



TERNOPIL, UKRAINE 1st Quarter 2011 Report

January 2011

Every year, we are faced with the same situation. As soon as the Christmas season arrives, we have a problem. In the church there remain very few people for Christmas. The reason: many of our church members and visitors during the Christmas holidays are going to visit their relatives. As a result, at the Christmas service we had very few people. And even those who come lose their festive mood when they see how few were there.

This Christmas we celebrated in a special way. A few days before the official holiday that we have on January 7, we held a Christmas Eve program. The children's group and a group of teenagers prepared programs. The parents came, friends from church came, and together we soaked up the atmosphere of Christmas. All of this was a great blessing for us. At the end of the evening I spoke a short evangelistic sermon on "Would they find room for Jesus, if He was born in 2011?" And at the end of the holiday, children and adolescents received gifts that were kindly provided by the BIEM mission.



On the first day, we decided to make a special appointment. It's a fact that almost everyone who stays at home for Christmas remains because they have nowhere else to go. So, since God has blessed us with a house, we invited all those [friends] who remained in the city to Christmas dinner. There were more than 20 people. Another reason was because we wanted the men from the rehabilitation center to also feel the celebration. In the past, almost all of them celebrated Christmas in such a way they don't remember how it was because of the rapid drinking. We had a wonderful time. One of them, named Nikolai said, "I could not imagine that Christmas Day could be so joyful, fun, and with a wonderful feast without alcohol."

Then on January 9, on Sunday we put on the Christmas holiday program for the whole church. Nearly everyone came. It was a special worship service. It was a special Christmas. In addition, our young people began to produce a Christian youth newspaper called *Ichthus*. And the 2nd edition was devoted to Christmas. Some 2,000 newspapers were distributed freely to youth near the universities of Ternopil.

Please pray for our ministry even more. We have a dream or a vision for ministry. That dream sounds like "Thousands of people in Ternopil and the Ternopil region converted to a living faith in God and became devoted followers of Jesus Christ." Without you and your prayers and support, we cannot achieve this.

Thank you for being there.
Vitaly Bilyak

February, 2011

The other day I had set aside special time to visit our rehabilitation center and to spend more time than usual. That morning, before the rehab center, I went to Zbarazh (the regional center) in order to fill out all the

necessary documents for the renewal of building and land of the church's rehabilitation center. Standing in lines outside the offices of officials makes you feel like a little man versus a big government official. That day I needed two papers; they were ready – I just needed to pick them up. And there I was, standing in a long line of somewhere around 30 people, mostly elderly people from the villages of the district. Someone said he had already been in line for more than 2 hours. Some of the grandmothers had left their villages by bus very early in the morning. It's hard to convey in words how one feels in this situation. Your very surroundings seem to say, "You're a nobody here," "No one here is waiting for you." This is evidenced by the ratio of officials for each piece of paper you have to pay big money for, but a building that hasn't seen repairs for 20 years. It's a small room without ventilation, with cracked walls and ceiling and dirty doors. The indoor air is heavy with odor. On the floor is dirt mixed with melted snow tracked in from the street. Of the 30 people, only 4 or 5 people sit. All the rest are standing, and if you have the opportunity to lean on a wall or table, you're lucky. For an hour and a half the crowd only increased, during which time several people went in and out of offices, but these people weren't people from the line. They're some sort of acquaintances or else officials from other offices.

I stand there, and my resentment was growing and growing. I asked a woman working there who has walked past several times when they'll start to see the people standing in line. In response, she dryly snaps, "All questions go to the supervisor." I walked over to the supervisor. At the desk sits a grandfather in a suit. I understand that he's the supervisor. I ask the same question, and in response I hear, "Have patience." I try to protest and ask questions to improve the situation, but then I understood that I was already talking to myself. No one was listening. Grandfather Supervisor picks up a document and reads something there. He shows it to some people standing near his desk... And here I am again, in the line and my indignation has no limits. Everything inside is boiling. And I had planned to spend that day at the rehab center, to lead spiritual discussions, to talk with the ministers and rehabilitants. I understood that, just then, I was the one in need of someone to speak calm words to me. In this state, I would be of no help to alcoholics and drug addicts who are trying to change their lives.

After a while they began seeing people. My business was taken care in two or three minutes. When I got out on the street, I began wondering what this was all about... I began to pray in my heart, "Lord, what do You want to show or teach me today?" I remembered the words of the supervisor, who said, "Have patience." I understood that this was not quite what I was there learn. Patience... I'm fairly patient, I was not agitated, as were other people in the line; on the contrary, I tried to calm the woman ahead of me, who had stood by me for an hour and a half just to ask one question.... And then I understood what God wanted to draw my attention to. "Even though these officials may not care about the problems and needs of these people, if you stand in a line of people and feel small and insignificant... it's not that way with Me. I gave My son Son to die in order to solve your problems. Your hairs are counted. I respond to all of people's needs." This is what I needed. It was this thought that comforted me and brought peace to my heart. Now I was ready to serve.



That day I enjoyed wonderful fellowship at the Rehabilitation Center. I arrived before lunch. According to the schedule, every day before lunch, the men their hold a combined reading of the Bible and Bible Study. Then we ate together. It was simple, but satisfying. The rehabilitants eat what they themselves have cooked. Those who know how to cook take turns in the kitchen for a week at a time. On that day, the chef on duty was Cyril. Now we have there 8 people, men trying to start a new life. After lunch and until evening we had a time for personal conversations with those going through the program and with the ministers. Each person has his

own story, the various the problems, various family situations. One has children waiting for him; for others, no one is waiting, and some have nowhere to go after rehabilitation. In addition to spiritual matters, there are always economic issues. While there, I saw how they all work, how they take care of each other, trying to help each other.

Please pray for the ministry of the rehabilitation center.

- For ministers, for wisdom in the ministry.
- For expansion of the ministry. We have a dream to expand the center so that it could receive up to 20 men. And in time, to open a Women's Rehabilitation Centre for at least 5 - 8 persons.
- For the finances for this ministry.
- We have a debt for the land. When we bought this center, we did not pay the sellers \$1600 due to the fact that they had no documents. We had such a contract, when they made the papers, then we'll pay. More than two years passed and recently they finalized the documents. Now it's our turn...
- Finances for expansion. We must build new facilities, and for those overseeing the work and for the rehabilitants staying there. A small tractor or walk-behind tractor to work the land for farming.

Thank you for your support.

Your humble brother in Christ,
Vitaly Bilyak

March 2011

Peace to you, dear partners in ministry!

Last month provided blessed opportunities to take part in the teenage youth ministry. In a constantly changing world, it's very hard to find a key to the hearts of youth. In recent months we began to notice that teenagers have been visiting the church less frequently, and they participate less actively in the weekly meetings of the youth club, which we hold in the gymnasium of a school. It became evident that it was time to take some sort of measures. My wife Katya and I, along with several other people who have been involved with teenagers previously, gathered in our house in order to talk and to pray about this ministry. We clearly realized that we have no right to leave the situation to chance. We had to do something.



One of the women asked a simple question: "When you were 15 years old, what did you like to do? Where would you like to go?" We began to talk in this direction. Of course, we had a goal – to teach young people biblical principles for life, to help them grow spiritually, and most of all to get them acquainted with God. But how could we reach our goals if the young people are interested in something altogether different? They want a fun time, to chat with one another, more emotion, new sensations...

After some discussion, we gained a new vision for the youth ministry. This new model for ministry was put into practice last month. We decided to hold two types of meetings. On Saturday evenings the meetings took on the purpose of more fellowship, along with the rest. So, on one of those Saturdays the teenagers spent their time creating ceramic souvenirs. On the next Saturday, they watched a good film. On another Saturday, we played Quest (a game with an intellectual and physical assignment played in one of the parks). In addition, we plan once per month to teach them how to drive a car. Almost all these kids come from families with social

problems, and it is unlikely that anyone would offer these young guys and girls a chance to drive an automobile. From time to time will have cooking lessons or something else along that line, picnics, fishing trips, hikes...

The second aspect of these meetings has a goal of spiritual fellowship. Right now this happens in the form of home groups on Fridays. I personally take active roles in these meetings. Other people prepare songs, some kind of competitions, and after me there's a spiritual conversation on some sort of important theme. It had already occurred to me that this might be a little complicated for me due to the difference in age, but I was pleasantly surprised to see that young people still understand me. ☺ What is important is that now they visit our meetings more actively on Saturdays and also on Fridays.

It's hard to say how this will play out in the future, but for now I am pleased.

Please PRAY for the youth ministry in our church.

- Please pray for a youth leader for the church. We greatly need a brother who loves the Lord and can serve as a quality evangelistic leader.
- Pray for the young people who made confessions of faith in summer camp and through the youth ministry.
- This summer we would like to hold two camps for young people. One of them would be a day or evening camp for youth in Ternopil, and the other would be a stationary camp in the Carpathian mountains.
- For the essential financing for these camps.

With best wishes to you,

Your brother in Jesus Christ,

Vitaly Bilyak