



The Bilyaks

3rd Quarter Report, 2018

July

Dear friends and coworkers of the BIEM mission,

I'm very glad to share with you some of the blessings that we have experienced from holding summer day camps. All of this was possible only because we have a big team of people who are united to one another and to God. And you are a very important part of this team. We couldn't do that we are doing, if you did not do that on which we depend!

Day camp – This is a light version of a normal camp. The kids live at home but come to the place where the camp is held each day for a week. We held two such camps: one in the daytime for children, and another for youth in the evenings.

For the day camp, we have traditionally chosen the playground of a neighboring school. From the very beginning, as soon as we acquired the building for the church, God favorably inclined the hearts of the school leaders. We support their projects, and they, in turn, are open when we have a need. The sports field is a good, neutral territory where parents are not afraid to let their children go. The camp on the school's property is perceived more neutrally than if it were in or beside a church. Maybe in other cities and regions of Ukraine everything is different, but not in religious Ternopil.



The leadership team this year was the youth from our church. At the time of the camp, they did not even go home. They lived right in the church. The guys stayed in the small room of the youth office, and the girls in the room for small children. They slept on the floor on mats and sleeping bags. The need for this was due to the fact that after the children's day camp they were still engaged in social work (they cleaned up the property at and near the school, and also mowed the grass and high weeds near the school and the church). And after social work in the evening they held a meeting for young people (evening youth camp).



About 100 children attended the children's day camp. Many kids happily prayed with prayers offered by the leaders. But after camp, not as many as we would like came to Sunday school. You need to understand that since childhood children here are taught to pray and repent. For most of them, the prayer of repentance is seen as another good deed, and when the suggestion comes up that the child should attend Sunday school in the evangelical church, this is equal to changing his Orthodox or Greek Catholic faith, which is betrayal. I cannot explain this, but parents allow children to come to

camps, even to stationary children's (youth) camps, but then do not allow them to continue communicating with the church through children's ministry. They are ready to use the opportunity of safe playtime when it is profitable for them, but afterward they stop communication.

In this I see an even greater need to conduct such camps and prepare with such zeal, as if this is our last opportunity to tell the children the truth and the gospel.

The evening youth meetings were more informal and took place at different venues. Basically, our young people came to the park, offered to play different games. I really liked youth volleyball. They use volleyball equipment, donated by our mission. In recent days, young people organized a quest, which ended at the church, where we awarded the winners. But everyone came to us, where our acquaintance continued. Praise the Lord, several young people continue to attend youth meetings.

Please pray for the post-camp follow-up work. It always upsets us that during the camp there is interest, and children and young people come with pleasure, but then pretend they do not know us. Sometimes we get the impression that we were used to just for a vacation time. But we are encouraged by the words of the Bible that the Word of God does not go out in vain. We believe that which has been sown will surely produce results.

Pray also for youth and children's ministry leaders.

Thank you for letting us work together with you in a very important matter - the giving of the Gospel to children and youth.

May our merciful and loving Lord bless you in you and your families.

August/September

Dear brothers and sisters, coworkers with the BIEM mission,

I'm very thankful to God for the opportunity to serve Him with you in the camp ministry. Each summer is always a time of opportunities. Because of the fact that here in Ukraine there is an extended financial crisis and many people live in poverty, the ministry of the church through the camps has been in demand for many years. A Christian camp is an opportunity to rest in a Christian atmosphere while hearing the Good News of the Gospel.

Two years ago we had the idea of holding a Christian family camp. For us, this was an experiment, but it turned out remarkably. Afterward, people constantly asked about holding another such camp. Several women began to attend church after that camp. We established personal contacts with the men and women from that camp. But in 2017, we did not manage to hold a family camp due to not enough funds on hand. Among families who wanted to go to camp, there are several who could pay the full price for themselves, but for the majority it was almost not realistic. If we held a camp for those who could pay, it wouldn't be genuinely Christian, because no poor families would be there. It wouldn't be evangelistic because our unbeliever friends (most of whom are no wealthy) would not be able to go.

In order to not create a camp for the wealthy, we decided to forego holding family camp last year. Instead we prayed and waited for a chance to hold camp for everyone. After I shared these thoughts and need with mission director Sam Slobodian, after a while he gave a somewhat positive answer. A sum was allocated; it covered our needs by 80%. We still needed part of the funds. We continued to pray. I shared about it with some friends and hoped that they would support this project, but they couldn't. Then the Lord began to answer from a completely different direction. Several families (believers and unbelievers) paid the full amount for themselves, but also extra. The funds arrived on time. There was no shortage, and there was no money leftover. God took care of our needs exactly.

It turned out that we had to pay more than planned for the bus in the budget. We had hoped that the bus would take us to the Carpathians and wait for several days, and then return us to Ternopil. We have done that many times for previous camps. But not this time. These were the days close to Ukraine's Independence Day. All buses were in demand. We had to pay 2 times for the bus, which exceeded our budget by \$400. But even this surplus was covered by donations. Praise the Lord for His guidance in this matter.

In addition to the families from our church, we invited several Christian families from other churches. These were families that were ready to serve. They accepted responsibility for the camp program. Our family and several other families who answered for the program arrived at camp one day in advance. Our budget did not allow for prolonged time onsite. So each of us paid for ourselves to be there one extra day. That day helped us to prepare the facility for the group's arrival. Men carried the beds, and women put up decorations and prepared a coffee zone for evening fellowship time.

When camp began and everyone was there, we started to see God's great working. All the time in camp we had a very good atmosphere of grace, peace, and friendliness. There were 80 of us adults and children, not counting the very smallest children, for whom we didn't need to pay, or need to provide beds. Thirteen of 24 families were those who needed God's saving grace.

There were those who came to the camp as a married couple; other families were in the form of one of the parents plus the children. An ordinary camp day began with physical exercise and breakfast. Then followed a program for parents and separately for children. After lunch, there was an opportunity for physical activity for children and parents (camping, rafting, all-camp games, etc.), and in the evening after supper we met again for all-evening evening worship.

One of our friends, Alexander, is involved in family ministry, and we invited him to come and lead discussions for adults. Each day we talked about important topics that touch upon marriage. Here are topics that were discussed in this camp:

1. The biblical foundation of marriage.
2. Sexual problems in marriage.
3. How to resolve conflicts.

4. How to instill moral values in children.

Two hours a day was not enough to expound the biblical doctrine of marriage, so after the children went to bed, we met again, but in a more informal setting and continued to talk about topics raised during the day.

Our camp ended with a Sunday worship service, where we included the Gospel message. I can't say that anyone repented during this camp, but we have testimonies of how God changes people, their attitude toward church, and their family relationships.

One couple that came with us is an elderly couple. They're the parents of one brother from our church. This brother is himself a newcomer to the faith, and his parents were against his decision to come to church. He gave them a gift of paying their way to the camp. He worried, and we were concerned. By the time the camp ended, we'd become family with this wonderful married couple. A month later, this couple was at the Harvest festival in our church. With them, we again felt that we were with relatives.

There is another family, one of those who are not poor. They could afford to vacation in another country in conditions 100 times better than in this camp. When at the end of camp, they expressed that this camp had been the very best vacation of their lives, their words definitely weren't about the living conditions. The Lord had begun to work in this family.

Since the camp, a few people will come to church from time to time. Our sisters in the Lord continue to meet with women who were in camp. Pray please, that the Lord will continue to work in the hearts of these people. We need a family who can devote themselves to working with families. We pray that whole families will come to church. Then we will have deacons and preachers. Then the influence of the church in society will increase.

Thanks again for your support of the camp ministry in Ukraine.

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