



BAPTIST INTERNATIONAL *Challenger*

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On the Road for Widows and Orphans

In October, BIEM's newest secretary, Lauren, traveled to Ukraine with members of Mt. Tabor Baptist Church in Lebanon, Indiana. Here she shares impressions from that trip.

I can honestly say this trip has been the answer to a long-held dream. I went to Ukraine for the first time when I was twelve, and have dreamed of going back ever since.

While I loved many things about this trip—the Ukrainian countryside, traveling, and don't get me started on the food!—as I look back over my pictures, the people stood out the most.

When I boarded the airplane for this trip, the only people I really knew were Sam and Amy, my coworkers from BIEM. I will admit I was nervous about spending a week and a half with strangers. But God removed that fear immediately. The Lord gave our motley crew great unity. I got to watch our group take care of each other by carrying bags, deciphering names of food, and sharing hair-doing skills.



Our group in front of the Desna church, L to R: Igor, Jacqueline, Ken, Lauren, Charlie, Sam, Derek (in orange hat) Amy, Chip (hiding), Diana, MaryAnn, Jason, Eugene, Debbie, Brad & Andrea.

Our group was made up of ten people from Indianapolis, a couple from Canada, and Sam and Amy. The youngest member of our group was Derek (age eleven). I was next youngest; everyone else was over fifty. One of the couples from Indy was also blind. While in Ukraine, we were accompanied by Eugene (BIEM's Ukrainian director) and Igor, who served as our drivers. Church planter Lyosha was our interpreter.

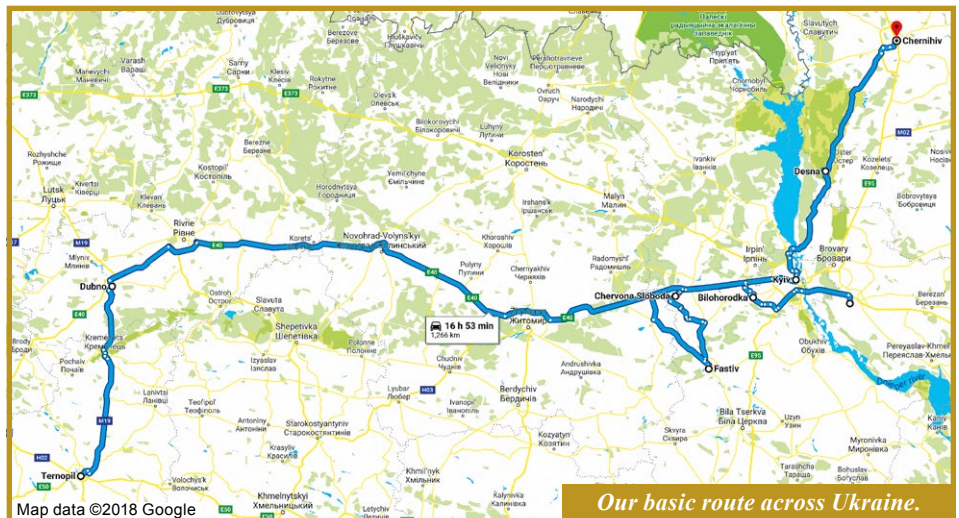
Our main purpose for the trip was to participate in widows' and orphans' services

in a number of the different churches BIEM supports. Some of the services were held in local orphanages or boarding-school facilities. We also had the opportunity to visit two of the Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation centers run by BIEM personnel or local pastors. In the process, we did a lot of driving. We stayed in Bilogorodka, just west of Kyiv in the Second Baptist Church of Bilogorodka, pastored by BIEM's Director for Ukraine, Eugene Buyko.

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Diana (right) demonstrates that sometimes a loving heart is enough to establish basic communication. But a translation app on a cell phone helps, too!



Map data ©2018 Google

Our basic route across Ukraine.

Bible Quest!

Most churches provide activities that offer Christian teens and young adults wholesome activities for their spare time. But why not create fun activities that simultaneously increase their knowledge of God's Word? BIEM missionary Pavlo Usach describes one such event.

This autumn we once again held a Bible quest. This is an excellent method of instilling the Word of God in young people. This year, we once more received significant financial support from the BIEM mission, which helped us to create this worthwhile event for young believers.

On October 19–20, teams of Christian teens and young adults from various churches came together in the village of Zalissy. In advance of coming, team members had studied the book of Judges. On the first day, after all the teams arrived at the destination, we had a combined dinner. Following that, we enjoyed a wonderful



youth service, where we shared a message from God's Word and the young people themselves participated with music.

The gathering lasted about three hours, and everyone listened intently to the sermon, which encouraged everyone to reconsider their relationship with God. The Lord spoke to hearts, and many young people prayed for God to forgive them for having a wrong relationship with Him. The main problem of the Israelite people during the period of Judges was that everyone was doing whatever he thought was right, not what God told them. As

a result, they had many problems, and wars. They had wrong attitudes concerning God and toward what He had told them in His Word. Therefore, the Bible message invited all of us to reflect on our relationship with God. After the service, we enjoyed a fellowship time, where we drank hot tea and got acquainted with each other before bed.

In the morning we began the new day with a general prayer for God's blessing on the day. After breakfast, the Bible Quest began. The event was held in the woods,

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"Reaching the world for Christ since 1981"

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God's creation in autumn provided beautiful surroundings for the Quest.



...Bible Quest! *continued from page 2*

where participants could observe the beauty of God’s creation and ponder God’s majesty. This year there were eighteen teams of young people from different cities and villages. The teams entered the the Quest route at intervals of every ten minutes.

To begin, each team received a map of the forest, which marked locations of the various checkpoints they had to visit. Upon reaching a checkpoint, each team member was asked to solve a certain task using their knowledge of the Book of Judges. The Quest took almost the whole day, so lunch and beverages were provided along the way. In the end, everyone returned to the base, where their scores



Diligent preparation makes for a confident team!

were totaled. Everyone thanked God for the wonderful time of fellowship around His Word!

Every time we hold a Bible Quest (which we hold once a year) we see the grace of God and His great blessing. It’s wonderful anytime youth are immersed in the Scriptures. Please pray for all 160 young people who participated, that God will strengthen them to live just as He teaches in His word!

Thank you once again for your financial and prayerful support. May God bless everyone who sacrificed funds for this event. Remember, God knows everything, and He blesses those who are willing. May His mercy protect you and your families. ■

Sincerely,

Pavel Usach and the Bible Quest team



Each team received a map, which guided them to Quest tasks scattered throughout the forest.

Knowledge of the book of Judges helps to make proper decisions during the Quest. Knowledge of God’s Word also helps to make wise decisions throughout life.



...Widows & Orphans *continued from page 1*

Our trip was punctuated by excellent meals, great conversations, and so much laughter. As I look at the pictures, I can almost hear the laughter. I know very little Russian and Ukrainian, but every once in a while I would get the jokes.

Since we spent most of the trip traveling hither and yon, we spent a

lot of time in the two vans. Combine bad suspension, bumpy roads, and a fully European driver, and it makes for some exciting adventures. I rode in the blue van, driven by Igor Fomichov, one of BIEM’s church planters. Igor and our interpreter Lyosha (another church planter) shared many laughs throughout the trip. And anytime that Sam, Eugene,

Igor, and Lyosha get together, laughter is sure to ensue.

And the people. The people are beautiful, from the impulsive hugs of little children to long, broken conversations in the van. We met widows who were so grateful for a simple bag of groceries. We met kids who were excited for gifts and

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As in other cities, widows in Desna packed the church’s auditorium.



After hearing the Gospel in testimonies and a puppet show, orphans received age-appropriate gifts.

God at Work!

The following story of faithfulness and blessing comes from a monthly report by BIEM church planter Nikolai Ryzhuk.

“The third young lady who was baptized is Sasha. Her family are not believers. Only her grandmother is a church member. From their childhood, the grandmother took her and her sister to Sunday school, and also sent her to our summer camps. Five years ago, Sasha accepted Christ in summer camp.

“The girl’s father is a staunch opponent of believers. He beat the girls for attending church meetings, and Sasha’s older sister stopped coming to Sunday school. But Sasha, despite the beatings and name-calling, ran to her grandmother, and there she sometimes lived to escape her father. He was especially scary when he was drunk. Then he beat his wife, too, because she did not help him fight against the believing mother-in-law and daughter. But one day the father fell from the roof of the house and was seriously injured. The Lord humbled him to the point that, because of his suffering, he even asked believers to pray for him. The Lord raised him up, and he was able to work again. Things got better for Sasha. Attending church was no longer forbidden.

“I’m very grateful that we and BIEM can minister together for the salvation of souls.” ■



After enduring years of opposition to her faith, Sasha (left) enjoyed a moment of prayer before her baptism.



Here, the testimony of MaryAnn touched hearts and endeared her to the Ukrainian listeners.

...Widows and Orphans continued from page 3 love. I got to reconnect with the wives of several church planters, whom I have met over the past year, when they have visited the BIEM office.

And their stories. Over the course of the trip, we got to hear testimonies from several BIEM church planters and other Christians. From Vitaly Yurchenko surviving being in the affected zone on the day Chernobyl exploded, to Igor Fomichov’s dramatic transformation from a life of drugs and crime, I am so grateful for the grace of our Lord, who sees value in all people, the broken, the prideful, the scared, the disabled, and the criminal.

I have no pictures of one of my favorite parts of the trip. On Friday night, after a long day visiting the Philadelphia Rehab Center in Fastiv, plus the Velykopolovetske orphanage (an hour away from Fastiv), and finishing with a widows’ service at the River of Life Baptist Church in Fastiv, we were finally heading back to Bilogorodka. It was probably 9:30 at night, and we had

an hour and a half drive over fairly bad roads. I was sitting towards the front of the van, chatting with Lyosha and Igor, when Igor asked whether I can sing. Igor’s English is about equal to my level of my Russian—very limited. But many hymns have been translated into Russian. So we sang. We sang all the verses of all the hymns we could remember, and when they knew the songs, the Ukrainians joined in. We sang all the way back. There is something about worship that is beautiful in any language, even if you don’t understand what is being said.

I returned home with a renewed love for a country on the other side of the world, for a language I barely understand, and for people I call my brothers and sisters in Christ. Please pray for these families as they reach out to their communities to impact lives for Christ. Please pray for the continued influence of the connections made through the widows’ services. For many of the widows, it was their first time in church. While many of the widows we interacted with were older, a number were younger women, widowed by the conflict that continues in Eastern Ukraine. And please pray for us who went on the trip, that God would continue to teach us and mold our hearts through this experience.

Throughout the course of this trip, over 700 widows and orphans heard the Gospel and received help. Pastors of the churches involved report they have gained regular attenders from these meetings. May the Lord work in hearts to save souls and make them church members! ■



Of the many souls who accepted Christ during the widows’ services, one was this man on the right. Acquaintances told him the church in Fastiv had what he needed, so he showed up and heard the Gospel!