



The Buykos in Bilogorodka, Ukraine

3rd Quarter, 2021

July

“To survive at all costs”

For the leaders and for most of the children who frequently attend summer camps, there are familiar and understandable events. These include Bible lessons and music lessons, games, and various sport competitions. Those are normal and predictable. But God has His ways and plans for the salvation of each soul.

In June, a children’s day camp was held at the Temple of Salvation church in Kyiv. Over 200 children attended. And among those kids were two boys, twins from a difficult situation. The parents of Kostya and Cyril were drug users. After the birth of these twins, for a week they lay with IVs, since their bodies was affected by drugs, and they had withdrawal symptoms. Even in her final months of pregnancy, the mother couldn’t refrain from heroin. The parents of these boys died from using narcotics. Their guardian is an aunt with a weakness for alcohol. But, as they say, even in the darkest tunnel there is a light at the end of the tunnel. By God’s mercy, these boys’ neighbor is a Christian woman who is a member of Temple of Salvation. This year, she decided to invite Cyril and Kostya to the Christian camp. It turned out that the boys didn’t even own any clothes that were clean and in one piece. So, before camp, this Christian woman visited a store, where she bought the boys new clothing. The most interesting and touching event, which displayed the character of the boys, happened during “Gold Rush,” the final game of the camp. And the most interesting thing is that their secret was revealed after the conclusion of the camp, during the leaders’ fellowship.



But first, let me explain the “Gold Rush” game. Leaders distribute gold-colored walnuts in the playing field. The children must find them and then trade them in at a special “bank” for paper play money in denominations of 10, 50, or 100 dollars. Last, using the play money, the children can go to the “store” and buy sweets, toys, and school supplies.

However, the game is not so simple. On the playing field there are bandits and police running around. The bandits can take away their golden walnuts if the children don’t exchange them in time.

This is the children's very favorite game, and no problems with the rules ever arise. What a surprise when it was discovered that one of the twins, Kirill, quickly caught on to the rules even though he was in camp for the first time. Within a couple of minutes, he came up with a scam that no one had encountered before.

The boy saw the markings that the "policemen" were wearing and somehow found some spare ones in the field. He decided to impersonate a policeman and made a deal with the kids in his group to protect them from the bandits. (According to the rules of the game, the police can arrest bandits and prevent them from picking up the walnuts. Since there were more than 200 children on the field, we never noticed a fake policeman.) For his protection, Kirill requested \$1,000 from each child. The value of one nut was \$10.

Cyril himself collected nuts and exchanged them at the bank, but he also collected a duty from the other boys. The average child left with a couple of toys and some sweets, but Kirill and his brother took home two boxes of gifts from the camp. Before anything else, the boy bought toothpaste, soap, shampoo, socks, and school supplies

You might wonder how we did not immediately notice that one child was purchasing so many items? The fact is many children stack prizes in one place and then carry them through the crowd to cars or the church.

Let's go back to Kirill. Here was an 11-year-old boy who came up with a scam and implemented it on the spur of the moment. He was not afraid of exposure. He acted boldly and confidently because his whole life is a competition for survival. Cyril knew that summer would end and that in school he and his brother would need notebooks, pens, and felt-tip markers.

During the camp, we had talked with them. Kirill and Kostya repeatedly emphasized that they will do anything to get out of poverty and not starve.

We are grateful to God that He draws to Himself children who walk in darkness.

Many thanks to the BIEM mission for financial and prayerful support in organizing the camps and the opportunity to evangelize children in this way!

Let's pray for these boys, that the Word they hear will grow in their hearts!

The Buyko family

August

We want to thank God for the fact that our church has people from all generations, and representatives of each group can praise God one way or another.

The younger and middle Sunday school groups didn't want to go away for summer vacation, which gives us joy. The Word of God is growing in their hearts and is yielding fruit. The children often want to praise God with songs or by reciting Bible verses.

A new young couple has had a baby boy, for which we all thank God along with being grateful for all their family. When they came to us, we women of the church threw a surprise baby shower for the wife, and this time of fellowship greatly united us and enabled us to get better acquainted.





Also, right now we're in the middle of active preparations for a camp, for which we request prayer. Please pray for favorable weather (that's very important) and for no one to be injured or to catch a virus and that the children will all enjoy it. Most important of all, please pray that the seeds we sow in their hearts will grow and bear fruit.

A week ago, when we were preparing for camp, we saw a group of boys ages 10-12 playing soccer on the field outside our church's fence. Our Misha decided to go outside and prepare the field for camp and to invite those boys to come. One of them immediately called his mom and asked whether he could attend camp on those dates. Then, in a joyful tone, he declared that he'll be able to attend, unlike last year when he had to go away. Without prompting, several boys even offered to help Misha to spruce up the field.



We ask that you uphold us in prayer, and we thank you for all your help.
Praise God for everything!

Camp



This summer, the Lord blessed our church with the opportunity to hold two camps. For the first time in years, we had an entire team of Americans come to our camp. The kids were very excited at their coming and very glad for the opportunity. We thank God for giving us such a marvelous camp and the chance to minister to the children together.

It's very joyful that many children are interested in learning English, and they enjoyed chatting with the American friends.

It was a great plus that the Americans brought along their photo albums. That provided a chance to communicate even without exactly understanding each other's' languages.

We distributed the Americans among the different activities going on—the handcrafts, music, Bible lessons, and English circle. After lunch, we play all-camp games, and our American friends helped a great deal in that.





Some ran with the children, assisting them in accumulating points for their team, and others stood in specific locations to explain the goals and how to fulfill them.

The theme of the camp was “Five Colors,” with each color representing an important stage in the Christian pathway. (Black symbolizes a sinful heart. Red represents the blood of Christ. White stands for repentance and cleansing. Green is new life in Christ. Yellow reminds us of golden new Jerusalem.) The bracelets made with beads of these five colors are

also famous. The most interesting thing is that we here had prepared for the camp separately and had prepared along the theme of “Five Colors,” including the bracelets, and our American friends had prepared the same things for us! Another amazing thing is that, to our great surprise, the Americans and we Ukrainians had prepared orange t-shirts for our teams.

During music time, the Americans helped greatly, not only by singing, but also in teaching the kids proper pronunciation in English and answering the children’s questions about certain sounds.

In addition, on one day we had a special day (a favorite not only for the children but for the whole team!)—water day! The all-camp game that day related to water. By the end of the day everyone was soaked but very happy.

We are very thankful to God and to our American friends for their help in making the Word of God understandable to the children. We eagerly look forward to our friends coming next year. Praise God!



September

This year there was a special blessing for our church – we held two camps!

This was a very important project for all of us.

Through this ministry, we feel the unity in the church. All ages united in the work of God: some working in the kitchen, some cleaning, some who work with children directly on the leadership team . . .

Right before our eyes, our teenagers are growing spiritually, taking responsibility for children's groups.

In the first camp, the Lord blessed us with an American team, which was a great support. Whoever had the desire could practice their English with them, which we strongly encouraged. ☺ Thank God that through such American-Ukrainian fellowship we could preach the Gospel to children!

We are still very grateful to God for our second camp. We had prepared lessons about Moses. Bible lessons intertwined with the themes of the first camp (Bracelets of 5 Colors). The children were especially happy, of course, for the handcrafts. Everyone was always looking forward to "Aunt Amy" and "Uncle Sam," who bring suitcases full of interesting, colorful, modern crafts. My favorite was painting T-shirts. Many thanks to our American friends for such a ministry!

On the last day of the camp, as usual, we held a charity fair of handmade craft items. In this way, we were able to collect 6,300 Ukrainian hryvnias (\$240) for a disabled girl who has Spinal Muscular Atrophy in the village of Bobrytsa (located near the village of Bilogorodka). On Sunday, this girl's father (named Vladislav) came to church for the first time and thanked us for the finances. He expressed gratitude for our pastor's prayer. About 10 days after that, the government gave them \$10,000 worth of medical supplies for free! Vladislav's family accepted that as a miracle. We ask you to pray for this girl, Ulyana, and her family. Now they know the way to church.

This year the camp for our church became a special blessing. After it, we began holding youth meetings on Saturdays. (In this year's camp, the older group was the largest, and someone suggested we continue working with them through youth fellowships.)



The teens study the Word of God, chat over cups of tea, and prepare for Sunday worship.

The topic of one such fellowship was the story of Moses. The youth were divided into 4 teams, and each team painted the life of Moses however they wanted. Then an adult jury chose the winner. It is interesting to observe how the same story can be portrayed in different ways. The winners, of course, received a prize. ☺

Dear brothers and sisters, we ask you to pray for the spiritual growth of the church in the village of Bilogorodka, especially for the development of this new youth ministry.