



DESNA & GONCHAROVSK, UKRAINE 1st Quarter 2009 Report

January 2009, part 1 Desna

[Note: In Ukraine and Russia many people and churches still celebrate Christmas according to the old Gregorian calendar, which puts Christmas on January 7.]

We wish to share with you some events that took place in our church before Christmas. It all started with preparations for a holiday service. The whole church had a strong desire to take part in these preparations. We distributed responsibilities, and the process of hard-working preparation started. Several young women were to decorate our auditorium, so with great joy they arrived early in the morning and worked until late at night. They made different crafts, went to the woods to cut down a Christmas tree, and decorated it. The decorated room created a festive mood in the church members, and an expectation of something good in the near future. It was so pleasing to observe how the whole church was taking part in ministry; it united us. Despite age differences we were working together and feeling the unity of our body. This doesn't mean that we don't have unity in our church; we have warm relationships among church members, but each of us has his own life and own problems, and in this period all of us were concentrating on one work. Our cashier Tanya was responsible for a Christmas play, and it wasn't an easy job for her. Her goal was to prepare two plays with people of different ages, and praise the Lord she got it done, and the plays went very well. After the Christmas service I talked to Tanya and she shared how hard it was and how now she understands people who regularly lead churches and that she needs to strengthen leaders instead of criticizing them. Tanya had a character trait to criticize, talk about negatives instead of helping to solve problems, and now she understood that instead of talking she needed to do something. But we are happy that God reveals to people their shortcomings and helps them to grow. I'm glad that God changed Tanya and used her this Christmas. In the past five months, Tanya had not been an active church member and now she is, and I praise Lord for it.

Ira Savchuk was responsible for the holiday dinner, and she shared how sisters helped her by offering different products. Each of them wanted to prepare their famous food, so that everything would be beautiful and festively, and get people close to the real understanding of Christmas. One of our purposes was to invite unbelievers and give them testimony about our Lord Jesus Christ. And in this time many relatives are coming for Christmas.

One of our sisters was crying tears of joy at this Christmas. She always feels pressure from her daughter and the daughter's husband. She always hears bad words about her faith and the church. They claim she is a fanatic and a cultist, and her faith is always a reason for conflicts. She invited them to church many times, but they didn't come. It's interesting that they allowed their kids to attend Sunday school but don't come by themselves. And when they actually came for Christmas, she was sitting and crying with joy, and she shared with me that she had prayed for it, and God answered. It is her greatest joy to see her kids in church.

Despite the fact that many church members were away visiting relatives for



Christmas, we had forty people at our service, and this number doesn't include the children.

One woman came with her three-week child, and I asked why she wasn't afraid to bring out such a young child. She said that it is her daughter's first Christmas. And the woman was glad to be with us and to see what happens here. I thought about our church members who have one-year-old children and they don't attend services because of their child. And this mother had a great desire to visit our Christmas.

This was very special Christmas for me, and our church did everything to make it special.

January 2009, part 2

We planned with the youth in our church to visit the homes of church members and of people who, from time to time, attend services. The purpose was to sing Christmas carols. First they visited my apartment building. As the young people were singing on our floor, people from other floors began to open their doors, because they were so pleased with the singing. Our brothers and sisters in Christ were glad that we had come, so they tried to thank us by giving sweets and money. For those members who had relatives visiting for holidays (relatives who didn't want to attend services), it was the only opportunity to give a witness to them. One sister didn't let us go; she wanted so much for her relatives to talk to believers. This sister shared that several days before Christmas she had had an unpleasant talk with her daughter. That daughter didn't want to hear about the mother's faith; she rejected Christianity and the inspiration of the Bible. But after the carols she changed her mind and told her mother that they should invite us to a holiday meal in order to spend more time with us. Lubov Efimovna thanked us with all with her heart, but we knew that it was God's work.

One interesting event happened when we went to Alusia's mother's place. She lives on the fourth floor, and when we were singing, a neighbor from the second floor came up to us and gave us money. That scenario was repeated several times that evening; unsaved neighbors were coming to us, asking us to sing. It was so cold that night, but our desire was to visit our members and to visit some far parts of our town, so I got my car and we continued our trip.

Our Christian sister Raya lives out of our town; it's not easy to get to her house. When she saw us with a guitar, it was a great encouragement. All her family was around the holiday table, worshipping our Lord. We all were filled with the great joy of ministering for our Lord.

We spent Christmas evening in worshipping God. Due to the cold, it wasn't easy to play the guitar, but we did this ministry in His greatest glory.

February 2009 Goncharivske

We want to ask you to pray for the ministry in Goncharivske because of new difficulties there. As we wrote earlier, we've begun a teen club there. We had Bible classes and planned through different activities to bring more youth. We were glad to meet new boys who took an active part in different Bible discussions. In our experiences in the past, we've had more girls attending in Goncharivske, but more boys attended this club. For two months our club existed without any difficulties. But two weeks ago only one girl, Katya, came to our club. We worried that nobody else came, despite the fact that we had seen several kids, and they promised to come. The next day we ran into the mother of a boy named Vitalik, and he was one kid who tried not to miss any of our clubs. Vitalik's mother told why he and other kids didn't come. Vitalik invited his classmates to the club and always tried to invite new kids. These new kids were coming to the club, and with the great joy we witnessed to them about our Lord. The parents of a boy named Fedia knew that he was attending our club, and they forbade him from coming, but he liked our club and continued attending in disobedience to his parents. Because his parents knew that he was disobeying them, they spanked him and told the parents of his friend Artiom about the situation. Artiom's parents forbade him to come, too, and also spread bias against us among other parents. So the parents had forbidden their teens to attend our club. Vitalik always went to his friends' homes before Bible club so they could walk over together, but this time his friends' parents didn't let them come, saying that they would not be attending anymore. Artiom got distressed and didn't come to club that night either.

Truly, I have been wondering about the situation in Goncharivske, We spend much time there, but people still are blocking our ministry. So I need to repeat: please pray for our ministry there. For now, only Katya and Vitalik are attending our club. We thank the Lord for them, but we want to receive more kids. We know that only God can change these parents' hearts and turn them to us.

Thank you for your prayer support.

March 2009
Desna, Ukraine

Dear Friends!

I want to express great thanks in the name of our church for your prayers. This is not a very good time in our country now; many people are losing their jobs. We hear different sorts of information, and they are frightening people. Recently in Desna and the surrounding area everyone began to buy salt and matches, because somebody announced that the matches and salt factories are closing. People were buying whole boxes of matches and salt. All the places where we could buy them were empty. Several days later the news announced that it's not true and that the factories are still working. At least many people provided themselves with matches and salt to last for the rest of their lives.

We can write a lot about the crisis in our country, but anyway our comfort is Christ. We see that difficulties are drawing people closer to God. We are receiving many prayer needs, people asking to pray about finding new jobs. But God is so merciful and kind that He is answering our prayers. One unbeliever, a Christian woman's son, lost his job, and his family has a debt which they couldn't pay. He asked his mother to pray for his job. We were praying as a church together on Sunday. Together we had carried that need to the throne of grace. God, by His great mercy didn't make us wait for long. Sasha found job immediately, and it was a great miracle for him. His wife visited church several times after that event. Sasha had been searching for a job before, and all his efforts ended in failure, but prayer can do a lot. It was a great encouragement for the church, and all instances of God's answers to our prayers encourage us.

One man, Vasya, fell ill with pneumonia, and liquid collected in his lungs. I drove him to the Kozelets hospital, and doctors said that his sickness is complicated and that he needs a long time for healing. Vasya went to the hospital and after observation doctors thought that he probably had tuberculosis. Vasya asked me to drive him to a special tuberculosis center. I asked the church to pray for him. When we reached the tuberculosis center, Vasya went through medical tests and we were waiting an hour for results. Vasya shared with me about his fear about the disease, and I shared about our Lord Jesus. I encouraged him said that the church is praying for his disease, and that in such conditions he needed to repent before the Lord and start a new life. I said that nothing is impossible to God. You know, when I was saying that God is able to change his life, I didn't know the test results. I was worrying together with Vasya as he told me about all his friends who died because of tuberculosis. And when we received the test results, they said that he doesn't have tuberculosis. He was very glad and full of joy, and I was happy also. Vasya said that he is happy and thanked the Lord for one more chance to start a new life. I know that God answered our church's prayers.

Pray with us:

- 1) For Vasya and his repentance,
- 2) For Sasha's family, and for their repentance,
- 3) For repentance of people in Desna.
- 4) That God uses this difficulties in our country for evangelization.