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Simferopol
Crimea
Ukraine/Russia



"The House on the Hill"
Ministry & Outreach center
Focusing on students & young professionals



News from the House on the Hill and summer Children's Camps

We still have no buyer for the **House on the Hill**. The market is flat. Sanctions make potential buyers wary. Russian government investment in Crimea is considerable but private investment is minimal. However, there are buyers for new apartments in new apartment blocks.

We have lowered the price but we just do not have anyone looking at the property.

The **staff** was ready for an encouraging visit in July and responded well to it. Everyone thought that we were ready to close in December, but that deal fell through. Staff had their bags packed already, so to speak. It was disappointing and even depressing for the staff to be in limbo. Bless them, they have reaffirmed that they will be there till it sells (knowing that I am dependent on them).



GC outing to Red Square.
Staff outing in Crimea.



They successfully handled significant property problems and have maintained the property well. They continue to serve the 20 residents in the name of Jesus. Income

from the hostel residents continues to meet almost all the expenses (except for 1.5 salaries). Given the limits on sharing one's faith, we do **pray** that the House sells soon. Plus, anything can happen to our property for which we have no viable legal recourse.

Children's Camps

Nastya (Anastasia) tells of her personal experience in two of three children's camps this summer, and the impact the camps had on her and some children.

I was blessed to take part in two different camps [three sessions] this summer. The first one was with the Program for Humanitarian Aid (PHA) and the other one was with the By Example Youth Missions (BEYM), former Eastern European Missions (EEM).

The camp with PHA was held in Zaporizhia; around 100 kids from Poltava and Zaporizhia **orphanages** were there. It was my second time as an interpreter for PHA, and some of the kids I knew from the past. We had as much fun as one is allowed to while at camp. Of course, we had some serious things to do, too. In the mornings we would usually have our Bible classes during which we were learning the stories from the Bible, memorizing Bible verses and making crafts. But in the afternoon we had lots of games and sports activities, concerts, disco, and our favorite, time at the river. The most fun, memorable day at the river was when we were building **cardboard and duct tape boats**. No one was sure if the idea would work, but we still decided to give it a try. The boats turned out to be a total success. Some of them sunk right away, but the winner stayed afloat for a long time. The kids loved building and decorating them. We grown-ups helped too.

The most humbling day at the river was when one of the kids was **baptized**. I personally didn't have much to do with it. It wasn't I who talked to him before the baptism. But I've known the boy for 6 years; I was among those who brought the Good News to camp "Mayak" [Lighthouse] in Poltava where we first met. I've watched the boy grow and mature. It was an honor to see him accepting Christ as his Lord and Savior. I was happy to call him my brother for the first time. I was happy and grateful to see the fruit of our ministry. Every year the Lord sends me "a troublemaker" "after my own heart." This time at camp I had two – Andrey and Vitya. And the most heartbreaking moment at the river is connected with Andrey.

Andrey was in my group, and he gave us a hard time during the classes. He wouldn't listen to the stories; he wouldn't even try to memorize the Bible verse of the day. He would argue, interrupt, etc. The only thing he seemed to be interested in getting from us was candy.



So during the class, in order to make him at least sit quietly, I would come to him from his back and pat him on his head. And that calmed him down for some time. One day when we were at the river, and the kids had enough of purple in their lips



and goose bumps on their skin to finally get out of the water, we were lying on the warm sand and talking about nothing in particular. Andrey was lying next to me. And at some point I started to pat him on his head like I was used to. Doing. I caught myself on the thought that it might have been not the right time and place for that. We were not in class anymore. What if he gets embarrassed and mad at me because of that? Andrey got really-really quiet. I decided to take my hand away. And the moment I did it, Andrey gets up and says, *“Could you, please, pat me some more. This is what my Mom would do to me when I was little.”*... A child from the orphanage... To me... Thank God, I had my sunglasses on and the boy couldn't see my face. Since then – and I am not making this up – everything changed. Andrey was still himself, but he behaved better and it became possible to cooperate with him instead of to constantly argue.

Vitya... When I first heard his name and saw who he was, I literally thanked God he wasn't in my age group. Vitya was even worse than Andrey because he is older, taller and stronger. Whenever he didn't like something or disapproved of something, it was impossible to talk him into it. He would just leave the room slamming the door. So when one of the interpreters asked me to help with a skit for the final concert of the camp, I didn't realize it was Vitya's group... The skit was about Jesus saving a young lady from her past sins and bad habits. And guess *who* played Jesus in it? Well of course, Vitya! Not only because he was the tallest and looked great in a white robe, but also because the part required slow and calm motions of the actor, and that was perfect – not for Vitya but – for us. It took us some time to talk Vitya into it; it took Vitya some time to calm his personality down a little. But he was very serious about the part and did his best during the rehearsals.

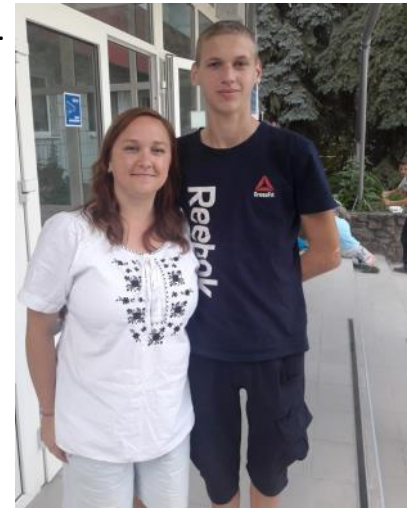
The morning of the final concert day, Vitya announces he wouldn't be performing. He just doesn't feel like it anymore. I decided to wait and give him some time. I knew he was just scared to get on stage and sad the camp was almost over. We became close friends for the past couple of days. So when it was getting closer to the concert, I just approached him and asked him in a quiet voice not to do something he would regret later and not

to let anybody down. 15 kids took part in the skit.

Vitya – which was quite unexpected of him – listened to what I said and let me help him change clothes for the skit... I still remember his eyes when he was waiting for his turn to get on stage. He was scared, shy and so happy at the same time. And this skit won the first prize which was real money the kids were free to spend the way they wanted. After the concert Vitya ran up to me, squeezed me in a hug and said, *“It's all thanks to you. Thank you. Thank you for believing in me.”* Again I could hardly hide my tears. No one has ever said anything like that to me before...

By the way, Vitya is now my brother in Christ, too. Just recently he was **baptized** too and now serves in a church in Zaporozhia.

And I'm most humbled and so grateful to be a witness of that and take a slight part in Lord's deeds.



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The other camp was camp “Mayak” (“Lighthouse”) with By Example Youth Missions in Poltava region. It was my second year as a lead interpreter and team leader and my sixth year at this camp in general. This year we had mainly **home kids**, almost 200. Some of them came specifically during the dates when our team was there. Thus we've had

many kids we've known for 3-4 years now. Going to "Mayak" is like a huge family reunion with more than 200 family members – my favorite time of the year.

A modern author wrote, "Children are not coloring books. You can't color them into your favorite colors." I agree with this thought as I think about all the old friends I had a chance to see this year, and all the new ones I've met. It's impossible to make children like and accept you. You are either "their people," or you are not. You will only be let into the internal life of a group if the group finds you suitable. And for that to happen, *you will have to pass several tests on trust and reliability.* For instance, what are you going to do if you learn there is a fight between two kids? Will you tell on them to the administration of the camp right away or you will try to solve the conflict before anyone else finds out? Or how you will react, finding out a kid smokes? Make a phone call to the parents or try to talk to the kid first? Luckily, I've passed several tests and was entrusted with some secrets.

**I loved every single day at camp.** I loved being not just a guest, an interpreter, but being involved in the life of "Mayak." The camp is a living organism bursting with energy, events and contradictory emotions as it consists of 200 kids of different age and background. Not all of the kids come from good homes even though they come from "homes," not orphanages.

We never got bored. Whenever we were done with our regular Bible classes, we would have sports or go to the river. When the time at the river was up, we would have rehearsals for the evening events. When we were done with performing, we would make a campfire or, if it was raining, watch a movie. Once we had "Bible and Christian books for kids" distribution day. Every day was special and unique.

We made good friends not only with the kids, but with the counselors of the camp, too. When it was bed-time for the kids, our team and the counselors would gather

together and have tea, play games and eat some "junk" food till late at night.

The main highlight for me is probably when we went to visit our kids who are **orphans** who were at a nearby campsite. I was happy to



witness how big and mature they become year after year. Most of them **graduated from the orphanage this year** and entered technical schools. They are now going to live on their own at a dormitory. Most of the kids entered the schools they wanted to enter. I hope to see them one day, Lord willing.

When we were talking, one of the girls, Nastya, decides to show a picture of herself at the children's home. We all have such pictures from kindergarten times – a group of poorly clothed toothless kids smiling at the camera. But it struck me – I had a life apart from this picture, apart from the kindergarten; I had loving parents, my own room and toys. This picture didn't represent my **WHOLE** life. But it did for Nastya and for so many others I now know. The room, the furniture, and the toys in the picture were Nastya's whole life. She had nowhere else to go and nowhere else to hide when she needed to. And it made me cry. Cry for her, for the unfairness of this world. But also it made me cry with gratefulness that I know Nastya and dozens of kids like her. I know Christ, can find my own comfort in Him, and can share it with those kids. I was humbled that Nastya trusted us enough to share the most sacred part of her life with us.



*The children put their wishes into a jar.*

*This girls wished to simply survive.*



We love coming back to “Mayak.” Both Americans and Ukrainians. There is so much love and acceptance, it can’t stay unnoticed. It’s in the air. When I am at “Mayak,” *I forget my age and the troubles of a grown-up life. I have a chance to live a better version of my childhood.* Every day there is filled up with love and laughter – and fun, and ends with dozens of kisses and hugs.



When our camp program was over and the US team left for home, I returned to “Mayak” to serve as a **counselor** for another camp session. It felt as if I had never left. I even spent my Birthday there. I was certain no one at camp knew it was my Birthday, but of course, everyone knew, and it was one of the best birthdays I’ve ever had. Grateful!



One of our graduates tells this/THE story ...

**To Jump or Not? Is Jesus the Answer?**

I was sitting on the edge of a cliff in Sevastopol [Crimea]. A woman came and asked for my opinion: would she die if she jumped from the cliff or would she end up having just a broken leg? She said she was sentenced to a jail term, but afterwards it was substituted with treatment in a mental hospital. But she got kicked out of the mental hospital (yes, such things happen!) because of repeated violation of the rules. So now she wants to break a leg and go to a "normal" hospital before the police come to take her back to jail. We spoke for about half an hour. I explained what I could about Jesus and prayed for her. (Doing that outside of a licensed church building is punishable with a 5000 rubble [\$80] fine now.)

[We do not know what the woman later decided to do. The tile is supplied by GC]



Anastasia (Nastya) S.

- ◇ Praise the Lord for providing what seemed foolish to even ask for (O ye of little faith!) - a good vehicle for Andrei and Anya.
- ◇ Praise the Lord for a good and uneventful administrative trip in July.
- ◇ Pray for LaVerne’s knee (PCL damage) and continuing healing of her tibia (broken Jan. 8) It is very hard for LaVerne to walk even with a walker.
- ◇ Praise the Lord Joel as well as Tiffany will be with LaVerne while I am gone Sep. 3-17.
- ◇ Pray for my visits to former teammates, teaching the Life of Christ at a seminary, and preaching two Sundays, and probably chapel.
- ◇ Praise the Lord for those who minister to children, the displaced, etc.



**A word about the French camps.**

# Français Sans Frontières

*Excerpts from Ben Beckner, director*

We are very thankful to the Lord of the harvest for the 50+ Ukrainian, Moldovan and Russian students of the French language who attended one of our camps (in Verkhovyna [Ukraine] and Terberda [Russia]) or our classes in Kursk ....

Russia: Our French team members had various opportunities to share our faith, especially with the more advanced students .

Ukraine: We have been able to share freely with some about our faith in Christ, and have discovered several believers in the group.

Ukraine: We were able to pick up conversations where we left off last year with 3 of our campers: Olga (... seems to have been converted after last year’s camp), Vica (who came to faith in Christ last year), and Sofia, who is somewhere en route.

We are very grateful for Nataka’s gifts for organising camps as well as for relating to young people!

[Nataka has nurtured faith in a few students at a time over several years at a time, and we see the fruit ripen. Blessed gift; blessings on the one who exercises the gift. gpc]

**REMEMBER THIS? —**

**Pray for this possibility and consider partnering**

Sergei Golovin, our partner in ministry via the Christian Center for Science and Apologetics, will soon replace his vehicle with a new one. It is on order. There is another ministry that could benefit greatly if Sergei’s vehicle could be sold to them at trade-in value - \$16,000.

When Sergei and I tallied the donations recently, it did not look like there was enough to buy even an old van, but it would be better than the broken down van.

THEN God surprised us with two large gifts from Sergei’s supporters that made the difference. Andrei and Anya are besides themselves with joy after years of trying to keep alive a worn out van for family and ministry.

Thank you for gifts and prayers!



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