



## Ivano-Frankivsk Church of Christ Update – May 2024

Hello there!

May was certainly a slower month than April as we did not have all of our visitors coming in and out to occupy us. Even with a little less activity, there was still a lot to do!

The first thing we want to highlight: we have a new Christian! This past month, Vova reached out to me and told me that he and his wife, Natasha, had been having some good studies with his mother in law, Galina. She lives in Vinnytsia, a city that is about 8 hours away by train. One weekend, they asked if I could come to their apartment while she was in town to study with her, because they were certain she was ready to be baptized. I went on Saturday night, ate an entire bowl of strawberries, and had a wonderful discussion with Galina about becoming a Christian. She said that she has felt for years like she has been carrying a heavy spiritual burden and every time she studies about it or talks with Vova or Natasha, the answer always comes to baptism. She told me she believed that baptism would free her from past sins and she would not have to carry their weight anymore. That was a pretty solid statement of understanding in my book. It was clear she had already been taught well by her family! Both Vova and Natasha jumped into the conversation several times with excellent comments and talked about what it means to be a part of the

church. As soon as we could get a pool organized, she was baptized into Christ!

We also received our first container of humanitarian aid from the US since I arrived! There are some legal hassles we have to go through to be able to give this out due to the changes in the church here this year, but it seems like we are almost in the clear. Hopefully in June, we'll be able to hand out most of what we have received. At the very least, we were able to go ahead ship out the rice meals to the front lines where food is needed constantly. In total, there were about 345 boxes which contain 36 meals. That should go a long way to helping a lot of people in need!

Our goal when we are able to move the rest of the items is to bring people to the church building premises and have some special days where we can invite different community groups to come, while also offering them some biblical teaching. We want to help the physical needs, but we have an ultimate goal of helping the spiritual needs as well as we know that has a longer lasting importance!



*Galina being baptized by her son in law, Vova, and Gif giving assistance*



*Unloading the container took ~3 hours*



*We loaded out rice meals to go to the front lines*

Another major highlight: we have begun our weekly Bible studies at the rehabilitation centers! Svetlana invited us to come, and as of now we have had two sessions both with those receiving treatment and also with the staff members. The people being treated all have different backgrounds: some have lifelong diseases, some have developed issues due to age, some are even wounded soldiers. So the goal in our sessions is simply this: bring them encouragement to begin relying on God. We have used Philippians 4 to talk about how no matter how bad the situation is, we have to look to God to be able to succeed. To do that, we must pray and read the Bible and be willing to do what he tells us. These simple lessons are hopefully getting people interested in reading the Bible who may never have cracked it open. One young man, Ruslan, has attended both sessions, and has asked questions privately afterwards regarding some Bible passages he has been reading. He is a wounded soldier himself and it is clear he is seeking God. Pray for him as we try to help him on this journey!

The rehabilitation center is an excellent opportunity because they have new people being treated every month, so we can reach several ears there. As Svetlana told us after the first week: all we can do is point this people to God, but it is up to them to change their lives. A wise and true statement! We are looking forward to doing several more of these sessions and helping God's kingdom to grow using every opportunity given to us.

-Gif



*Pictures from our Bible studies at the rehab center*