti High School. Doors will open at 6:30 p.m. and all tickets are \$10. Tickets are all general admission and can be ordered online at norskstoryteller.com/scandinavian-showcase-tickets or will be available for purchase at



Scandinavian storyteller Chad Filley (left) and 'Ole' impersonator Bruce Danielson, will participate in the Scandinavian Showcase to be held April 23 in Cambridge.

Photo by Rachel Kytonen

the door.

The showcase features the comedy and music of "Ole" impersonator Bruce Danielson; author and storyteller Rose Arrowsmith; nyckelharpa player Renee Vaughan; and Scandinavian storyteller and comedian Chad Filley.

"Bruce and I have worked together. I came in at the at the tail end of the Kaleidoscope Revues, and when he was done, we did a show together in Milaca and really enjoyed it," Filley said. "My side of it is I do stand-up comedy. And then I got a grant one time to work with Kevin Kling, and in

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DEDICATION



40 years

Rush City Fire Chief Bob Carlson celebrates 40 years with the Rush City Fire Department and does not have any plans of slowing down.

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The Taste



Good eats

Amy Draxten and Grant Johnson from the Leader, located in Cambridge, offer multiple samples during The Taste event held March 31.

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SPORTS

Spring sports

North Branch fares well at recent Mankato meet. Braham, Rush City athletes honored by Great River Conference.

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UKRAINE

Continued from front

there are Russian soldiers, several banks gone, mobile net doesn't work, there is no electricity often. My key people were attacked by soldiers. My sisters Olga and Helen, were beaten. Russian soldiers took away their mobile phones," Leonid wrote to Scheumann.

Despite Leonid's current state, he still tries to assist others. Because they are still in Ukraine, his family is suffering.

"Last month was a difficult time for my family, especially kids. Almost every day we come to the shelter, sometimes 3-4 times a day because of the air alarm. We need rest. I need to find an exit," Leonid wrote.

Russians continue to be nearby and Leonid prays for Ukrainians.

"God's keep and carry about our key people. They see Russian soldiers on the street. To work with the Ukrainian side is very dangerous right now," Leonid wrote.

The worst of Leonid and his family's experience may not have been returning to shelter daily, hearing of Russian soldiers nearby, but to know of what happened to Leonid's brother and his untimely death.

"My brother died several days ago, (not at the hands of Russians). We couldn't bury his body. Not me – on a different side of Ukraine, nor my sisters – in occupation, couldn't be with him on the last day. Stranger people did it. It was so terrible," Leonid wrote.

In October 2021, Scheumann visited Melitopol, Ukraine, which is located in the southern part of the country. He met the mayor, where they built a relationship and made plans to send supplies to the city in the near future. Scheumann was not aware of what would come shortly after their meeting.

"I was working on a project with the mayor of Melitopol. We were going to send a container of mixed medical and some equipment. Russians took Melitopol over on Feb. 25, and a week later he was abducted by the Russians. Since then, being released," Scheumann said.

The mayor of Melitopol was not the only person Scheumann was aware of who was captured.

"Since then, there was another pastor that I know in Melitopol who has been abducted and I'm reading mixed reports regarding whether or not he's been freed or not," Scheumann said.

The war and intense moments that are constantly occurring are closer to our local community in Isanti than most would expect, because of close friends and connections of Scheumann.

"So this is not a distant issue for me, when you know people, you meet with them, you shake their hands," Scheumann said. "I wasn't even thinking at all about the Russians when I was there."

A Christian organization in Melitopol at the Merium Center has three distribution places that are able to serve 150,000 people. Sending these supplies has now been compromised due to the war.

There are two other places that



A token of appreciation given to Pastor Lee Scheumann from an organization called Merium, which the church has been sending containers since 2009.

Photo by Nikki Hallman



A photo of Pastor Lee Scheumann's friend, Leonid and his wife Mila, in their shelter where Leonid manages to keep a smile on his face.

Photo submitted



Leonid and Mila's son sleeping in their shelter.

Photo submitted

Scheumann mentioned his church and Minnesota organizations support. One is located in Snovsk, the poorest district of Churniniv. This city has suffered even more now due to war.

"The Russian army just drove through town and said, 'OK, we control you' — so outrageous," Scheumann said.

Another city they support is Kotzubinskye, which is 8 miles outside of Kyiv. Food and clothing are sent to Logos Christian Rehabilitation Center there.

All of the connections Scheumann built started 25 years ago. In 1997 he was invited to teach classes at a Bible school in Zaporzhzhye for two weeks at a time, three years in a row. One student approached him about opening a church in Melitopol, asking for his assistance.

After helping with the church, Scheumann kept in contact with those in Ukraine and was eventually noticed by friends in the Minnesota about what he does.

"I was then approached by some friends of mine from Lindstrom, Minnesota, who were starting a ministry of gathering and sending, procuring, used fire equipment. This was in 2009," Scheumann said.

At this point, the church then changed

focus to loading 40-foot shipping containers of supplies, which takes 25 volunteers. A total of three containers are sent each year, one to each of the three cities they assist.

Bibles for Missions, a nonprofit thrift store run completely by volunteers in Minneapolis, is where all the clothing comes from. Funds that are raised by the clothing they are able to sell are sent to help fund Christian missions in Europe. Clothes that aren't sold are sent for free in the containers.

"When I was in Melitopol I made connections with a man who has become a friend who oversees distribution of these things, through these kind of thrift stores and also directly to hospitals, orphanages, churches and communities," Scheumann said.

Hand in Hand Together is another organization that has been sending containers of clothing to Ukraine for 10 years and heard Scheumann has a connection to Melitopol. They want to send 28,000 pounds of clothing there as well.

Scheumann has connected with many in Melitopol to send these containers properly through customs and any other processes. Scheumann said there have been a lot of challenges to get through,



A poster of photos where supplies were given to those in need. These were put together as a thank you to the church.

Photo by Nikki Hallman

taking six months to send.

Considering the conditions of Ukraine, Scheumann said he is worried about a friend, Father Nicoli, who travels from Poland to Ukraine, assisting with goods and equipment for those in shelter.

Scheumann said he is introducing people he knows in Ukraine with one another to make the connections easier for transporting goods due to how busy he has now become.

"This is a story of God's grace. I look out my window and I go, I'm the pastor of probably the oddest named church in Minnesota named Oxlip, and here I am spending most of my time trying to arrange humanitarian aid to Ukraine," Scheumann said.

During this interview, Scheumann received a call with a connection from the Matter 360 initiative that repurposes medical equipment and supplies, saying they spoke with a company that would underwrite the cost of sending a container filled with the medical products to Poland.

Scheumann said there is still the difficulty of organizing the delivery to Poland and then distributing it to Ukraine via truck, but it is not luck that has given him this opportunity.

"When a war hits, all the systems get messed up. So everyone is scrambling," Scheumann said. "I thought I was going to spend \$40,000 on this — looks like it's paid for. That's of God."

With this new planned container, Scheumann said he is looking for 25 volunteers to help sort to make sure they have what is needed. If some have knowledge of medical equipment, that would be a great benefit.

In addition, Scheumann has another message of need.

"Prayers of God's people is absolutely essential because this task is massively bigger than any of us are," Scheumann said.

If any are interested in helping financially, they can send funds to the church, 29237 Roanoke St. NW, Isanti, MN 55040. A special fund is set up that is used for direct assistance to those that are trustworthy partners.