

KATE KONDOR

The Language of Obedience

By Natalie Hart

KATE (FEDORUK, B.A. '07) KONDOR has long been guided and encouraged by this advice: "Someone else is on the other side of your obedience"—someone who Jesus is seeking, who God is reaching for.

Kondor's obedience has been as dramatic as moving halfway across the world to minister in several Slavic countries, as complicated as remaining in Ukraine during the Revolution of Dignity in 2014 and as simple as greeting people in their own language. But it all started at the Cornerstone Music Festival.

During her senior year, she went to the Youth With a Mission (YWAM) booth at the festival and learned about their Discipleship Training School (DTS). Kondor was on her third major, had no plans for graduate school and didn't have a job lined up. What she did have was a longtime desire to go to Ukraine and a love of ministry. A friend described DTS as "this awesome time if you want to hear from God." She signed up with a "Why not?" attitude, thinking it would be a short-term mission trip.

She had never been out of the United States, but in September 2007, YWAM took her to Ukraine and the Republic of Georgia. "DTS was the first door that opened, and it all changed after that. It just totally changed my perspective on the world nations and how the LORD has His truth in it."

The work was varied, depending on the local need, but always, for Kondor, she prioritized learning the language.

"It started when I did camp ministry in a university town. When kids told me their names, I'd ask them to repeat them until I could say their names like they did. I wanted them to know I saw them. They smiled that I cared to learn their names and say them in their way. When DTS sent me to the Republic of Georgia, I learned a little bit of Georgian,

mostly numbers. Instead of asking for three kilos of potatoes in Russian, I would ask in Georgian, and the ladies at the market just lit up."

Knowing the language helps her learn the culture of each place, but the biggest benefit is always relational: "People respond when you seek to understand them. They open up more." Of course, English is a language that people everywhere want to learn, so Kondor pioneered a successful evangelism ministry based on English clubs.

Her short-term mission trip turned into 11 years of ministry based in Kyiv, Ukraine. In 2013, while in the U.S. for a furlough, Kondor discerned that God was calling her to continue to make Kyiv home. She returned in September. The Revolution of Dignity began in November, turning violent in January and February 2014.

"I chose to stay. No matter how it unfolded, unless the U.S. government made me leave, I was staying. This was my home until God moved me. I lived with two Ukrainians who couldn't leave. How was I better than them?"

Staying had an impact on the people around her: "The sellers in my neighborhood looked shocked to see me. They expected foreigners to leave. To see someone stay and push through was so encouraging to them. Years later, an older Ukrainian missionary said it gave her strength to go on. God reached her through my step of obedience."

It had an impact on her, as well: "When you take those steps of boldness, nothing but trust is strengthened between you and the LORD."

Her relationship with one of her ministry colleagues also strengthened during this time—and developed into love. Matyas is Hungarian, and when it was time for pre-marital counseling, their leaders connected them with an American ministry couple who had been in Hungary for many years. That began a friendship that took Kate and Matyas through their next step of obedience: serving together in Ukraine for seven years before wrapping up their ministry with YWAM in Kyiv and moving to Budapest to join the couple to serve. They are now missionaries with EFCA ReachGlobal, serving with the Budapest City Team.

They arrived in Budapest two months before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

So now, in addition to beginning their work of strengthening the church in Hungary and the year of cultural, language and team studies ReachGlobal requires, they are helping Ukrainian refugees and missionaries every way they can. Through their church, they are part of Bible studies and discipleship. But when she's walking down the street, Kate can't help but greet people she hears speaking Ukrainian. In shops, she's drawn to them.



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Because Kate speaks their language and misses all the same beautiful places they're missing, many Ukrainians share their stories with her. "I'm ready. I can grasp only so much of their experiences, but I can listen and pray with them."

At the same time, there is much joy for her in Budapest. As she learns more of the Hungarian language and culture, she's able to connect better with locals, including Matyas's family, and those at the school of their children, Abner and Emese. Even she and Matyas are having deep conversations about his home, "We're looking at his culture with a Biblical perspective. How does it reflect who God made Hungarians to be? How does it reflect God's truth? How do we connect people to the gospel of Jesus Christ?"

There has been much obedience over 15 years of international ministry, and many someones reached by God. Kate sees being a missionary as a privilege: "These are beautiful nations and beautiful people. There is such value in every nation—God had a design for every nation from the beginning. As missionaries, we get to see how God created these cultures for His glory and purpose. We then get to be part of God's discipleship in individuals from the nations for His glory."

ABOUT KATE KONDOR

Kate Kondor earned a Bachelor of Arts in psychology from Cornerstone University in 2007. In her Cross-Cultural Communications course, she completed a research project on Ukraine, learning more about her heritage as her great-grandfather was Ukrainian. While completing research in Miller Library, she felt a call from God to serve in cross-cultural missions rather than camp ministry and completed Youth With a Mission's Discipleship Training School after graduation. To follow the ongoing ministry of the Kondor family in Budapest, Hungary, and learn about opportunities to support their work as full-time missionaries with EFCA ReachGlobal Europe, subscribe to their newsletter at bit.ly/kondornews.