



TERNOPIL, UKRAINE

3rd Quarter 2011 Report

July 2011

This month God led our ministry in an unusual way. You never know how God will guide His children. We had this summer planned out almost every day. But, as we saw later, our little calendar did not coincide with what the Lord had planned for us.

Several young men from the Ukrainian Baptist Church of Federal Way (Seattle, USA), among whom was my younger brother, Leonid, had planned to attend a summer camp for orphans in the Zhytomyr region. They collected a little money with the desire to serve orphans, but their trip to the camp was canceled due to the fact that the organizers of that camp did not find space for them. Looking back, even I cannot remember in detail how it happened. I heard that there are people willing to serve orphans, but they did not know where it might be possible. Somehow without even thinking, I offered to do it here in Ternopil.

So, here we ended up with a group of young people at home, and almost no plan. The only thing I remember is that I knew of one church in the north that has a ministry in an orphanage. We phoned them and visited the orphanage, where we gave some new children's clothes and 15 chairs. But then God opened a big opportunity. In early summer, I met with a public services representative for children and young people. On the phone we agreed to meet and then talked in their office. We said: "There is an opportunity to serve orphans."

They told me that there are many orphans who live under the care of families. Some of them live very well, but many of them live in difficult circumstances. On that day, we agreed that they would make lists of these children, and we would go to every family, and together with the social worker would visit them and give something that will help them. While they were preparing the lists, we prepared the gifts. There were 15 notebooks for school, socks, shorts, tights, t-shirts and a towel. I put in a request for literature to Eugene Buyko, and by bus he brought to us children's Bibles. Each child was presented with a Children's Bible. For each family, we left an invitation to visit the church, as well as the children's and youth clubs. During that week, we personally gave gifts to almost seventy children. It is approximately 50 families.

We saw various things. There were tidy apartments in good repair, we've seen that people take care of orphans, and have seen just the opposite. At one apartment for a long time we knocked at the door and they would not open to us. We were ready to leave. I tried the door knob; the door opened, and we entered. It was a tiny room with two bunk beds. Nearby stood a bedside table with a TV. In front of the TV sat an impoverished-looking man, about age 45. When we entered, he turned his head for a moment, looked at us, and then went back to watching TV. We saw a social degradation there. You guessed it, the conversation did not work there, and later the social worker told me that children in such families often lag behind in development because of the parents.

Then we were in another family, where the impressions were no less, but where everything was different. As soon as we entered the apartment, the first thing that caught my eye, or rather what we smelled, was that it was damp inside. When our eyes grew a little accustomed to the darkness, we saw mold on the walls. In the hallway and in the rooms, the walls were crumbling under a fungus from the floor to a height of 1 meter. We met a pretty young woman and she invited us to the children's room. On the wall we saw a dozen medals for winning in sports competitions. Her daughter is engaged in gymnastics and won the awards. All that we have seen here shows that there is a great need, but also we saw a mom who does what can for their 2 children.

For us it was a great blessing to visit these families. To some families we had the opportunity to share the Gospel. To some families we would like to go back, that would be something else to help. A few things God has revealed in this period. All around us there are so many people who need our love.

Pray for the development of this ministry. We do not know exactly why or what goal God has for showing us these families and their needs.

August 2011

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7)

Peace to you, my dear friends,

As I wrote in my last letter, this summer has been especially with different events. Especially we spent a lot of effort and energy on preparation and holding camps. And this is the end of the summer. We all decided to do a church picnic. Initially we planned to leave the city, to be in nature, and spend time with church and friends of the church. But just before the scheduled date, the weather changed drastically: it became very cold, and we decided to hold a picnic at our house. This is an opportunity for parents and children to be in fellowship.

Sometimes, at those moments, I understand why the Lord blessed us with a house. That evening, the house and yard were filled with people of different age groups. Children's laughter ranged from youngest through school ages. The youth sat on makeshift chairs that were rings cut from tree stumps. Most of them were identified as the youth of the church after a summer youth camp in the Carpathian Mountains. They are very good friends with each other. Almost all of these are the only believers in their families.

It was interesting to observe married couples. Moms looked after the children and talked with each other. Several nurses ran the kitchen under the direction of Katya (my lovely wife). I was with several brothers; we made a fire and barbecued. There were older people. Friends came to the church. In this category I include the people who attend church regularly or from time to time, but who have not yet made a decision on dedicated service for the Lord. These were our rehabilitants, 5 people who undergo rehabilitation for drug addiction or alcoholism.

That evening I tried to count how many people had been there and counted and more than 35 adults plus a dozen children.

That evening, the Lord taught me several things. First - it was a testimony to my neighbors that you can spend an enjoyable time without alcohol, without sin; a quiet guitar sounded, someone was singing our favorite songs. My neighbor, a grandmother, said, "You always have a lot of people come to visit, but they always go peacefully. We do not hear bad words, no drunken brawls, no quarrelling." I told her about several people whose lives have been changed by the Lord. "Before, they were active participants in drunken fights and quarrels. But now the LORD came into their lives and brought peace. "

The second point that I realized is that if people love each other, they like to spend time together. They were all of different educations, different social status, all different ages, but everyone enjoyed being together. And I thought that if we love the Lord, we have to spend more time together.

That night the Lord led me to pray for the unity of the church. He showed that it is possible and real. But I know that the Devil does not like it.

The evening didn't pass without its oddities. When nearly everyone had gone, there were still many young people but only two cars. The young people decided to squeeze in to make room. But for one guy there was no room. He said, "No problem" and climbed into the trunk of my brother's car and closed the it. When they drove into town, my brother, Andrew, slightly exceeded the speed and was stopped by policemen. He got out to talk to the police; they were talking near the trunk. The traffic inspector said: "What are you doing with so many people crammed in here; you can see them through the glass." He began to explain to him that everybody he had to leave and he could not leave anyone behind. What did the policeman say? "Okay, well, just don't put anybody in the trunk." Then he let go of them. Early the next morning this story was told to me by Pasha, who was riding in the trunk.

Please pray for the unity of the church.

September 2011

Peace to you, dear brothers and sisters, the servants of God.

It's great working with you in evangelism. There are many different ways we have used for evangelism

for the past few years. In September, in a special way God has blessed our young, new church. It was a somewhat unusual form of evangelism. A girl, Susanna, a member of our church, is getting married to Sergei (a good believing guy who believes in Lviv). In most cases, the wedding is performed on the territory of the bride. Especially because they have chosen to live in Ternopil.

But this is not an ordinary couple. Susanna is from a Muslim family. Her dad is from Dagistan, and the mother converted to Islam. Several years ago, Susanna came to believe. And her young sister Marian started coming to church with her. At home, all was not sweet for them. In the eyes of the parents, especially of the mother, our church was guilty more than once of causing troubles for their family. But the girls were very strong in their decision to follow the Lord.

Sergei was an orphan from Lviv. The closest relative present at the wedding was his sister. As you can imagine, we had no choice. So we decided to organize a genuine Christian wedding. Especially since the parents of Susanna would hold a wedding only for their unbelieving relatives.

A Christian wedding consists of 2 parts. First, it's a joining. And second, it's a holiday. The joining ceremony was held in a house of prayer of a Pentecostal church, which we rented for just such an event. It was nice to see most relatives and friends of Susanna and of Sergei's church in Lviv. Of course, came from our church. Our musical group prepared several wedding songs. The sisters decorated the auditorium. And we spent a great time evangelizing. I talked about the importance of marriage. All together, we prayed for blessing on the new family. The mother of Susanna also agreed to pray. The ceremony was held in very reverent atmosphere. After the ceremony, an older sister of Susanna and her husband even said in private that they didn't want to go to the wedding banquet organized by her parents, knowing what awaited them there. She said, "We don't want to lose the atmosphere of the presence of God." That was a Saturday.

The next day, Sunday, we scheduled to have holiday at our home, since we don't have a church building and we have a private home. Although we still have a lot of things uncomplete in the yard, we offered our home for the wedding, and everyone liked the idea. On Saturday came a little young to decorate. Not everything is done in that room, but they did everything perfectly. Several nurses prepared a simple but tasty meal.

And on Sunday afternoon, after the service, our house was filled with guests again. It was a wonderful time. There was much laughter and joy. We gave the young couple our happy wishes and sang songs. The youth prepared a program with contests and singing. In the evening everyone went home very pleased. I recalled that it's written, "Rejoice with those who rejoice." I am sure that if you have to weep with those who weep, we will do it.

I really wanted to convey to you a little of that joy. Rejoice with us!

Best regards,
Vitaly Bilak