



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

Hello there!

It has been quite a mild summer for the weather in Ukraine, but a hotbed of activity! We have had some very positive signs of spiritual growth in the Ivano-Frankivsk church, and we are beginning to see that play out in the attendance numbers. We are still a “small” church, but we have constant visitors thanks to members inviting their friends! A new couple began attending in July and have not missed a meeting since, bringing lots of questions and open minds, which is what we like to see. Last week, a soldier who had just been released from fighting due to injury came and told us that he wants to be a part of the church here. He has not yet been baptized, but the door is open with him to begin talking, and the members were very encouraging to him the whole day!

I was able to spend a month of the summer in the US, my longest trip there since I moved to Ukraine in January 2024. It was nice to spend a little time with family and complete some needed tasks, but most importantly, I spent a week at Bible camp, where I have been a director with some of my



*Two new visitors, Mykola and Alla, have been coming every Sunday*

dearest friends since 2019. This year, we had one of our largest groups ever and are happy to report 6 baptisms!

One of the very positive events while I was gone was that the two men here, Vova and Pasha, split the preaching responsibilities for 4 Sundays. They were up to the challenge, and as I understand, they did very well. As a matter of fact, my first Sunday back, Pasha asked if he could still preach because he had prepared one more lesson he wanted to present. I said absolutely! And, for the future, I want them to continue to preach regularly even while I'm here.

This move is a sign of very positive growth in the church. One of our goals when I came here was to teach and demonstrate that the church should not be run by one person but instead is a community where all are equal and able to contribute in some way. There is no individual pastor or priest; Jesus is the head, and we are members of his body. In some ways, it has been difficult to break the old "pastorate" mentality, but these men stepping up is a strong step in a good direction.



*A short visit with Ukrainian friends in Warsaw*

Now that I have returned, we started a series on the parables of Jesus. The goal in this is to teach these foundational truths about the kingdom and inspire the members to continue to grow the church both spiritually and numerically. Most recently, we talked about the mustard seed and how it grows. It was great to be able to use a very present example: this time last year, we could all come to church on Sunday in one van. The past few Sundays, I have had to take two packed van loads of people and even a third trip for those who remained! Logistically, it's a real nightmare, but in reality, it's a great problem to have. Just like Jesus promised, his kingdom is growing with time and proper cultivation.

A couple of other personal things I was able to do in the past few months are worth mentioning. First, on my way back from the US, I stopped in Warsaw, Poland, for a few days to spend some time with Vlad and Oksana Pazyi. For those who don't know, they worked with the church in Kramatorsk prior to the invasion in 2022 and were forced to flee as the front line grew closer to them. Since being in Warsaw, they have been living in a house with many other refugees and have focused on evangelizing there. I really appreciate them for what they are doing and their lives of service. They invited me to come and teach a class at the house with the refugees, and then again for a class on Sunday morning before worship. On Friday, we discussed the importance of being a member of the church and the importance of each individual member. On Sunday mornings, Vlad had been teaching a hermeneutics class and asked if I would teach them how to do a basic Greek word study, which I was more than thrilled to do—any day I can talk about Greek is a good day.

Second, as we prepare for the school year to begin in September, the English department at King Daniel University in Ivano-Frankivsk asked if I would do a conversational seminar for their teachers to prepare them for the year. I always enjoy spending time with them there, as that helps me to fulfill my “teaching” desire. Plus, there are always opportunities to meet new people and make potential contacts for the church there. It took a lot of preparation and time, but overall I think it was worth the effort!

Now that the summer is settling down and everyone is returning from their vacations, the church is ready to continue to grow and is seeking more opportunities daily. I am certain there will be much to discuss in the next update!

-Gif



*Sunday morning class in  
Warsaw*

*Class with Ukrainian refugees in  
Warsaw*



*Candlelight devotional at Bible  
camp*





*Loading humanitarian aid for the front lines*



*Arrival of the humanitarian aid van at the front*



*English seminar at UKD*