
UKRAINE NEWS

Newsletter № 68

Erich and Tetyana Salzmann

December 2012

Dear friends

Christmas is coming soon and for many that includes quite a lot of stress. That seems to be a perpetual companion in our modern times. At the same time we mess, that God isn't stressed and doesn't expect it from us either. Instead of getting calm and peace from our relationship with God and the fellowship with other Christians, the whole Christian "stuff" adds to our stress. Something is wrong here. During the last two years we have learnt to live each day with calmness. That didn't come always easy. Often patience was tested. But it was worth it. Now we begin to see, what God is doing, and that is a lot more exciting, than if you always try to do things on your own.

House church

This has been one of the most beautiful but also most painful experiences for us during the last one and a half years. Beautiful, because friendships keep on growing deeper, and because we see how we polish each other and grow together. Painful, because the issues with the prosperity gospel caused a rift and various tensions in the group. We often had thoughts about whether we would want to continue at all like this. But in the midst of this situation we observed, how God always used at least one person to be a peacemaker, to encourage the other to go on loving. Now it seems, that the whole issue is taking a bit care of itself. One couple, which really got into the prosperity stuff, has not attended the group since over a month. That is sad, but then we also feel, that we want to let them go in peace. Through that, the tensions in the group are almost totally gone. For one family it is still difficult, because the wife is also fond of this false teaching, but the husband would rather continue to meet with us. We pray for Gods loving intervention.

Now a new atmosphere of optimism can be felt. The people realise, that it is time to go forward. The old wounds were licked sufficiently, now the time has come to pass on Gods love to other people. Currently we are watching an interesting teaching series on the spiritual gifts. These gifts are given to us, so that we would serve each other and the world around us.

Family camp

From the 7th until the 13th of January we will, together with the Swiss house church who visited us in summer, run a family camp. 6 people will travel again to Ukraine to spend time with us. This time we are able to spend the time at a camp facility. The managers are Christians and they ask for the Ukrainians to pay only for the food. Accommodation will be free of charge. Thanks to that, the camp becomes affordable also for those with children. That will be especially nice for the wives, because they will not have to cook. We really look forward to this time together. We want to intentionally spend time in quietness and worship and listen

to God. We would like to get a common vision for us as a church.

Presentations at the University of Ostroh

I while back I was contacted by a teacher from the University of Ostroh. He teaches German and invited me to be a guest teacher in his class. During an 80-minutes lesson I presented the film "More than chocolate and cheese", a film about Switzerland, made by Christians, with a special angle on the cross in the Swiss flag. (if you are interested, you can watch it in English here:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0_9p828uz3I)

Afterwards we did a quiz with the students, to see how much the remembered. At the end we had a good time of dialog with the very interested students. After the lesson, the teachers wanted to immediately engage me to teach twice a week in their German classes. Unfortunately, expenses and income are out of proportion to each other. The teacher is a believer and we had a lengthy talk out in the parking lot. He then invited me to come back for their monthly meeting for Christian students. On the 3rd of December, Oleg, Yura, Pasha and myself, travelled together to Ostroh. Oleg is our musician. He is in a wheelchair. Yura is a guitar player and Pasha was our driver. First, we did a presentation during a regular class of about 50 students. Oleg sang a few songs and shared from his life. Then I presented some interesting material on the topic "Jesus, Lord or legend?" I showed, that our faith in the resurrection is based on historical facts and not just on a legend.

An hour later the meeting for the Christian students took place. Here the atmosphere was more relaxed and family-like, and we could share more freely. Oleg and Yura began again with a few songs. Then I shared the sermon "Prodigal God" (the parable about the prodigal son), but this time not as a simultaneous translation. Admitted, I read most of the text, but thanks to that it was in really good Russian. Since I had made the typing on the computer extra large, I was still able to maintain good eye contact with the 30 or so very attentive listeners. As it is always the case with this sermon, the people were deeply touched. The teacher said afterwards: "If I would have known, that you have this kind of a sermon, then I would have asked you to share it also with the other class. Please, come and share it also at our church". At the end of the meeting, the students used the opportunity to buy a good number of CD's from Oleg and also a number of the book "Letters from a sceptic". With joy and thankfulness in our hearts we travelled back home through a freshly snow covered landscape.

Students from the music school

The students from the music school have restarted their meetings at our house after the summer break. First, they

opted for a video seminar about “The biblical portrait of marriage”, by Bruce Wilkinson. After two evenings, a majority decided, that this topic was not yet sufficiently important for them. After a break due to concerts, they came again to our house and we decided to show them the studio recording of “The prodigal God”, the original video of the sermon by Greg Boyd with my voiceover in Russian. At the end of the sermons, most had difficulties to hold back their tears, so deeply were they touched by Gods love. Later we found out, that there are a few among these students, who already are like little Pharisees. They were not please, that the preacher wore a T-shirt instead of suit and tie. That saddened us a bit. The following week, the group wanted to simply continue their studies of the Gospel of John, which they had started at the student dorm. So we looked at the third chapter, which of course got us right back to the topic of Gods love. The probably best known Bible verse, John 3:16, clearly shows us Gods motivation to become a human being. Jesus didn’t come into this world and died on the cross, because God was mad at us sinners. Jesus came into this world and died on the cross, because God was madly in love with us!

We don’t yet know, how this student ministry will continue. There might even be a possibility to hold meetings at the student dorm, which would make it possible for more students to attend.

Studio recordings

The work is progressing well. At the moment, there are several sermons in various stages of translation, editing and recording. I was able to set up Google Analytics for my own website, so that we now have at least a rough idea, how often people download our Russian sermons. Currently we register about 100 visits per month. It is possible, for example, to see, that there are regular visitor from a city in eastern Kazakhstan. That is the positive side of the internet, it is possible to spread the good news to far away corners of this world.

Volodya has meanwhile finished the Gospel of Matthew for deaf people. Should you be interested, then you can also support this project financially, so that more and more books of the Bible can be recorded, then please contact me. I will help you to make the necessary arrangements. For an example: The Gospel of Mark cost 800 USD, for one chapter 50 USD. The length of the video is 2 hours. Depending on the length of the books in the Bible, they will cost more or less. We focus first on the New Testament.

Family news

Because Tetyana had recurring problems with her back, she decided to go for a bigger check. The doctors found out, that she is suffering from spinal disc herniation, both in her lower back and near her neck. She got some shots with Voltaren, which helped with the inflammation. Now she already feels a lot better. During the next few days we will meet with a chiropractic/manual therapist, so as to find out, what can be achieved through a therapy and exercises.

My own back is also not in the best shape. Maybe I will join the treatment. We have got us new mattresses and I am sitting on one of these big balls now, when working on the computer. That has improved the situation, but doesn’t take too much, and the problems reappear. Working as a lumber-

jack I have limited to not more than half a day, and for some of the heavy equipment I use a helper.



In spite of these problems, Tetyana was able to celebrate her 40th birthday in fellowship with a lot of friends and, what was special to her, with a lot of singing and praising God.

The kids are doing well. Darja is in 5th grade now and Dan in 3rd grade. They both learn well. Sometimes it is a bit a problem though, because the material taught seems too difficult for their age or it is not presented very well.

Stress free holidays to all of you!

Many greetings from a deeply snow covered Ukraine

Erich & Tetyana with Darja & Dan



Prayer requests

Give thanks for

- the new spirit of optimism in the house church
- the possibility to share the Gospel at the Ostroh University
- the Gospel of Matthew in Russian sign language for deaf
- the inexpensive option to run a family camp

Pray for

- the family who no longer attends the house church
- the family, who is torn in two directions
- continued good success with the recordings of the sermons and the video bible
- the University students who heard about Jesus
- the students from the music school. How to go on?
- a blessed family camp
- our spines

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