



The Bilyaks

2nd Quarter Report, 2018

April 2018

Hello, dear brothers and sisters, coworkers of God in our common work of evangelism.

I'm so glad I can perform this ministry jointly with a large team of God's people. In this letter I'd like to share about the ministry among men who have once again sat down at student desks. I'm referring to our men in the rehabilitation program and my ministry at the rehabilitation center. In general, I have to devote more time to pastoral ministry in our growing church, but at the same time I am very glad that I am actively involved in working with the alcohol and drug-dependent brothers. I have three responsibilities in this ministry. First, I teach once a week for these men. I have three responsibilities in this ministry. Second, I have a role in the council of ministers of the rehabilitation center, which we hold once every two weeks. Lastly, management of economic projects (construction, landscaping, the bee hives, development of a workshop...). Concerning that last ministry, I do more after the fire, which took place almost 4 years ago.

Today I'd like to share about the teaching ministry. I wasn't specially chosen for this ministry. For several years now, on Wednesdays, we've been holding lessons in the church for all who wanted to come. Earlier our deacon Volodya conducted these meetings. I held meetings with those preparing for baptism and church membership. This year I decided to change and to let Volodya gain experience in preparing people for baptism while I took over the teaching role.

When this possibility presented itself, I thought and prayed about how to conduct these meetings: whether to continue explanations of how to study the Bible, or to use some sort of educational material. I decided to use the material called "Basic Life Principles," which is material that in the past was very helpful to me personally. In general, 90% of these meetings are attended by the men from the rehab center. Right from the start it became clear that this is material that each one of them needed. The first thing we did was put everyone at a desk. People began to keep notes. All of our meetings began with songs of worship and with prayer. It so happened that we had a good service in the middle of the week. Everyone who had already completed rehabilitation, or was approaching the finish line in this process, came gladly. The relatives of some of our rehabilitants who live in Ternopil started to become active in these meetings. In this way, this also became a way for them to spend time with their son or brother, and also to support them in the rehabilitation process.

At these meetings people asked some questions that were far from simple. We talked about the sovereign God, as Creator, who placed us in our specific life situations. This wasn't easy for those who didn't know their own parents. It was not easy for those who did not know their parents, or were brought up in a boarding school, or had health problems or birth defects. Some did not like their appearance or nationality... From the first meeting, this course became a challenge for many. They had either to make a decision, or to leave.

The next challenge was to recognize God as the One who has authority, and on earth uses different levels of power. When we looked at God possessing authority, we understood that in each of us

there is a rebel. We talked about suffering, about responsibility to have a clear conscience before God and people. Each new meeting for almost a year made us realize that this world with its values offers something completely different. The questions of success, the willingness to forgive, and many other topics became very practical. Each meeting ended with prayer. Someone repented. Another admitted that he cannot do right and God gave His grace. Literally a week ago we completed this course. The brothers at the meetings shared evidence of how God used these meetings to transform their lives. Several people said that God used this very much in their life.

Understand, these men have different levels of education, professions, and life experience. One is a simple worker; yet among them are people with higher education, in the past we've had a bank employee, a policeman, a pilot, builders, drivers, athletes... Someone had served time in prison, another was abandoned by someone, some of them have HIV + hepatitis ... There were many challenges in their lives, but only while sitting at a desk with the Bible in their hands did life begin to change. It is not surprising that Christ called us to make disciples (the Great Commission). Friends, please pray that the Devil not be successful in stealing what we've sowed in their hearts. Pray for these men undergoing rehabilitation; each of them needs your prayers and support. Jesus said, "I came to save those who are lost."

Thank for supporting this not-so-simple ministry. Also pray, that the Lord will send a chance to develop this ministry. We need additional ministers for it. We greatly hope that some of those who have recently completed rehabilitation or are drawing near to completion will dedicate themselves to ministering to others with dependencies.

May

Dear friends, coworkers with the BIEM mission,

I'm glad to greet you again in a new letter. Each time when we see some sort of special event in the life of our young church, we understand that all these things merit a large team of God's children, God's workers.

One of the most recent events were the family holiday and Mother's Day. As I have already written earlier, each time we try to employ various methods and mean to tell people about God's truth. In recent years in Ukraine there has been an active movement in defense of the family. As it turned out, due to the influence of European officials, our government officials included in a strategic plan for Ukraine the promotion of same-sex unions, which greatly outraged the majority of Ukrainians, because most of our people are religious. Although not all of them are believers, when it comes to recognizing a right to homosexual relations, our people aren't ready for this; therefore, pretty much any movement in defense of the traditional family has respect and support. In addition, in mid-May, we usually hold days, holidays, and festivals of the family. This is the second year that we have decided to make use of this movement for preaching.

I'll say right off that this year was much simpler than last year. We agreed in advance with the local school to hold this holiday in the schoolyard (on the playground). The director of the school is very open for such events, so receiving permission was very simple. About a week in advance, our young people went through the area and distributed invitations to this family holiday. We gave out the majority of the invitations through teachers. The holiday was planned for Saturday and Sunday. On Saturday we held a big entertainment and sports program, and on Sunday a special service dedicated to Mother's Day was planned.

In our young, small church there is no particular team in charge of family holidays; therefore, we put together a team consisting of all who wanted to help. We even found jobs for the men in the

rehabilitation center. Each person had his sphere of responsibility. Several of our brothers especially showed themselves during this holiday. Not long ago, we had a man join our church who is a professional sportsman, a trainer. We decided to commission him with the task of holding competitions for children and for families. We worried a little bit concerning how he would cope with this assignment. Some of our other members already have some experience running such games, so in giving him this job we did run a bit of a risk. However, it was nice to see the result. In the first place, it was handled professionally. In the second place, he fulfilled his role with great enthusiasm and devotion.

As you have understood, at this holiday we had various sporting competitions for children and for families. In addition, the photo-zone, prepared by my Katya, was in great demand. One of our new brothers in the faith (he's preparing for baptism) is a professional photographer. He took photos, and this gave us the chance to record people contact information, so that later we could send their photos and invite them to church.

The cotton candy machine was especially popular. There was a line at it all day. Our sisters were very tired. At the end of the evening we couldn't close the line. New people kept on coming. We ended up having to post several brothers at the end of the line, and they explained to newcomers that no more people were allowed in line.

Another zone that received special interest was the area where children could get drawings painted on their faces with special children's paint. And it was very interesting for little children and parents to blow big bubbles. You need special chemical reagents for this. Our medical students did an excellent job with it. We had classes for various crafts. The trampoline was also in constant use. It's good that the springs don't grow tired. All the parents with little children really liked a normal tent that was designated a play zone for the youngest kiddies.

But the salt and light of the whole holiday was the evangelistic group. These brothers gave people children's Bibles and other children's literature. When possible, they witnessed to people and said that God can bless every family if people want to follow God's will. They invited people to Sunday services dedicated to Mother's Day.

For the conclusion of the holiday we prepared hotdogs, and it seems that this location became even more popular than the cotton candy. While people stood in this long line, other brothers and I again invited them to the church.

Around 400 people attended the holiday. This was a very big undertaking for our church. In the first place, 95% of the people were from our region. The majority had never been in our church, and their attendance at this holiday was an opportunity to change their views toward the church. The mass media try to paint our churches as robbing churches (that is, defrauding people through deception). I'm sure that the next time they hear something negative about Baptists (evangelical) churches, they will know that in their area the church serves people.

We also hope that several hundred children's Bible and other children's literature will also do their work in the hearts of people.

Of course, those several people who visited the church on Mother's Day are also results. It was very interesting to hear good comments from the administration of the school. It turns out that, among the parents with children, there were also teachers from the school. Many of them left positive reviews on social media.

Please pray for the development of family ministry in our church. Pray for family camp, which we are planning for August. Pray for families of the church, that the Devil would not succeed in destroying not a single family from the church, so that the church can say, "We know what a strong family is!"

Thank you for your prayers and your support in the form of resources, which we received from the mission for the conducting of this holiday.

June

We greet you, friends!

In this letter I want to share some information about our Christian youth extreme camp. Around 50 people took part. The camp lasted from June 22 – 28.

I asked my daughter Karina to write her impressions about the camp. She is 15, and she was a leader in this camp. Here is her account:

“The extreme camp named ‘Wake Up’ was full of new acquaintances, a sea of emotions, interesting stories, truths that are important for life, and much of the extreme!

“This year, as usual, we held the camp in Ukraine’s Carpathian Mountains, and the very name testifies of the fact that it was not boring!

“Without exception, all of us lived in the extreme for six days as we slept in tents, ate local dishes of the residents in the Carpathians, cooked over fire, paddled on catamarans on a mountain river, and also used the river to wash and brush our teeth.

“This camp was really special, thanks to the fellowship of teens and young adults. Through friendly relationships, ‘Wake Up’ was one big team, which you rarely see in our time, since nowadays it’s normal to divide ourselves into various groups according to status and interests.

“Each day was different, according to the program, but one thing that never changed is that we had morning and evening worship times. It was during this time that we studied the Word of God, read the Bible, and praised our Creator in songs and prayers. At these gatherings, and in general over the course of the whole time in the Carpathians, we emphasized the theme of the Kingdom of God.

“In the camp we also practiced personal time with God. That is, in the mornings everyone spread out to different tents and we thought on the Scriptures with our leaders and considered what we had read in the Bible.

“Of course, there were also other assignments. The program allotted much time to boating, and we were very fortunate, since the level of water in the river after the rains rose greatly. This added extra drive to those who dared to tame the Cheremosh River.

On one of the days we were shown how to climb a mountain. This was a special time when both the youth and leaders were able to see unbelievable beauty created by God, along with His might and greatness. On that day we clearly felt His mercy and support as we were climbing upward. When we at last reached the summit of the mountain, a cloud appeared on the horizon. All of the locals, plus our guide, predicted there would be rain; therefore, we quickly ate lunch and considered the unreal beauty of the mountains, and then quickly began our descent. And once again we experienced a miracle from God: the expected rain didn’t happen. Therefore, we returned dry, and more importantly, alive. It’s worth pointing out that ‘Wake up 2018’ was the first time ever, without exception, that all participants in the camp reached the mountain’s summit! This was active rest. Except for when we went on the hike, and the boating and services, every morning we had very dynamic exercise, which were led by a leader who was a trainer who had taught Greek-Roman wrestling. We had all-camp games, which were geared to develop us physically and spiritually. In conversations, campers shared their impressions from the camp. They liked it. Each one enjoyed it for their own reasons. Some had already been in the camps, but had never lived through so many emotions, and others in general enjoyed it all for the first time, and for them these several days became special.

“Can anything better be said about it? Here it is: in this camp, several people recognized their sin and received Christ into their heart!

-Karina Bilyak”

Friends, thank you for your participation in evangelism through camps. Pray please, that young people would be joined to the church. Also pray for the upcoming day camps and family evangelistic camp.

With great faithfulness,
Your brother,
Vitaly Bilyak