



## **The Bilyaks in Ternopil, Ukraine**

### **4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Report, 2017**

#### **October**

Greetings to you, brothers and sisters, coworkers for God!

It's very pleasant and blessed to recognize that the BIEM mission takes part, not only in the filling of spiritual needs, but also of material needs of brothers and sisters in Ukraine.

As it turned out, our young church in Ternopil was selected to receive a shipment of humanitarian aid from BIEM for distribution in Ukraine. When God blessed us with our own church building, the first thing we did was to prepare the storage area for the purpose of receiving and Customs clearance of humanitarian aid.

At the beginning of summer 2017 we once again received a shipment from you. When brother Eugene Buyko and I were in America last spring, we helped to load the container. Some years back, I helped in sorting aid donations in the mission's warehouse in Danville, Indiana, along with other brothers and sisters who volunteered from local churches.

When I see and realize the whole process of these donations being dropped off by people, or else sent to the mission office, and then all the way to distribution in churches, orphanages, and rehabilitation centers in Ukraine, I see in this process the church of Jesus Christ, united in carrying out the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because every carton of clothing, every chair, each blanket, is a sign of God's love delivered to people in Ukraine from brothers and sisters in America. This isn't simply a mountain of clothing; it's lovingly packed boxes of love in the form of sorted and folded blouses, sweaters, pants. Because of the fact that in Ukraine the economic crisis has dragged on for decades and people have seen humanitarian aid more than once, they've come to distinguish good humanitarian aid from a pile of rags. Everyone who has received help from us is always very grateful, because the clothing from you is always decent quality. Thank you for your love, as expressed in this aid.

The process of shipping and receiving assistance is rather laborious and clumsy. First, most of the things sent to the mission warehouse pass through the hands of volunteers in the U.S. This isn't two or three days of work preparing clothes, shoes, and other household items for shipment. When the warehouse is full, it's time to order a large sea container [40 ft.] for loading. Volunteers are needed again.

When loading a container, volunteers try to pack it as compactly as possible to fill it to the maximum. As much as possible, no empty space is left, from the floor to the ceiling. In the top of the container are bulky or fragile things: bicycles, wheelchairs, cribs, baby strollers... While the loading process is in progress, someone always counts every box and other items going into a container. Documentation is important. Then comes the process of

fumigation. After a few days the container goes to a port and is loaded onto a ship bound for Ukraine. Transit usually lasts 2 months.

While the container is en route, other work needs to be done for the documents in Ukraine. In the end, the documentation folder contains more than 80 pages of different documents. We need letters from organizations wishing to receive a portion of the cargo. Some of the documents are prepared by the mission office in Indiana. Other documents must be obtained from a government ministry in Kiev, and to get their permission you need to send them a folder of the documents they list.

Then comes the work with the local Customs. It is necessary to write many different requests. For example, to request permission to use our premises as a customs warehouse, we need a schedule of duty officers; we need declarations from the church concerning who is responsible for fire safety, who is responsible for the protection of the cargo. In addition to the local Customs office, you need to work with Customs at the port. They require another folder of documents. And while all this creative process is underway for two months, the container arrives in Ukraine. When it reaches Ternopil, it goes first to the warehouse of the local Customs, and then to our church.

The men in the Rehabilitation Center have been a huge help in this ministry. They take an active role in the unloading of containers. When Customs issues documents for the distribution of this assistance, our guys help to sort out all the help for the groups (women's clothing, men's, children's, shoes, etc.). From this container, most items were sent to Kiev, where they were in turn distributed between church plants, and part of the help went to a boarding school near Kiev where orphans live.

This container was special for all of us because we needed some of the contents by certain dates. Many prayers were lifted for it to clear Customs. This particular container was supposed to arrive in the Ukrainian port on July 1. However, July 18 was the date set for the opening service of the new prayer house in Bilogorodka, near Kyiv (missionary pastor Eugene Buyko). This shipment contained more 200+ chairs for the auditorium, a chair, tables, and other things for the special opening service. It so happened that we unloaded the contents of the container on July 6 in our warehouse. The Customs officer sealed it. At that time, the government's commission still had not recognized the cargo as humanitarian assistance. Not until Monday, July 12, would the government commission make that ruling, which would be less than a week before the opening Sunday service in Bilogorodka. And Customs could not allow the warehouse to be opened and the cargo delivered until the government's official website listed that cargo as humanitarian aid.

Based on past experience, such documents usually appear after 4-5 days, which meant that most likely the warehouse would not be unsealed before the church opening. We decided to pray – and a miracle happened. On Wednesday a document appeared on the government site, and on Thursday after lunch the warehouse was unsealed. On Friday the first vehicle with the most crucial things for the church service left for Kyiv. We sensed God's intervention and leadership in this matter.

Another interesting story happened when we needed to send a second vehicle to Kyiv. This time we needed a large truck. We began telephoning our contacts. One wanted more money than we were prepared to pay. Another wanted us to load the truck at night, which wasn't realistic for us. Then we got a call from a man.

He asked, "Do you have a shipment that needs to go to Kyiv?"

“Yes, we do.”

We agreed on the weight of the cargo, the terms of delivery, and loading. Then he asked concerning the best way to reach our location, from which side of the city, etc. We talked about 15 minutes. I mentioned that the cargo needed to be picked up from the church.

"From the church?" he said in surprise.

"That's right! This humanitarian aid must be taken from our church and delivered to a church near Kyiv."

I never expected his reply: "We do not support any churches. We are against all churches. We won't work with you." He hung up.

At first I was bewildered. From his response, I realized he was either an atheist or some spiritualist. Of course, literally a half hour later, another carrier telephoned and we hired him for delivery.

We left part of the cargo in Ternopil. Of course, we gave our needy brothers and sisters a chance to come and choose some necessary things for themselves. God gave our Christian sisters wisdom in this matter. They sorted and stacked everything in the big room, where someday we'll have a gym. Women's clothes, children's, men's ... Blouses, pants, shirts, T-shirts – everything had a place. If a person needed a T-shirt, he looked for it in T-shirts. If a woman needed a skirt, she looked in a pile of skirts. In about 90 minutes people found what they needed. These sisters advised people in advance to know exactly what they needed, and to bring a list of necessary things.

In this matter we've enjoyed very good collaboration with the Center for Social Services of our city. They know people who truly need assistance and bring them to our church twice a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. It's already been two months, and each Tuesday and Thursday people come to church accompanied by employees of Social Service. Before they leave, we offer everyone Christian literature and a children's Bible if they have children. This way, some have received their first Bible. We noticed that the employees of Social Services feel at home in the church. One time when I was talking to one of their workers, when he mentioned the church, he said "in our church." I smiled. I like this trend. We pray that people, "seeing your good deeds, glorify God" (1 Peter 2:12).

We noticed that we'll soon be out of shoes. There's also a very large demand for kitchen utensils, dishes, sheets and blankets.

Friends, once more I want to express to you great thanks for your ministry to Ukraine through humanitarian aid.

### **November – December 2017**

Peace to you, dear brothers and sisters, coworkers of God in the field of evangelism!

In this letter I would like to share about the ministry among men. I have spent time in thought considering our catastrophic lack of ministers. We need brethren for the ministry of the rehabilitation center. We need preachers, leaders of home groups, deacons, pastors, Sunday school teachers, leaders for the youth ministry. The need for men in ministry is colossal. Ever since the time when we moved into our own building, I see more than a few men in the meeting hall. Most of them have repented. They come to church, some have been baptized, but most do not take active part in the life of the church. This bothered me. A

few people in the church are doing the bulk of the work. I saw how this restricts development of the church and limits opportunities for evangelism.

For some time I prayed concerning this and tried to understand how I could get the men of the church to take part in ministry. In the midst of those reflections there appeared the idea of holding men's meetings in order to build relationships between the brothers, to share with them needs, and then during such get-togethers to entrust various ministries and small areas of responsibility in order to attract and train new ministers.

I decided to hold meetings one time every two weeks. Tuesday turned out to be the best day for it. We've already held four meetings, and you could say that there has been blessing in this.

Each meeting begins with a supper since most of the guys come directly from work. We are all aware that a hungry man is not a very talkative man. The brothers chip in money for the meetings. That which we take in today we use for the next get-together. When the guys are well fed and feeling in a better frame of mind, we sing a few songs, and then move into a Bible study. Brother Volodya suggested having a theme for the meetings: "What Is God's Will?" In this manner, each time we study a Bible passage that sheds light on the topic of what God wants of us. But we strive to talk, not in vague generalities, but practically, trying to apply what we've learned to real life. At each meeting, we motivate people to take part in different ministries.

One brother, Dima, began to attend these meetings. Some years back, Dima was dropped from church membership for sin. He is one of the former drug addicts. He had been very active in church, but then the Devil deceived him and he began to drift away from the church. As a result, he began to live with a woman outside of marriage, and a daughter was born to them. I sense that these meetings are particularly valuable for him. Here he can sense that he has brothers who are prepared to support him and his return to God. And he began to revive. Pray please about Dima, that he would turn to God and become established in the church.

We have about 15-17 guys coming to our meetings. Pray that each one will become dedicated to ministry in the matter of evangelism. If that happens, it will open opportunities for developing many ministries, and we believe that this will bring praise to our Lord. Pray especially for the families of those who are already married, and for those who will be establishing families in the future. We know this is vital. In our small, relatively young church, there are a number of active brothers, but not all of them can be considered candidates for pastoral or deacon preparation due to family problems. Their home situations don't meet the qualifications of the New Testament for pastors and deacons.

Also pray for our family. We strive to take upon ourselves as much as possible in the ministry, and this leads to great fatigue. Pray for our health and spiritual growth. And for our children. Some months ago, our oldest child, Karina, was baptized, and she is also very active in the church. She helps in many ministries. We pray that David and Mark will also come to know the Lord from a young age, and that they will dedicate their lives to Him.

Your brother,  
Vitaly Bilyak

Sunday service.



In October Volodymyr Vynnyk was ordained.



Documents for the container.



Happy New Year from our family!

