



The Bilyaks

4th Quarter Report, 2018

October

Greetings to you, dear coworkers of the BIEM mission. I'm very glad for this chance to share with you some of our blessings. Ours is a young, modest-sized church, and for us it's very special to know that we have partners in ministry. We could not accomplish many things without your support. So we praise the Lord for each of you who support our ministry. For us, it's a great blessing to see how God cares for our church in a divine way through friends.

Several years ago in our New Life Church we acquired a building. We had prayed much that the Lord would give us a permanent location of our own for church services. We had to change rented facilities several times. This was very uncomfortable and each change of location cost us people. Then the Lord did a miracle, and the congregation gained its own remarkable building: the ground floor and basement of a multistory building right next to the city center. Again using support from you, we repaired and furnished the main floor.

We created an auditorium for worship services, a room for mothers with small children, restrooms, a little kitchen, a library, and a smaller room. In comparison with the rented facilities where everything was complicated, what we have now is quite a blessing. But the ministry has begun to expand, and several places have become insufficient.

For example, our smaller auditorium is a universal room. On Sundays after the morning service, this is where we have tables and drink tea and fellowship. An hour later, that room becomes the classroom for Sunday school for the middle group of children. On Mondays we hold our men's meeting here. On Tuesday mornings it becomes a fitness room for the women of the church, and in the evenings for the girls in the youth group. On Wednesdays it's our classroom for Bible studies. On Thursday mornings and evenings, it once again is used as a fitness room. On Fridays, it becomes the young adult room for evangelistic meetings with young people. On Saturdays, it's used for teen ministry. We have begun to pray that the Lord would provide the ability to refurbish the basement, to equip Sunday school classes and other facilities. We really need them.

One day a friend from Holland called me. She said that there is a church there that wants to help our church in some kind of building project. They wanted not only to help with money, but to come to work with us. I wrote to her that we have 2 hot needs: I said we needed to put in insulation in the house at the rehabilitation center, and we needed to refurbish rooms for Sunday school



classes. I said that we would be happy for any help. They conferred, and after a while they decided to help with both needs. They sent us 2 teams of builders, who worked for us for 1 week in the rehabilitation center and 1 week in the church. Of course, our brothers had to work a lot before they arrived. And we continue that work now. It is hoped that in a month or two we will complete the renovation of a Sunday school and guest rooms and for medical needs. We continue to pray that the Lord will give the necessary finances to complete this work.



Working with children is very important to us. Even before the opening of the church, we began working with children. Children from un-churched families attend most of our meetings. Often these are not prosperous families. Some of our young adults came to us through the children's ministry. Pray please that the Lord will strengthen all leaders who work with children. We are very clearly aware that the Devil wants to capture the interest and lead children away from God. We now have 3 groups of children. The young children are taught during the second half of the service. The middle group has a class an hour after the Sunday service and the teen group is on Saturdays.

Pray that the Word of God, which is sown among children, will bring good fruit.

November

Greetings, dear brothers and sisters. Sometimes I think about how great is our Lord, who manifests Himself in the unity of His church. Where is Ukraine, where is the USA? What were the chances that you and we would have fellowshiped, if it were not for the precious sacrifice of Jesus Christ uniting us all at Calvary? We already know some of you personally, while others we have never met. But here in Ternopil in western Ukraine we feel your love and great support of our ministry.

In the Bible, when God speaks of Himself, He describes Himself by various names and titles. But it seems very unique to me when God calls himself the God of orphans and widows. Our young church is little by little looking into such topics. It is very difficult to engage in all ministries at the same time. Not that we never helped orphans and widows, but in the past it was somehow indirectly. They came to us for humanitarian aid, or we took aid to orphanages. But even for me personally, working with children deprived of their parents feels difficult. It is easier to deliver boxes with clothes or food. I noticed at the rehabilitation center that those men who went through orphanages and boarding schools in childhood are different from those who grew up with a family. But God had a plan for our church in this area.

Not long ago there was a group of brothers and sisters from the USA who visited us. They wanted to help orphans and widows. When we stopped and gave thought to how we could organize something, I remembered one orphanage where we had already donated humanitarian aid several times but hadn't yet visited them. We considered the best way to organize a meeting where we could present the Gospel.

I decided to go there personally. I bought several boxes of cookies for the children and set out. This orphanage is roughly a one-hour drive from Ternopil. It turned out that they have about 120 children, with all kinds of children. It's not strictly an orphanage. It's a children's

complex, where they educate kids with special needs. There they do have some orphaned children. There are also kids who parents lost their parental rights. There are kids from problematic families (parents who are alcoholics, drug addicts, prostitutes, with criminal histories...). A small percent of the children have normal parents but simply remain for development.

I heard very many sad stories about the kids living there. The director and I talked in her office. Her assistant was also at this meeting. According to the rules of this boarding school, the kids who officially have parents are supposed to go home for the three months of summer vacation. The government will not pay for these kids to live there during the summer. Only the children without parents stay behind to live in the boarding school. Sending these kids home would be a problem. Many of those parents are not glad when their children come home. Several parents can't come to get their kids for whole weeks. When the kids come back after summer, their condition can be a shock to the teachers and caregivers. They often come with infectious diseases and are dirty. The clean clothes they left with at the beginning of summer have disappeared. They have lice in their hair. Some kids come with visible signs of exhaustion. When asked what their mother gave them to eat, some simply shrug their shoulders.

Sitting there with these two remarkable women, I listened to stories about kids named Masha, Ivan, Sergei, about a family with many children, about a mother with loose morals who doesn't care about her kids, about a boy who constantly saw his stepfather beating his pregnant mother who had a miscarriage... After a while, these educators stopped and said, "Why have we told you so much?"

"I'm a pastor," I said. "I know how to listen."

Because of that warm meeting, I understood that we are needed there. We needed to show those kids the love of God. As I listened to these heartrending stories I thought, "There are orphans, there are half-orphans, and there are kids who have no good clothing, and there are kids whose parents cannot give them a good education. But under the influence of these stories, into my head came phrases that could describe the children of that boarding school: "unneeded kids," "kids whom nobody needs." And as I pondered that, I heard as it were a small voice saying, "I need them!" Right then I recalled the words of God, who says He wants to be the God of orphans. I understood it was our obligation to give the love of God to these "unneeded" kids. It's our responsibility to make children of God out of these kids whom nobody needed.



We need to give help to the teachers and caregivers of this boarding school. Beginning with the director and right down to each caregiver, these people are enthusiastic in their work. Pray for the workers of this complex.

We began preparations for bringing the group to this boarding school. When I began sharing about this plan with the church, about 15 people expressed their desire to take part in this ministry. With joy, people took responsibility upon themselves to prepare for this evangelistic

meeting. It was decided to hold it in the format of a concert. The youth came first with a request that I permit their musical group to sing for the kids, because they heard that I wanted to invite an outside musical team. I saw how God was prompting my brothers and sisters to get involved in this outreach. We began discussing the possibility that maybe God didn't want us simply to

hold a one-time meeting, but rather to begin a new ministry among those kids. We agreed to pray about it. The meeting went fabulously. I even saw a notice about it on BIEM's website.



Immediately afterward, we held a conversation with all those who were interested in such a ministry. Once again, more than 10 people came for that. We shared some of our impressions, and just about all of them expressed the need to continue this work. However, when we raised the question of who was ready to dedicate himself to the ministry of conducting this ministry, people basically were ready to assist, but not to lead it themselves. We decided to visit these children several times, to pray, and to watch concerning organizing a team for this outreach.

We've already been back and had a marvelous meeting. Once more, we were convinced that these kids need us. The second time looked more like a day camp than a concert. We saw more of these children in a relaxed atmosphere.

Please pray that the Lord will call several regular leaders, so that we might collaborate with God in the process of changing the hearts of these kids "whom nobody needs."

Thank you for supporting us in our needs.

December



Greetings to you, dear brothers and sisters, coworkers with the BIEM mission!

In this letter I would like to share with you part of the story of our new ministry.

In Ukraine there are various institutions that are working with orphans: children's homes, orphanages, boarding schools, family-type homes... Of course, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union the level of orphans and problem children has been less visible, but nevertheless this topic is still quite current for Ukraine.

Due to the fact that our church is young, and not large in numbers of people, up to this present time we hadn't really considered any sort of ministry to orphans as one of our regular outreaches. Here and there we have assisted in various events. At one time our youth attempted to begin a ministry in one of the children's homes. But the children in that home were very closed. I have noticed that there are establishments that receive quite a bit of assistance, while others are forgotten.

One time a social organization that works with orphans approached us. From them I learned that 45 kilometers from Ternopil there is a boarding school that is in need of aid. This is

a special educational center, where various kinds of children live and receive schooling, including children with behavioral problems and learning problems.

When we began to receive humanitarian from our mission, we ferried cartons of aid to them several times. In October, a group of brothers and sisters visited us from America, and we decided to visit this place together.

It turns out there are 120 kids there. There is a group of orphans, and there are other kids whose parents have been deprived of their parental rights. Many of them do have living fathers and mothers, but if we were to sum up the majority of these kids with one word, you could say these are “unneded” children.

I have written about how we are contemplating the chance to begin a regular ministry in this educational facility. When the group from America was here, many of our brothers and sisters wanted to go there together in order to minister to these children. Then we held a meeting at church for everyone who was interested in such an outreach. More than 10 people showed up. Just about all of them said that they would like to assist in such a ministry, but they didn’t want to accept the responsibility of leading it regularly. We decided to pray about the matter, and for the time being we would organize several group trips there composed of those who had expressed interest in order for them to gain a better idea of what ministry there would be like and to give God a chance to show them His will.

Our following visits were somewhat different. Our meetings with the children took place, not in the concert hall, but rather in the gym and in the classrooms. The youth started by leading some games, relays, and then we had a Bible lesson in the classes. This temporary decision yielded its results. A team for this ministry began to take shape. Sergei, one of our brothers, came to me and volunteered to accept responsibility for leading this ministry. He’s already been talking with several people, and he’s already formed a team of 5 people who are prepared to start a regular ministry in this boarding school. Sergei himself grew up in a very disadvantaged family. Due to the alcoholism of his parents, he became an orphan in childhood. Through Christians, he learned of God and the church.

Please pray for Sergei Ryabinin as leader of this ministry. I will help him, as I can, but I want this ministry to develop through new people from the church.

We are in need of your prayers and for the healing of the children in that place through our ministry. Our goal is to give them the love of God, so that “unneded” kids can feel themselves as needed by God. Please also pray for the finances that this ministry will need.

With sincere greetings,
Your brother in Christ,
Vitaly Bilyak