

February 2026



A new facility and a new chapter of ministry for NLR



Studio B: Ukrainian



Studios in the sky



Studio A: Russian

An exciting year of transition and opportunity culminated in the New Year's Eve 2026 initial broadcasts of NLR's Russian and Ukrainian radio networks! In this edition we review the timeline.

December 2024: After 30 years of operating Christian radio from rented facilities, and witnessing the deterioration of NLR's existing facility at a defunct Christian university that lost its heating system and maintenance funding, NLR's directors put out a call to raise funds to purchase a new facility to ensure their broadcast ministry's potential into the future. A fund raising campaign was initiated to create a new home for New Life Radio.

January 2025. The first pledges of support came in and the campaign was off to a good start. A prospective station site was located in Odessa along with a few others that showed promise. Some questioned the viability of making a major investment while Odessa was still under attack by Russian forces, but the need for a new place was clear and we put our confidence in the Lord being able to secure and protect new studios dedicated to the proclamation of His Gospel to the warring peoples of Russia and Ukraine.

February: NLR staff continued to produce 24/7 radio working under difficult conditions for Ukraine as the nation entered its third year of war. The station's satellite and Internet transmissions provided Russia with an important source of Christian encouragement while the Kremlin enacted major disruptions and shutdowns of western media.

photo: Zhenya in Studio B trying to stay warm

March: CRFR announces a name change to *New Life Radio International* in an effort to surmount various legal and bureaucratic problems that had confronted NLR during this time of war. \$42,000 had been raised toward

the \$150,000 capital campaign. However, the real estate market in Odessa had gone up much farther than realized as people from occupied cities in eastern Ukraine sought to move there. Initial studio sites proved unworkable and NLR would have to pay more. Donations continued and staff scoured real estate listings for the perfect place. The war didn't dampen their spirits.

April: \$102,000 had been raised at the beginning of this month so Daniel and Oksana Johnson flew to Odessa to start looking for locations. Prices ranged from \$150,000 to \$220,000+ and what they hoped for and what was possible appeared to be different things. After visiting multiple properties, none seemed viable nor inspiring as Odessa mainly offered basement or 1st floor apartments zoned for commercial use.

Then a call came from Illinois, and a pledge was made that opened up every possibility. God had made a way for us, and a listing came to light that seemed unbelievable: a new penthouse apartment for a price right in the middle of that range and comparable to million dollar properties of similar type. Things progressed very rapidly and before we knew it, New Life Radio had a new home in the sky, or at least, on the 25th floor.

May: Preparations began for the transition of NLR to a new home. The closing process for the penthouse site took time and caused headaches as many of these costs had to be paid in cash, and staff had extremely tough conditions to get it as wire services like Western Union rejected 70 % of our attempts. Gracious NLR partners in the US helped out and finally the paperwork and financial payments were completed.

JUNE/JULY Initial construction began to turn this four room apartment into six radio studios plus kitchen. A short term team of radio staff joined us for the summer with hopes of returning full time. They were busy!

NLR had a close call in July as a missile hit the building next door, resulting in major damage and blown out windows on every

floor of the University building except NLR's. It was a reminder that doing God's work is not without danger or trouble. This didn't hinder our efforts to get the new site up and running.



August: there was a lull in construction as the Johnsons headed back to the US due to visa requirements. NLR staff continued to transmit from both Odessa and our remote studio in Austria as the Russian bombings intensified and electrical power was intermittent. In the meantime, the search for additional mission staff began in earnest, despite challenges to find seminary-trained men and other potential candidates that were reluctant to come to Odessa due to mobilization and forced impressment.

With so much potential to develop additional media channels (satellite, FM radio) for Ukraine after the war ends, NLR will need an increased staffing presence to meet the programming requirements these new opportunities can afford. *The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few...*

September: Christian radio requires radio equipment, but the equipment cannot be installed unless the carpets are in first. A seemly simple issue like carpet installation became a vexing one for NLR as the decision was made to install padding and stretched carpets in our studios, partially to improve acoustics, but also to shield our neighbors in this apartment complex from the noise of daily operations. Local professionals in Odessa had no experience, so the call was put out across America that month for one man to come. Weeks would go by and no one volunteered. In the meantime, Christian builders worked on the station's electrical wiring, heating, fire protection, and other tasks to turn this apartment into a professional radio station. There was a petition by residents against NLR who heard a rumor we were creating a recording studio featuring loud rock bands, but they were assured NLR needed quiet to do its work. The protests eventually subsided, though the building administrator was not friendly despite our assurances of being good neighbors. A potential thorn in the flesh, he was eventually taken by the army press gangs, and replaced by a man more amenable toward us. God works mysteriously!

October: NLR witnessed the increasing interference and stoppage by Russia of their domestic telecom and Internet services for the public at large, along with a general decline of basic civil and personal rights. Reports of interruptions of our radio streams in various cities across Russia required staff to change servers in different countries reminding us of the ongoing importance of our free to air satellite radio transmissions that the Putin government cannot block. The war continued with a fierceness in October that made it clear that peace was still far off, but inconsequential to our efforts to aid those who are "citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven." Our message of ultimate peace and hope of eternity through Christ remains the benchmark of our broadcasts.

November: The Johnsons returned to complete the studio construction with a goal of going live on both networks by Christmas eve. They found themselves a month behind schedule as builders left to take other jobs without their notification. A busy month of construction began with efforts

to sound proof studios impacted by a loud elevator shaft next door. Multiple walls and coverings were needed to make the studios usable. Oksana oversaw this hard work!

December: As construction neared its completion, the carpets remained rolled up and the equipment from the old studios could not be moved in. The Johnsons feared having to do the job themselves without experience, but in a moment of rescue, 83 year old Roger Kuter from Atlanta called the Johnsons and said the Lord had impressed on him the need to come to Odessa to finish the job so NLR could get back on the air! A day later, Roger had a plane ticket to Moldova ready to take a bus to Odessa, but the Russians had just bombed the main bridge on the way to the city. We had the man, but not the means to get him to work. Eventually, a taxi was arranged for Roger that could find a way around the bridge and he arrived just before Christmas. In five short days, Roger expertly cut and stretched all the studio carpets, with no hint that he had not installed a carpet in 35 years.

He is just one of many the Lord has sent our way over the years to rescue us!

photo: Roger finishes his work



Within two days, all the equipment at the old station site was transferred to the 25th floor and installation commenced in earnest to meet the Christmas Eve deadline. While we didn't hit that target, NLR did broadcast live on New Year's Eve!

What a year!

Thanks to our mission partners for a wonderful 2025! God bless you all!



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