



## **TERNOPIL, UKRAINE**

### ***1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2015 Report***

#### **January**

Greetings to you, dear people of God!

I am glad to have this opportunity to write to you to share with you the latest news, to keep our fellowship and collaboration going as we minister to the same Lord. Every time I write a letter to you, my mind makes me travel overseas to where you are. I might not be personally acquainted with all of you, but while I am addressing you in my thoughts it gives me sense of belonging to God's huge family - His Church. I remember as brother Rick and I were visiting one family in Pennsylvania. During the supper that our hosts – an elderly brother and his wife were serving us – the man looked at me and said, “I have prayed for Vitaly Bilyak so many times at our prayer meetings, and I imagined him to look different...” He might have expected me to look older and more respectable. Recollections of this story made me think of the time when we will all meet in the eternity in the house of our Father and will get a chance to get acquainted. There, some of you may approach me saying, “You know, Vitaly, we read updates about your ministry in our church and in our families, and we were praying for you.” I do not want to wait until I meet you in Heaven to tell you, “Thank you!” Thank you for being there for us! Thank you for praying and sympathizing with us in our needs. Thank you for supporting our ministry in every possible way. Thank you for making trips over to visit us and help us with summer camps and with construction work on the Rehab Center... Thank you that you are there and that we can share our blessings with you.

Now, let me give you an up-date on the ministry of our church. In the last few up-dates I have told more about the Rehab Center, about the restoration of the house after the fire. We have not really done much work on it over the winter. However, with spring coming soon, we need to start thinking about where to get the finances to be able to continue work on restoration of the dorm facility of the Rehab Center.

As you may remember, in October 2014 we were going to change the place of our church meetings. We switched from the premises we rented earlier to an auditorium at the Trade Union Building. This auditorium is a lot bigger (120 seats) than the auditorium we were using before. We use it for Sunday services and then, right after the service is over, we have children coming. Ladies from our church have a Bible class for them. We call these activities Children's Christian Club, and it lasts for about an hour and half. Then, after a thirty-minute break, we have a teen meeting. There is another group of people from our church that conducts the teen meetings. This way, we try to keep in touch with and minister to those teens and children that we met through our camps. We use this new auditorium from 10 am to 6 pm. It is pretty expensive, but since we do not yet see how God will provide us with our own church building – we are happy to have even this place for our meetings. There are some issues that come up from time to time. Children are children even when they come to the meetings of the Children's Christian Club. Just recently one of them left marks on the wall and I got a serious warning from the administration of the Trade Union Building. These started us praying about a permanent premise for our church meetings and meetings with youth and children.

We had to rent another premise, an office, to be able to hold other weekly meetings. Beginning in January 2015 we have been renting a premise of 28 square meters in an office building. We hold our music practices here as well as men's meetings and church leadership meetings. It is also a good place to have meetings with

individuals. Men from our church fixed up the room, and friends of ours whom we've known from when we were very young donated money for the ministry and left it to our discretion how to use it. Thus we were able to buy the most essential furniture, and now have a place to have our weekly meetings. We would like very much that the next time our church will have to change the place for its meetings it would be moving into its own building. It would greatly help the ministry of our church in many aspects. Please, pray with us about this need.

We also ask you to pray with us about the leaders of our church's ministries. Our church is not a big church - just 25 members. There are some members that are just passive comers, but there are others who are active. Beside our Rehab Center ministries, we also have children's ministries. We have three groups of children we minister to.

My wife Katya teaches the youngest group from 3 to 6 years old. This group meets during the church service; their class usually starts right before the second part of the service, when the main sermon is preached. This group consists mainly of the children whose parents are attending the Sunday service. There are 10 to 12 children in this group.

Julia teaches a group of children from 7 to 12 years old. She works with children from "the street." These are children we met through our camps, and children from dysfunctional homes... This group consists of about 20 children.



Then we have a group of teens from 13 to 15 years old. We have Veronika and Kolya working with them. Most of these kids are also those whom we met through our camps. There are 15 of them overall.

Volody is our youth leader. He teaches a group of 10 young people. And, these are not all the active members of our church; we also have Andrey, Maccsim, Oksana, Ira and others. Please, pray about all of them to stay strong in the Spirit, that Satan would not overpower the leaders of our church. Without these people, our ministry would be very difficult, or even impossible.

## February

Greetings to you, dear friends!

I recently experienced a special blessing that I would like to share with you all. I realize that this is not my own merit, but God's work, and you and I are His coworkers.

The Apostle John once wrote, « I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth» (3 John 1:4). That is the exact joy I experienced with some of our former rehabilitants. Generally in this ministry we relate very carefully with the results of the work. If we speak of some sort of results, then it is with fear that this person will not fall from faith and return to his previous life.

Six years ago, when we had only just begun the rehabilitation center, we received three men who came from Georgia. Two drug addicts and an alcoholic. Zurab was addicted to drugs, but came to Ukraine to be with relatives, then lost his ID documents. He came to us in a very bad physical condition. HIV+, foot rot, and very weak. But he so strongly grabbed hold of God, as if this were his last chance. After rehabilitation he went home to Georgia. Two others came to us through the ministry of the BIEM ministry. Timur and Nukzar. Timur was addicted to drugs, and Nukzar to alcohol. It seems it was a bit hard for them since for them Russian





is a foreign language, and Ukrainian pretty much not understandable. At the rehab center they talked with them in Russian, but also in Ukrainian. If a person seeks God, then the language turns out not to be such a problem.

Somehow in a conversation with Lasha (a ministry coworker in Georgia) I asked for Zurab's phone number. Before long I phoned him. This was a very emotional and warm conversation. In the conversation he was abiding with God. God healed his health. His vision was restored; he began to see well. Before, he had experienced a big problem with his feet. Now he walks on

foot 5 – 7 kilometers to church services. His heart is open for working with addicts there in Georgia. It's hard to put into words how good all this was to hear, to know that those efforts were not in vain.

And the blessings did not stop there. We agreed that he would look me up on Skype and Facebook. When he did, I found on his page photographs of the rehabilitation center that I do not have, but even more, it was great to find through his page Timur, the other former addict. Timur and I began to correspond. He, too, testified of his faith. This is happiness to know that «*those who are drawn toward death*» (Proverbs 24:11) are alive, thanks to God. From Lasha I learned that Zurab (former alcoholic) is also abiding with the Lord.

Pray, please, for the ministry of the rehab center.

- For the ministers, the brethren who live there 24 hours a day/7 days a week. Andrei and Dinis take turns a week at a time.
- For the rehabilitants. Now there are 7. Two are already nearing the end of their rehabilitation. Springtime always brings a temptation to leave rehab.
- Concerning finances for the ministry and to complete the reconstruction of the building following the fire.

## March

Peace to you, dear friends, coworkers of God. I am glad once again to share with you our blessings and events.

In recent times God has shown me that in many families of the church there arise problems due to men not fulfilling their purpose, as men, according to the Bible. Sometimes they want to take upon themselves responsibility for the family, for the financial portion, and to show an example of genuine Christian conduct; sometimes they are incorrect portraits... the list is sad and long. They all suffer from this, mothers, children, wives... In the end result the church is weak, the ministry is weak, and God is not glorified... But God especially wants to work with men. Women walked behind Christ, but it was men He specifically called to follow Him. Such are we – we need a push. It seems that Jesus exerted special efforts to reach men. It's interesting that while men hid for fear behind closed doors, women walked to the grave and encountered Jesus. And He sent this message through the women: «Tell the disciples, and especially Peter, that will wait for them in Galilee.» This inspires me. If it wasn't easy for Christ working with me, then it won't be easier for me...

Thus, my dream has come to pass. Last month I began a group for men. The meetings take place in the office that we rent for the church. At the first meetings came those who normally come to all the services. That is not what I needed. I telephoned, I met with people, and urged them to come. Several came one time—but did not come again. Now 5-7 men are coming. Each Friday, at the end of the week. Only men. That's exactly what we told the women: «We love you, but don't come to this meeting.» We have a simpler atmosphere. We don't need a bouquet of flowers on the table. A bottle of Coca-Cola and a couple packages of chips make a better table decoration, or sandwiches set out with napkins so we won't have to wash dishes afterward. We have more laughter. Men like to joke around and laugh, but when we open the New Testament we say more truth to each other. We can say directly to a person who is shirking away from the decision to be baptized, «Do you know

what your questions are? We are not pressuring you, but if you have decided to live with God, then what is standing in your way? How can we help you?» At the onset of each meeting each of us is supposed to tell what has been good for him since the past meeting, and what has been hardest. The first prompts us not simply to thank God with general phrases, but each of us observes and analyzes his past week so that there will be specifics for which to praise God. The difficulties that we share with one another transition into prayer for specific people and their needs.

Friends, pray about this group. That God will give me wisdom and patience in this ministry. Pray that the Lord will send us new men who search for God. For those who come, that they will be open to change according to the Word of God.

May God bless you!

Your brother,

Vitaly