



TERNOPIL, UKRAINE

2nd Quarter 2013 Report

April

From the beginning of the church's ministry, we focused on the younger generation. We deliberately chose young people as a target audience for the outreaches. When we were looking for a name for our church, someone said, "Let's find a name that that will show we are a youthful church." I remember that at some point, I liked the idea, but then I thought about how it would be when the young people get married. How would it be when I grow old? What will happen when these coming to church are middle-aged, or even little old people? We abandoned the idea. Now I see that it was the right decision. We have not changed our focus of ministry. We all still want to serve young people, and we try as best we can, to support this ministry. But facts are stubborn things. At the moment, the church has 9 two-parent families and one family where a single mother is raising two children. Realizing this, I understand, and I see that the Devil is not interested in a church of strong families.



I have prayed for opportunities to engage with families. It's not so simple. Many of us have small children. I see this in our home group. Very often the group will not meet because someone has a sick child, or because someone has to work overtime to take care of his family. But I have seen the need and prayed about the possibility of teaching the church families.

Somewhere at the end of 2012, I was talking to a brother who is involved in family ministries, and we agreed that in the spring of 2013 he would come to us and will hold a one-day workshop for the families of the church. But he had not forgotten our conversation and called me. So we appointed a day for a

workshop for families. I said to him: "Sasha, since you're already coming to us, let's have you come a day earlier, and we will do a special meeting with the youth on 'Preparation for Marriage.'" He agreed. It was a special time for our young people. It seems that young people are always interested in talking about the choice of a life partner. They could ask their questions. One of the most-discussed issues was the matter of starting a family with an unbelieving boyfriend or girlfriend. I think many issues became clearer for them.

The next day, April 20, we invited all the couples in our family to a family time. In order to prevent those who have young children from worrying about how their children will stay home without them, we asked two girls from the youth to look after the children of those who come with children. Each family brought a dish, sandwiches, cake or fruit ... We lit candles for a romantic atmosphere. (I think that was important for our women).

It turned out to be a great time of fellowship. Together, we spent about five hours of afternoon time. We talked about conflict resolution in the family, finances, about fatherhood and of course about the performance of their roles.

Hopefully, this will be a good reminder and push to work on strengthening families. Please pray for the families of our church. Several couples were married just this year. Other couples have been married more than 10 years. Pray especially for the families of the leaders of the church.

May 2013

Greetings to you, my dear friends. I am very glad to share with you the events of the past month. It was a particularly busy month. Many things have happened, but most of all I want to share some of the blessings. For us, a baptism always brings much anticipation and celebration to the church. Baptism, in my view, reflects the way we work, or better expressed, how we co-operate with the Lord. Baptism shows who runs the church. This was true with respect to our church. We have a group that has been preparing for baptism. Four people have been coming to the meetings. But two were ready to be baptized. One is a girl from our youth, Julia, and also a man from the rehabilitation center, Sergei.

Julia repented last summer at a youth camp that we held with your aid. The first time we met her was also in a camp, two years ago. She has very actively joined the life and ministry of the church. She started to help in the children's ministry; then she became an active member of the youth ministry team. When we announced classes for preparation for baptism, she was the first who approached me with her desire to attend. With her in the church is her younger sister, Nadia. They serve the Lord together. Julia is a student. She has borne many trials and temptations in life, but now I rejoice when I see her firmness and conviction.



Another important person at this holiday, the baptism, was Sergei. His story is much more complicated. His life has been full of a lot of grief and bitterness. He was an orphan, brought up in an orphanage. Such an education, or rather lack of it, led him to criminal offenses and, of course, prison. He is still a fairly young man. He is 37, but that did not stop him from becoming an alcoholic. In addition, he has a disability related to the musculoskeletal system (problems with the spine and feet). Sergei worked as a loader at the market. He had lots of friends. But one person who was selling coffee in the market began to pray about him, witnessed to, and cared about him. Then this

man invited Sergei to go to rehab and, after some time, Sergei agreed. So we met with him. He quickly began to realize that his was not the problem of alcoholic beverages, but a lack of purpose in life, and the absence of God in his heart. He repented about a year ago. For almost half a year, he has helped in the ministry of the rehabilitation center. It's hard to call him a man of relations (because of orphanage upbringing), but he is a very disciplined (again because of the orphanage upbringing).

When I looked at Sergei and Julia, they were for me inspiring examples of the need to preserve and save lives. Julia is still young, and her belief in Jesus Christ protects her from a lot of problems that could be in her life without God. Sergei, on the contrary, has been through a lot brought on himself. He could be called a missing person, but God had mercy on him. The ceremony itself was both simple and solemn. I have a dream that baptisms would occur so frequently that the word "holiday" would not fit anymore.

At the time, we had Sam Slobodian and Eugene Crouch visiting. They took part in the service dedicated to the baptism. Sam Slobodian and I baptized these people. For me it was very symbolic. We labor jointly in the work of the Lord: we in Ukraine, you in the U.S., but we share the same results, which is a total joy. It seemed to me that Sam represented all of our American friends who donated money for the camp where young people and children receive the Lord, and also those who come themselves, in support of our missionaries, in support of the ministry of the rehabilitation center.

The baptism itself was held in a pool, and then we went to the place that we rent for worship services and continued the celebration. There was a lot of testimonies, preaching, and of course the first communion for our friends. Please pray for all the people who have begun their journey following the Lord.

June

I went to a meeting with the principal of the school. I took with me some gifts for the school. Somehow through the mission BIEM, we got books on Christian ethics into elementary schools. These books have been approved by the Ministry of Education of Ukraine. I took along about 15 of each book (it's a 3-part series). At a meeting with the principal I told him about our experience in the past and offered him a partnership. So we used the opportunity to run a day camp for children near the church. This is a very good place for a camp. The site itself is spacious and covered with grass, not asphalt.

I am very glad that you and I have the opportunity to participate in joint work for the glory of the Lord. A great blessing for me personally and for our young ministry was to hold a children's day camp with a group of Americans.



Summer is always a time of opportunities for evangelism, especially among children and young people. Some of you already know that we rent a room in a student area, close to our church, where there are two large universities. The work with the students is not as active as it should be, God has laid on our hearts to work harder in this region. Those outreaches that we are doing focus primarily on people living more or less close to us. So when we were talking about summer camps, we thought it would be great to conduct these meetings, not at the center of the city, as it was in years past. We began to pray about it, to consult, to see whether there might be such a possibility. There were several options, but the most dignified option seemed to use the stadium of one of the schools in our district. But the

biggest advantage was the presence of a large number of nearby houses. Many children came without any invitation. They simply saw or heard the noise of the camp. In addition, we gave out quite a few invitations via teachers in schools.

Every day, an hour before the start of camp, our youth set up a trampoline and children came to jump. Then began the program. The whole camp was very dynamic and fast. God sent us various types of weather. There were sunny days, and there were days when there was rain. On those days, the meetings were held in the premises of the church. Of course, on those days, only part of the children came. In all, a little more than a hundred children attended our day camp. A very strong support for us was a team from the United States. They took the lead in organizing and carrying out a few days at the camp, which was a great help for our young people. We are very grateful to God for such special features.



Please pray for the leaders of the children's ministry, as well as for the children and their families. Very often parents do not mind allowing the children to attend summer camp, but then do not let them attend regular meetings in a Christian children's club.

With best greetings, your brother and co-worker for the Lord,
Vitaly Bilyak