

February 28, 2017

Grace and peace to you, dear friends!

The shortest month of the year has passed. This marks the end of winter. At least this is the case in Moldova. By God’s grace we survived the winter without any problems. The local people say that this winter was colder than usual. However, we did not notice it.



In this letter, I wanted to share with you the most notable events that took place in our life during February.

The most important event during February for us was obtaining permission for long term stay in Moldova. It was a complicated process. Now we have a Moldavian “green card”. However, it is effective only for one year. At the end of this year, we must apply for its extension. Obtaining this document is a very important event for us. It allows us to stay and minister in Moldova. Thank you very much for your prayers for this need!

Next, I want to share about our visit of a church in a village located not far from Chisinau. **On February 5**, on an overcast Sunday morning, Nina and I visited a church called “Source of Life” in the village Maksimovka, 15 km from Chisinau. Michael Pimenov is the senior pastor at this church. The congregation has its own church building, which was built back in 2000. Due to the absence of a heating system at the main sanctuary, church meetings take place in the basement during winter season.



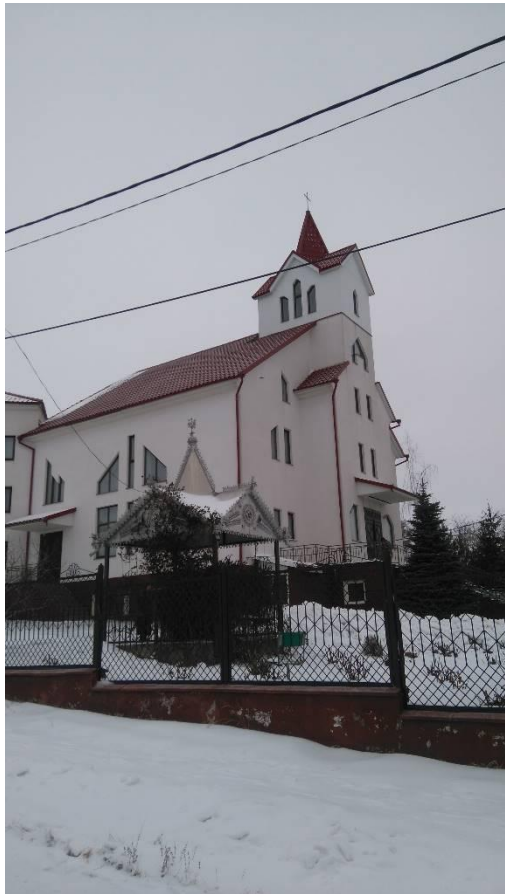
There were about 40 people at the service on that day. Four students from the Christian university I am teaching at participated at the service—two young men and two young ladies. One of the men delivered a short message. The interesting fact is that all four of them came from four different countries—Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tatarstan, and Tajikistan.

There is a requirement for all students of the University to be assigned to practicum at one of the local churches. This is a great help to small rural congregations like the “Source of Life” church. At the same time, this is a great opportunity for students to obtain ministry experience in a real-life church situation. After lunch, the students together with some members of the congregation went to visit believers who were not able to attend the service due to their sickness.

In our conversation after the service with members of the congregation we found that most of them are first generation believers. Most of them accepted Christ during the last 10-15 years. One elderly lady shared with us that she accepted Christ as her personal Savior at the age of 70. Now her main concern is how to lead her sons to the Lord who are high ranking officers in the military. Another woman was dedicated at the end of the service for children's ministry. She has worked as a principal of the local school for many years and only recently committed her life to Christ. Now, as a retired person she wants to serve God with her full heart and bring as much fruit as possible. Her desire is to compensate as much as possible what she missed in serving God while she was a nonbeliever.



Pastor Michael noted that his congregation takes an active part in life of the village, participating in different events that are not in conflict with Christian values. They have good relations with the village government. In the past, when the church facilities were under construction, the congregation conducted its Sunday meetings at the main office of the village government. What a striking contrast with the Soviet reality that we remember very well! Praise God for this radical change!



February 12. On Sunday morning, one of the University professors, Sergey German, brought us to the church where he is serving as one of the pastors. The church is in the small town of Crikovo, about 12 km from Chisinau. It was overcast and chilly that morning. We approached a very nice-looking prayer house that architecturally resembled an Orthodox cathedral. The service took place at the main sanctuary. Although fuel was expensive, the congregation was able to buy it and heat the sanctuary and use it for services. The senior pastor of the church, Sergeh Namestnik, was traveling in America and not there. Before the beginning of the service, I had a chance to chat with the elderly man who was the founding pastor of this church. He planted this church at the beginning of 1990s. His name is Andrei Zakharovich Oselskiy. He is over 75 now. Despite his age, he is very active in the life of the congregation. Also, he is traveling to the Northern parts of Russia with mission work. In a couple of weeks, he was planning to go on another such trip with another brother who is a medical doctor. They plan to be there for one and a half months. Amazing!

At 10:00 the service began with about 100 people in attendance. The form of service is more contemporary than traditional. The few songs at the beginning of service were led by the worship group. Most of the songs were in Romanian. There is only one sermon during the meeting. I preached in Russian without translation into Romanian. My impression was that most people understand Russian well. Although, prayers after the sermon were in different languages—Russian and Romanian. After the service, Nina and I spent some time talking with that old pastor Oselskiy whom I knew since I lived in Riga, Latvia, in 1980s, and some of his

family members. Three of his children with their families live in Moldova and attend the same church with him (see the picture on the left). One of his grandsons was leading the worship group. Another three children with their families live in Canada.



There is a challenge of extended family being separated because of migration.

After that conversation with Brother Oselskiy, pastor Sergey German took Nina and I for sightseeing in Cricovo. There are two old prisons in town. However, it is not the main thing this place is known for. Cricovo is famous across the former Soviet Union and beyond for its underground wine storehouse. There is a small town located underground under the Cricovo. Many leaders and celebrities from all over of the former Soviet Union come here to visit this underground town and taste wine stored in it.

Also, there are mines around Cricovo where white slab called “kotelets” is taken from, cut in large bricks and used as construction material for building houses in Chisinau area for many years.

On February 15, after finishing one of my classes during lunch time I had an opportunity to chat with the Senior pastor of the church called *Isus Salvatoru* (Jesus the Savior), Vitaliy Fedula. Services at that church are conducted in Romanian. There are about 1,500 members in the congregation. Brother Fedula shared with me that they baptize on average 50 new members every year. Most of those people come from unbelieving families. And most of them are youth! A very pleasant piece of information.



On the same day, in the evening we visited the house of Nelly Mogan. She is the mother of Olga Shipuk who is married to Alik Shipuk, a graduate of Fresno Pacific University. Alik and Olga are serving as long-term missionaries in Naples, Italy. They are working among Russian-speaking migrants who moved to Italy looking

for work. Alik and Olga with their two children came to Chisinau for a short visit of Olga’s mother. On that evening, all of Nelly’s family gathered at her house. They invited us to join them. It was a pleasant time of fellowship around the family table. Nina and I were very happy to see Alik and Olga and their kids. We have known Alik since he lived in Fresno and studied at FPU more than ten years ago.



I had an interesting meeting on **February 19**. After the Sunday morning service at Bethany church, the academic dean and I met with the former President of St. Petersburg Christian University (SPCU), Dr. Alexandr Negrov. Currently he leads the School of Leadership at SPCU. We had a good conversation about ministry and the

importance of preparing leaders for it. What is interesting is that Brother Negrov and I share similar family situations. He and his wife serve God in Russia. However, their three children and grandchildren live in the US. Like that Nina and I are ministering in Moldova while our children and grandchildren live in the USA. We (Alexandr and I) understand each other's feelings very well.

The most memorable event of February was, of course, our participation at VII Summit of Russian-speaking churches in Western Europe. It took place in Warsaw, Poland, from 21st to 24th of February. About 15 million of Russian-speaking migrants are currently living in countries of Western Europe. They moved there from republics of the former Soviet Union



seeking work. Most of them came from Ukraine and Moldova. During the last 10-12 years, small Baptist congregations have been established in different countries, like Czech Republic, Poland, Portugal, France, England and etc. Starting in 2011, representatives of those churches have organized such Summits. They gather

in different countries. A lot of energy and time were invested in starting and developing this movement for unity of all these churches by Gennadiy Gavrillov. More than 10 years ago, he moved to Prague, Czech Republic, and started a Russian-speaking church within Czech Baptist Union. Today, Lev Shultz, one of the pastors in Czech Republic, is leading this important movement.

During the Summit, churches from different countries were introduced and prayed for. There was preaching of the Word of God. Among preachers were Igor Bandura (Ukraine), Mick Stockwell (Czech Republic), Ivan Mileev (USA), Ion Miron (Moldova), Lev Shults (Czech Rep.). I also was



given an opportunity to preach and lead a seminar. Several seminars on different topics were offered to the participants. Also, different mission organizations, educational institutions and other organizations were given an opportunity to share about their ministry. And, of course, the most important part of that forum was informal fellowship of participants between services and seminars. Especially, during meal time. Through taking part in this event participants were recharged for ministry during the next year. Many of them live and minister in situations where there are very few evangelical believers. Because of this such kind of gatherings serve as a source of encouragement and inspiration for those believers.

For Nina and I participation at that Summit meant meeting with people whom we already knew as well as meeting new

participants of that event. Among those, whom we knew already were our missionaries in Italy—Iliya Danilyuk, Alik Shipuk, Sergey Tsvetarniy, and others. As a surprise for us was a meeting with a woman who was a member of our



church in Riga, Latvia, when we used to live there. She was a young girl when we left Riga in 1989 and moved to America. All these years we did not see each other. Now, she came to the

Summit with her husband, who is a pastor of the church in Latvia for 20 years. They have six children (as we do too 😊). This was a very pleasant meeting for us and for them.



A very important event during the Summit was the signing of a partnership agreement between Pacific Coast Slavic Baptist Association (PCSBA) and the Baptist Union of Moldova, on February 23. Leaders of both church organizations (Rev. Ivan Mileyev and Rev. Ion Miron) were present at the Summit. They signed an agreement for mutual cooperation, support, joint ministry and coordination

in such areas as missions, Christian education, humanitarian aid, and other projects designed to extend God's Kingdom on Earth. That act was a practical demonstration of unity in ministry of children of God living in different parts of the Globe, but sharing the same spirit of love to the Lord, His Church and mission. I personally was very pleased being part of this important event.

This is enough for this time. Thank you very much for reading this newsletter!

Nina and I are very grateful for prayer support.

We are asking God to bless all of you abundantly. Let Him take care for all your needs.

With love and appreciation,

Your coworkers in God's Vineyard,

Vyacheslav and Nina Tsvirinko

