



## The Bilyaks

### 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Report, 2018

#### January

Hello, dear brothers and sisters in Christ. It's very blessed to share with you all the blessings of our past year. Usually December is a month of summaries. And looking backward, I see many blessings in this past year. I want to share these with you, because without you and your ministry, there wouldn't be all the blessings that we see here. I should say, that our church is young and not large. We have 30 members, and about 60 people attending worship services.

At the very beginning of the year, God blessed our young church with its own place for services. In January 2017 we declared the auditorium ready for worship services. It's amazing how God began to use our new location and to fill it with people. This could be written as a new paragraph as a separate blessing, but the room that God gave us is filled with people. It has turned out that we see people every Sunday and are accustomed to their presence, but during the Lord's Supper it is evident that more than half of the people do not partake of the ordinance, which means one thing: they need the healing action of God in their lives. Some of them are not saved; others had fallen away at some time and are trying to return to God. For us this is encouraging because they are people who need the love of God, the love of the church. This is how a growing, developing church should look. There must be people who seek God. Pray for the people who attend the church, for the power of preaching, for a relationship of love and unity in the church. **Pray that those who have not yet done so would repent, and that those who have not been baptized will be baptized, and for those who need reconciliation with God.**

There is another blessing from the past year – the dedication service of the restored rehabilitation center after the fire. This was a special sign of God's care for us. The small house that was able to accommodate 5-7 people burned down. After rebuilding and restoring, the house can accommodate 15 - 20 people. Right now, we have 7 men going through rehabilitation. Please pray that God would call several other ministers to serve these dependent people. One of our servants went back home to Russia. He has been temporarily replaced by one of the brothers from the church, but he, too, will soon leave to be with his family (800 km to the east of Ukraine). Concerning our rehab center (the buildings and land), **please pray for the opportunity to get all the changes and restructuring that we did after the fire legalized, as well as the installation of a fire alarm system.**

Yet another blessing of 2017 was the ordination of brother Volodya to the ministry of deacon. At the beginning of the year, we decided to pray and educate the church in maturity. Before that, we never had an officially ordained deacon. Volodya had been chosen

for this ministry a long time earlier, and he performed it as far as possible, but certain life situations and problems stood in the way of the ordination. The Lord removed these barriers, and Volodya was ordained. **Please pray for more people to be called to the ministries of pastor and deacon service so that the church can become truly independent.**

A special cause for joy was a baptism we had. Six people received baptism. Three people from the youth ministry, and three from the rehabilitation center. A special joy for our family was the baptism of our daughter Karina. **Please pray that each of them, who dedicated their life to God, will be faithful to their promises.** So that ultimately we will have functioning members in the Body of Christ, and not simply parishioners who come and “polish the church pews.”

A first and new experience for our church was holding a “holiday for the family.” Two days at the sports field of the neighboring school were dedicated to the family. This provided new acquaintances a testimony about the church in our neighborhood. **Please pray for the family ministry in the church.** We need a married couple to work among families. **Pray for an opportunity in summer 2018 to hold a family camp, for finances to hold it.**

We are grateful to God for the chance to evangelize to the youth through the extreme camp. Over 40 young people were gathered around the Gospel in a good, trusting atmosphere of Christian tent camp. **Pray for a chance to hold a camp in 2018 for 60 young people.**

A special time for evangelizing in our area was the project called “Choose Life.” The project included: a children's day camp for 100 children, a social program (litter pick-up, mowing grass on the school grounds, etc.), a youth evening playground (while part of the team plays volleyball with non-believers, another part sings and blesses about Jesus Christ). **Pray that the Lord would bring more people from our area.** Already there are several people from the neighborhood attending the church, and this gives hope, but there is still a great need for spiritual awakening of the area.

In addition to these special events in the church there is a list of ministries that are conducted regularly. I'm especially thankful to God for the faithfulness of brothers and sisters who regularly hold children's classes (2 groups on Sundays), youth meetings on Saturdays, Bible studies on Wednesdays, home groups on Fridays, evangelism to the addicted ones in the psychoneurological dispensary every Saturday, rehearsals of the musical group, organizational meetings in the teams of ministries... Sometimes all of the activity makes it seem that we have a large church. I believe that in the future it will be so. **Please pray for those who have dedicated themselves to ministry, and pray for those who are still looking for easy paths and are not ready to serve God.**

We are very grateful to God that for the whole of 2017 that is now in the past, we've had you, the team, our coworkers in the common cause of the salvation of sinners! May the Lord bless you, your families, your churches and your country!

With the best greetings from Ternopil, from the New Life Church, and your brother and fellow coworker Vitaly Bilyak!

## February

Greetings to you, dear friends, coworkers in the work of evangelism. I'm very glad to share with you news about our ministry. In a small church, it's very complicated to work simultaneously on everything that needs doing. The main problem is that for this kind of labor we don't have enough qualified, self-sufficient leaders. Therefore, some things seem to float along undone until you get to a certain moment, and then you realize that this is the time when you need to do that job.

In January, several other brothers and I agreed that we would spend time in prayer and meditation concerning the life of our church. During these reflections came the understanding that the minimum factor in our church at this stage is "staying in the teaching of Christ." In connection with this, we came to the decision that this year we would dedicate more time to teaching. In this, we recognized several important things for the church.

In the first place, in active teaching of the church, we will fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. Twice in His commission we see the command "teach." We didn't reinvent the wheel. There were several ideas. One idea was to begin a Sunday school in our building, as is done in many churches in the USA. But we don't have enough space to operate such a school. In the future, when the classrooms in the basement are ready, we will return to this model. Therefore, we chose the version of the school "Following Christ." This is an educational program created by young brethren in our fellowship of churches. Basically, this program is geared toward youth, but it is very understandable for all the grassroots categories. Typically, some brother from another church in our brotherhood comes to us for two days per month. Saturday is a full day of instruction, and then the brother will take part in the Sunday worship service. In this way, we receive not only the opportunity to study, but we also receive a guest once a month in our worship service. As the saying goes, "Said and done!"

February was the first time that the whole church gathered for instruction. Starting at 10 am, most of the active church members, along with those who are drawing closer to salvation and the brothers from the rehabilitation center, sat at tables. The first course that we chose was "Introduction to the Old Testament." The Bible training was so wonderful and exciting that some people were indignant that we "wasted" time on breaks and coffee breaks. They wanted to learn more about God, and how He interacts with people. They were afraid that the teacher would not have time to tell everything that he had planned because of these break times.

Then came lunch time. Our sisters prepared a delicious lunch. And after lunch we resumed our seats at the tables. This was a special time. We decided to hold such educational sessions every month. We believe that those who dedicate themselves to these studies will receive the reward of spiritual growth, and closer knowledge of God, and understanding the lives of other believers.

Please pray for our young church. For the leaders of all its ministries. Many our leaders are very young Christians in the faith.

Thank you for your support of our ministry through your prayers and resources.

## March 2018

Hello, dear friends!

I'd like to tell you a little about the youth ministry in our church. In the beginning, as soon as we began ministry in Ternopil, we placed an emphasis on working with youth. We conducted multiple evangelistic opportunities for young people: we organized youth camps, held gatherings in a Christian youth club, had coffee, we went out to students... But with time, the church began to fill with people of various ages. Placing an emphasis only on youth became more complicated. Besides that, with every passing year we (the leaders of the youth ministry) aged a little, and I noticed that many of the youth began to speak to me using the more formal form of the word "you." [In Russian, there are 2 forms of "you": one used for friends, family, and people close in age, and another form to speak to people who are elder, or in positions of authority.] As the joke here goes, "In the past, we were young and beautiful. But now we're only beautiful."

I began to pray for a leader of the youth work. We needed a young man who could relate to youth, who loved God, and who would exert an influence on young people. In addition to prayer, we tried to pick out people from our congregation who could be responsible for the youth, but nothing resulted from this. For various reasons, the men who were responsible changed, and the youth ministry slowly cooled. For all of 2016 and the first half of 2017, I led the youth outreach. And of course, there was enough of me to go around for the whole ministry.

A couple of years ago, when we were visited by a team of youth connected with the "Choose Life" project and we performed children's work, youth work, and social ministry in the church, I noticed that Sergei, the man who led the team, had both respect and influence among the young people of that project. He lived on the other side of Ukraine, in the zone of the military front. After we'd gotten acquainted, I suggested to him that he join our church in order to minister among the youth. I had noticed that we have many common values: He had studied in the seminary operated by our mission, and I saw that he was open to changes if he understood that the Lord was so leading. But at that time, he didn't take the offer too seriously, and we even laughed together about his reaction.

We began to pray more earnestly for a youth leader. And I wrote to you about this need in my letters to you. After six months, I reminded Sergei about my proposition, and at that time he was undergoing various difficulties and was more open to the idea of changes in life. After a while, he agreed. However, from the moment of his agreeing to the time of moving nearly a full year elapsed due to various matters that he needed to settle.

Then, in September of 2017, Sergei became our youth leader. He had never before been the leader of youth in a developing church. Our young people fell in love with him. He organized a team, so that even when he must be away for a few weeks as part of his duties with "Choose Life," the youth movement continues.

I'm glad for the fact that their Saturday youth meetings attract two times more youth than do the Sunday services. They began to visit families of believers from our church once a month. They hold a youth meeting with the families. This creates opportunities for getting acquainted. So, the young people who are on a path toward the Lord can see something in the lives of these families. From time to time, they visit the orphanage-boarding school, where there are about 30 kids without families, and they minister to the children and young ones there.

Recently, we visited together my home church, Bethany Baptist, in Dubno. On Saturday, they had a youth conference at which I was the main speaker, and then our youth were divided up among the apartments of brothers and sisters of the church. On Sunday morning they participated in the worship service. This was a special joy for my



church. There was something symbolic about this gathering. It was almost like a young family returning to their parents with grandkids. Everyone received great pleasure from the meeting.

I want to ask you to continue praying for our youth ministry. And for Sergei, its leader. For the moment, he has agreed to try himself out in this role for

one year. We are praying that he will decide to continue in this ministry, which has begun to develop again. Pray that God will send partners for our unmarried friends from the youth to establish families of believers. Some of the young people have already reached the age where they could marry. Pray also for the extreme youth camp that we are planning for this summer, that God would give us young people who are looking for God, so that we could minister to them, and that they would eventually join our youth group and the church.

With best greetings to you all,  
Your brother and coworker,

Vitaly Bilyak  
Ternopil, Ukraine

