



## Ivano-Frankivsk Church of Christ Update – April 2025

Hello there!

Americans Abound in April! We had a full month in Ivano-Frankivsk that began with Avery Hackney from the Arnold church of Christ in St. Louis, Missouri, coming to teach a week-long seminar on the book of James for the church. On a personal level, Avery and I go way back to our childhood years when our families worshipped at the same congregation, so it is always nice for me to get to spend some time catching up with him. On a church level, the classes were full every night and the members were engaged and talkative! A lot of positive things stemmed from that, and I'll let Avery tell you a little more about that further down in the report.

Almost as soon as Avery crossed the border into Poland, we were greeted here with a Jolly Jambalaya of Johns! John Kachelman from Montgomery and John Durham from Nashville both arrived at the same time and have had full schedules ever since. One of our main goals as they were here was to get connected with local orphanages and we have made some good visits and established contacts and relationships that will hopefully be useful for the community.



*Avery presented Sunday lessons on his trip*

We've had a consistently higher attendance this year at our Sunday services and also a consistently higher contribution on average than last year, both of which are positive signs. A lot of members are inviting friends and telling others about the church. We have had one lady visiting almost every Sunday and Wednesday since February and she is deep in Bible study. She already has a higher than average knowledge of the Bible, but just needs guidance towards some of the right answers to her questions—and believe me, she has *a lot* of questions!

From here on, I'll let John Durham and Avery tell you about their experiences here; for John Kachelman's comments, you can always check his website.

-Gif



*One of our orphanage visits in April*



*Evening classes on James were well attended*



*John Durham received an award for teaching 10 years*

**From Avery Hackney**

*“In him [Jesus] was life, and the life was the light of men...The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” John 1:4-5*

I cannot think of a better verse to summarize my time in Ivano-Frankivsk this year. For every challenge the Ukrainian people are facing, there is a number of people dedicating their time and attention to illuminate the darkness.

During my visit we coordinated with local volunteers to transport food and medical supplies to the villages and towns where access to basic necessities remain extremely limited. Despite the risk, the volunteers we aided successfully reached several regions heavily impacted by the current conflict. It warmed my heart to see such selflessness by these brave individuals. It also was wonderful to know with each bucket of relief sent, the local congregation's contact information was included. Pray for these potential converts brethren.

Another impactful moment on my trip was visiting and delivering aid to a local military hospital. While there, we met a group of local high school students who were devoting their time to helping with the emotional and mental recovery of wounded soldiers. These students were amazing examples of maturity and servanthood. During our visit with the military hospital we were able to deliver 50 buckets of relief supplies with the congregation's contact information as well as Bibles. Pray for those wounded physically and spiritually.

During the evenings, I was able to teach a class for the local congregation covering the book of James.

Last year we were able to study 1 Corinthians which highlights many areas of growth within a congregation. Turning our attention to James, we were able to highlight areas of personal growth. The studies were well attended and usually led to long discussions and questions. The brethren in Ivano-Frankivsk truly love studying and dwelling on the Word of God. Pray for the local congregation, as they teach the lost and bear the Light of the Gospel.

I am especially thankful to Gif who hosted me during my time in Ukraine. While I was able to visit for a few days and help with some of these amazing works, he lives this life of servanthood everyday. (1 Corinthians 15:58). Brethren, pray for Gif and the Ministry he is apart of in Ukraine.

John Durham

Report from Ivano-Frankivsk

This is my second and another busy week here in what I refer to as my “home-away-from-home.”

I have been conducting two classes each day at King Daniel University where I have taught since 2015. It is always enjoyable to meet new students and especially to see students whom I have taught on my previous trips here. It is also an excellent opportunity to invite these new friends to church and for Bible study as they work to improve their English language skills.

It is exciting to see our new Galaxy Center up and working. This is a ministry of the SeaStar Kids established in 2010 to help the orphans of Ukraine.

The “Teddy Bear Hospital” which we held for a second-grade class was one of the most innovative activities I have been involved in. The children conducted “examinations” on the bears - one of which comes with an opening that allows the children to see the “heart, lungs and other internal organs!” They also learned about proper oral hygiene as they examined the ear, nose, eyes and throat.

Last weekend we provided lectures on immunization which is especially needed for the displaced citizens of Ukraine most of whom have lost contact with their health care providers.

On Saturday, we will be conducting Health Screenings, and I will be teaching at our Speaking Club. We are also setting up a children’s reading club and I left the EEM Children’s Bibles to use there.

Friday, it was “build-a-bear day” where I had a class on making Love Bears for use by the congregation and for the children of military families.

Lord willing, I’ll return to Warsaw Monday and then fly home on Wednesday.