



Ivano-Frankivsk Church of Christ Update – March 2024

Hello there!

Well, what do you do after Perry has left? The answer is mostly cry; after the tears have gone and you are left with eyes that can no longer spare moisture, you then do the only thing you can do and learn how to drive a stick shift church van.

Perry did go home at the beginning of the month, but several have stepped up in his absence! We have had a good rotation of four men taking care of different aspects of worship and all are doing an excellent job. I want to call them out by name here – even though you may not know them, they deserve recognition. Kola leads singing for us every Sunday now of his volition. When we put out a two-month signup sheet, he wrote his name in every song-leading slot because he loves to do it! Ruslan, Vova, and Pasha all rotate leading the Lord's Supper and our prayers. Ruslan is great to have because he is willing to jump in wherever he is needed in worship at a moment's notice. Pasha leads with a big smile and reminds everyone to be joyful because we are in God's presence! Vova puts a lot of thought into the things he says, and he just told me that this past month was the first time he had ever led the Lord's Supper. I never would have known; he spoke like he had been doing it his whole life! We are thrilled to have this kind of participation.



Bible study day with Kola and Tamar

One particular thing I noticed a few weeks ago – Kola’s wife, Tamar, always wants to talk about the Bible and comes to me after every service or class to make comments or ask questions. She has a list of questions that she keeps on her, so Inna and I asked if she and Kola would like to go to coffee and talk about some of them when we have no time constraints. That coffee meeting stretched so long that we were invited for lunch and talked even longer! Both of them have hearts that want to serve God and are concerned about knowing him and growing correctly, so it was good to be with them.

Our sermons these past two months have been focused on God’s kingdom and how to enter it through faith, repentance, and baptism. The key that we noted was that baptism is not the end, but the beginning: God expects a lot from us after that! On Wednesdays, we began discussing how to read and interpret the Bible for yourself, focusing mainly on how we got the Bible today and identifying the context of passages. Inna has been doing a great job translating these, especially when the speaker tends to go away from the planned topic.



A normal Sunday morning assembly



Storks bring good luck here. We’ve got four of them!



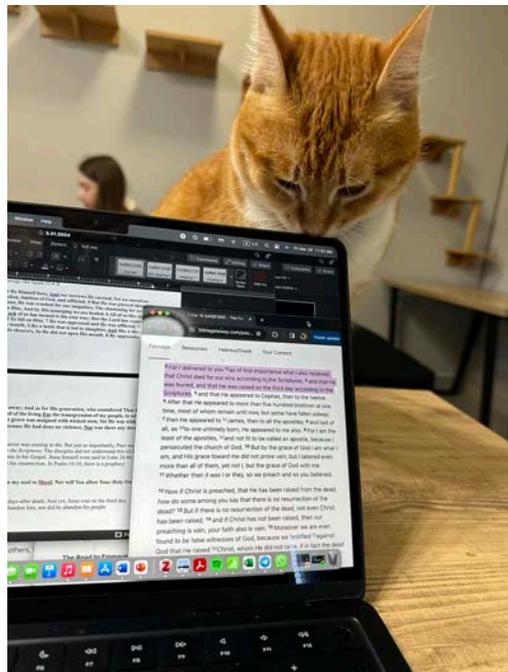
Anya teaches her nephews in Bible class

I have begun working on some local personal evangelism tactics as well. This month I have met with two people who are learning English in order to give them some practice talking to a native speaker. With these sessions, we always end up going well over our planned time. The goal is that as we get more comfortable, we can begin discussing religious and biblical topics. So far, we have discussed very basic “get to know you” topics, as it probably isn’t a good idea to come out swinging the bat of salvation as soon as you meet someone who is still learning the language. But, we have begun the connection and started building the trust that should get us into those discussions fairly soon. Additionally, I have been made aware of some local English speaking clubs in the city where I will try the same tactic: make friends and begin to teach those friends.

Pasha has finished what he can do in the kitchen in the church building and has begun working on the stairwell; he is doing a fantastic job! We put in an order for the kitchen cabinets and also bought the items that go with them such as the stove, sink, and vent. Once the cabinets are completed all of this will be installed and our kitchen should be fully functional!

We are looking forward to hosting some Americans in the next few days! John Kachelman Jr. and Tanya will be here next week, followed by Jared and Whitney Kelly, and Avery Hackney just a few days later. Between these groups, nearly all of April will be filled and busy. Ruslan and I got the van cleaned up and ready to go today for all the adventures coming up in the next few weeks; it should be a productive month!

-Gif



I get some much needed input on an upcoming sermon



Special delivery for Pasha!



Met Kola – a relative of a humanitarian aid contact. Wonderful man, and promised he'd come to church one Sunday!



We spent some time helping Marianna with the kindergarten bomb shelter

