

THE STRATEGIC VISION FOR THE CHURCH IN IVANO-FRANKIVSK

The Ivano-Frankivsk Church of Christ is involved in a construction project that is amazing. The total construction includes an operations' complex with these facilities:

- A storage and distribution center for the Church's benevolent works
- A meeting house for the Church
- Facilities for the preacher training school
- Facilities for community educational programs that will feature the Church's participation

The total project is a complex for operations that seeks to broaden the Church's influence in teaching the gospel and doing good throughout western Ukraine and the neighboring nations.

The STORAGE & DISTRIBUTION CENTER for the Church's benevolent works

We began shipping benevolence items into Ivano-Frankivsk in 2008. At that point we had no storage facility and were paying \$300-\$600 per month for storage until the shipments were cleared for distribution. As a result of our operations, the village of Ugornyky offered us a plot of land that was exclusively reserved for religious use. The property was deeded to the Church after the Church was legally registered. The dominant (and controlling) religious denomination seethes with anger and bitterness at our presence. It tried to prevent our being registered but failed. After the Church's registration, this bitterness led them to say that if we did not begin construction they should get the property (it is located on prime real estate and on the main highway going into the city). The law said we had to begin construction or lose the land. We decided to begin building the storage and distribution center with a small assembly room for the Church. This construction satisfied the Law's requirements and provided us the storage that would save the monthly rental payments. The storage was built and then the Church built a shop next to the storage building that is used to repair and refurbish shipped items. The Church met in the assembly room several times but outgrew the space and had to continue renting rooms for assemblies.

The MEETING HOUSE FOR THE CHURCH

The overall vision of the Ivano-Frankivsk construction project is much more than a meeting house BUT the meeting house is a critical phase at this time because the existence of the congregation is being strangled. This persecution has been recorded and is available by reading previous blog posts.

The construction on the large meeting place for the Church began and was slowly progressing. When the Storage & Distribution Center was constructed it required us to do a number of things that were a part of the entire complex—removing the black dirt; installing the septic system; erecting the wall; developing an access road; installing the transformer; drilling a well; etc.

A renewed persecution on the Church began in 2017. This time the controlling denominations pressured the landlord into raising the monthly rent and spread word that no one in the city was to rent to the Church. This was an overt attempt to erase the presence of the Church in the city. We were not given assurances that rent increases would stop but in fact told just the opposite that we were renting in the center of the city and the space we used could be rented for double what we are paying. The message was clear that increases were certain and the desired end was to remove us from the place. With the edict to all others that no one was to rent to the Church, we would soon have no place to meet. Assembling in homes was not an option as neighbors were told to report such meetings and they would then lose their apartments. There was a planned effort to make it impossible for the Church to meet.

As a result of this renewed persecution we decided to step-up construction so the Church could assemble and work in the security of their own property. This would also provide the Church legitimacy because religious groups assembling in rented facilities are viewed as "cults."

The property which the Church has is securely its possession. There is no legal way that the property can be taken away from them. Under a providential quirk in the Law, the property is actually in the name of the Dalraida Eldership.

The trolley system is scheduled to add more stops in 2020 and a stop is scheduled to be placed at the Church. Ivan says it will be called "Church of Christ stop." This comes at the exact time we anticipate the meeting house structure being available for use by the Church and joining the Storage & Distribution Center in operations.

Our goal was to have the construction dried-in at the end of 2019. If left uncovered the harsh winter would destroy the exposed brick work. A plea was sent out for brethren to help us in this objective. We had hoped that the Church would be able to start assembling in the facility when it was roofed over but such was not possible because doors, windows and heating need to be in place and while assemblies in the moderate seasons would be possible such was impossible in the harsh winter.

The brethren in Ivano-Frankivsk cannot give much financially but they have "given themselves"—they work doing all they can to lessen the cost. The Church members do this by personal labor, buy materials, leveraging opportunities for materials. When comparing the estimates of construction with the actual costs our brethren have decreased the cost by almost \$100,000.00! The spreadsheet for construction is available on the web site. It is updated periodically.

The concentrated focus is to complete the construction to the point where brethren can use it for assemblies and they will continue finishing the interior. In order for this to happen they need to finish the roof-over, install windows, doors and have heating. The estimated costs for this is recorded in the spreadsheet but the estimate does not reflect the reduction in costs that results from brethren doing much of the labor. So, the final costs should be significantly less than the estimated costs.

The PREACHER TRAINING SCHOOL

The western part of Ukraine is very different from the east. This is evident in the language, general religious beliefs, culture and customs. Because of this great difference preachers trained in the east are ill-suited to work well in the west. Because of this difference we envisioned a preacher training school to be in operations in the facilities used by the Lord's Church in Ivano-Frankivsk. *World Bible Institute* launched an extension of this school and its first graduating class was in May 2019. The school strives to train preachers who have a vocational skill that will provide them income while they are preaching in mission areas. This training program will need a place for out-of-town students to lodge, a vocational training facility, and adequate classrooms.

The construction is planning for this. There are sleeping rooms and classrooms designed. The vocational training can occur inside the shop or in another location. This vocational training is in its earliest developments. Various skills have been discussed that are markable in western Ukraine and the neighboring countries. Currently a program is being pioneered by Jerry Max Morgan that teaches vocational skills in the orphanages and it is possible this will meld with the plans for the preacher's school training.

COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS THAT WILL FEATURE THE CHURCH'S PARTICIPATION

The Ivano-Frankivsk Church had as one of its major purposes for the facility the concept that the facility will be utilized for community events. This is a deliberate design showing the Church is welcoming to the community. This is in contrast to the cultural views of a church building in the west. The Church has a vision of offering various seminars to the community (family; parenting marriage; financial). These would be offered to any as a community service. The facility is also intended to be utilized by the community for civil activities (this is totally novel as the religious structures there are never made available for public use but deemed "holy" and off-limits).

COOPERATION WITH COMMUNITY EFFORTS

In addition to offering developmental seminars to the community, the Church wants the facility complex to be available for use by the community. This will offer the community a good facility for its civil conferences and activities. This offers the Church an opportunity to distinguish itself as an entity that is sensitive to the community and willing for the facility to be open to the community.

CURRENT FOCUS (November 2019)

Right now, the focus is to complete the construction and get the Church into it. This is the desire of the Dalraida elders and the end to which all are striving. Then, when the construction is completed and the Church is assembling inside, a number of options that only God knows will be realized and we will seize these opportunities.

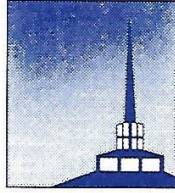
The general maintenance of the facility has been accepted by the Church. The building sits on an artesian well so the water is potable. The Church has its own electric transformer and will sell unused electricity, thus having a revenue source for maintenance. The property has a full septic system so no sewer costs. The Church will heart with wood, natural gas, electricity, or solar power so costs will be minimal.

Where are we?

- We have completed the Storage & Distribution Center and it is in full operation.
- We have completed the shop where commodities are repaired for distribution.
- We have completed the major part of the construction for the meeting house and facilities in which the Church can assemble.
- We plan to have the construction "dried-in" by December 2019 so the harsh weather will not destroy what has been accomplished.
- This leaves the installing of doors, windows and heating to be completed before the Church can begin assembling.
- After that the brethren will work on finishing the interior themselves.
- After the construction of the meeting house is completed, then implementation of the last two objectives can begin (or continue as WBI is already in operation).

What more can we add? The vision that we hold for the potential of this work is meager when considered from the Almighty's perspective: *Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:20-21)*

This project is undertaken with the Dalraida Elders receiving reports and offering counsel. The elders have offered their encouragement and their letter is posted on the web site and it will be attached with this document. As progression develops this summary document will be updated so that the current situation will be reported so all concerned will rejoice in the great good that God has accomplished (Acts 14:27).



D A L R A I D A
CHURCH OF CHRIST

The Dalraida elders are fully supportive of the building effort of the Ivano-Frankivsk church. And we are very much impressed with the hard work being done by members of that congregation.

As we understand the terms under which the building was secured, the property must always be used for religious purposes. And according to provisions of the Ukraine government, the Dalraida elders are legally the last authority in decisions concerning the building. This is similar to the legal provisions of many churches in America who have trustees to satisfy state regulations but are under practical control of the elders.

The Ivano-Frankivsk congregation has been in existence many years, having survived lobbying from a former member and the Russian Orthodox Church to frustrate its application for official registration. Thanks to the benevolent efforts of John Kachelman, Jr., the church is well thought of by local authorities, and we are pleased with the progress on all fronts.

Although the Dalraida congregation has made no financial contributions to the building program, we are heavily invested in the Ivano-Frankivsk church:

- We provide \$ 4,750 monthly support to the congregation, which includes partial support for minister Ivan Skoleba and operational expenses.
- We accept funds for other works of the Lord in that area.
- We accept donations for special needs and these are wired to recipients in the Ukraine.
- We help sponsor shipments of humanitarian aid that are distributed in the Lord's name.
- In October 2018 we plan to send a group of twenty-one members from Dalraida to Ivano-Frankivsk for evangelization and to encourage and strengthen the church.

Contributions for construction of the meeting house are overseen by John L. Kachelman Jr. A copy of these is made available to the elders with a copy also kept in the church office. The church copy does not name individuals but lists donors as either churches or individuals.

The Dalraida elders understand the enormous scope of the Ivano-Frankivsk building project and believe that in the long run this meeting house will be a significant factor in bolstering the Lord's work in western Ukraine. And we are glad to have others join us in this and any effort which seeks and saves the lost. Through partnerships that work heart to heart and hand in hand we can recognize and utilize doors of opportunity which God opens for us.

John McKee *Steve Phillips*
James Russell *Alan B. Salt*
Bill