

UKRAINE

story by Sharon Markey and photos by Jed Gourley



Jed Gourley leads a team from CC Kiev in distributing food and the love of Jesus.

In a rare show of unity, Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox Christians set aside their differences to call out for God's guidance in Ukraine's recent presidential elections.

While most supported West-leaning opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko, there were those who supported Moscow-backed Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich, including more than half of the Russian Orthodox Church that had been the recipients of over-



Crowds overflow in one of the most peaceful revolutions in history.

whelming favoritism from the pro-Russian candidate. Amid internal pressure and mass demonstrations from the people, Ukraine's Supreme Court invalidated the November 21 run-off election results and ordered a second run-off election for December 26. Tests confirmed that the Ukrainian opposition candidate, Viktor Yushchenko, had been poisoned with dioxin, providing an explanation for an array of painful and disfiguring conditions that plagued the candidate during the last three months of the campaign.

Calvary Chapels in and near Kiev used the mass demonstrations as an opportunity to share the Gospel. Providing food, hot tea, and a listening ear to those impacted by the events, they were able to tell people about the true battle raging for their souls. Other Christians from the Calvarys across Ukraine journeyed to the capital city to help.

Millions of people gathered in the streets, but because of the influence of Christian leaders and the church, the demonstrations were more like revivals. On the main stage in Independence Square, denomination officials led the crowds in prayer at the begin-

ning and close of each day, and music groups led the people in singing the song, "A Prayer for Ukraine." Signs and banners bearing phrases like "Salvation is Only in Jesus" and "God Loves Ukraine" were scattered among the orange flags and Yushchenko signs. No shops were vandalized, and no one was drinking—which is unheard of among any crowd to gather in Ukraine. Pastor Jake Knotts of Calvary Chapel Chernigiv witnessed incredible generosity during the demonstration. Complete strangers were sharing food with each other, and many people politely refused free handouts, saying, "No, give it to somebody else; I've already eaten."

With voter fraud greatly reduced in the December 26 election, West-leaning opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko emerged victorious and was officially sworn in on January 23. In his inaugural speech, he gave glory to God and vowed to fight corruption.

"I believe the Orange Revolution was a work of God; it was not the work of man," said Pastor George Markey of Calvary Chapel Kiev. "Hundreds of thousands of people, fed up with corruption and unrighteousness, united together to take a stand for freedom and justice. God has answered our prayers for Ukraine in a way we never could have imagined." ❧



Demonstrators spent many nights in freezing temperatures in Independence Square.