



COME OVER & HELP

2024 Issue 4



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COME OVER & HELP

Mission Statement

Come Over & Help partners with churches in Eastern Europe to bring glory to God through gospel proclamation and practical ministry.

Vision Statement

Our vision is to see thriving, biblically faithful churches serving Eastern Europe.



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Director of Projects and Administration



Mr. Greg Slingerland
Director of Projects and Communications



Mr. Adam Radsma
Director of Projects

Come Over & Help is a non-profit organization with charitable status in Canada and the USA.

The foundation of Come Over & Help is the Bible, which is the Word of God. Come Over & Help adheres to the revealed truths and principles in that Word and to the Three Forms of Unity (Heidelberg Catechism, Canons of Dordt, Belgic Confession) and the Westminster Confession.

The board and staff of Come Over & Help are affiliated with Reformed, Bible-believing Churches and ministries.

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He Must Increase

By Pastor Denis Boris, Kazakhstan

John 3:30 - He must increase, but I must decrease.

Leon Morris said that what John the Baptist said in John 3:30 is "one of the greatest utterances that ever fell from human lips." Christ must increase and we must decrease. I want to emphasize several points from this passage.

- 1 First, He MUST increase, not "it would be good if He increases", not "it would be beneficial if He increases". It is not a suggestion, not a careful calculation. It is a "must". This is the way it ought to be. Fire must burn, water must flow, Jesus Christ must increase.
- 2 Men must decrease. We are to decrease in our estimation of ourselves. The world screams at us that we will be miserable without self-fulfillment, without the attraction of attention to ourselves. But the Bible tells us that humility is the joy of self-forgetfulness. In the light of the sun the flashlight is ridiculous and must be turned off.
- 3 These two movements must happen simultaneously. Christ is great and awesome regardless of our actions. But the more we decrease the more room we have to see Him become bigger in our lives.
- 4 Lastly, I wanted to say that John 3:30 is precious and beautiful only to those who are born from above. Only those who have tasted the sweetness of self-forgetfulness in the light of Christ's beauty may approve of John's saying. So, believe in the Lord, and enjoy your constant decrease.



Ordination in Belarus

By Pastor Slava Viazovsky, President of Minsk Reformed Seminary

Last Sunday, September 15, I participated in the ordination of one of our students — Dennis Ryzhuck.

The last time I took part in the ordination of a Reformed minister in Belarus was 14 years ago.

I personally met Dennis for the first time in 2018. I saw great potential in him as a future minister, and I was not wrong. We helped him get theological training first at the Evangelical Reformed Seminary of Ukraine (Kiev) and then at Minsk Reformed Seminary. He was a very diligent student for all those years. And behold, his own church in Kobrin called him to serve as their pastor.

Dennis is the first of our students at Minsk Reformed Seminary to be ordained.

This is a concrete and tangible result of our efforts to provide theological education for the new generation of leaders.

That's not all, though.

The ordination was coupled with a conference the day before, on Saturday, September 14. The motivation behind this event was to

bring the successful conference model from the capital (Minsk) to a regional center like Kobrin.

The theme of the conference was "God and His People". The sermons were on the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenant, the covenant with David, and the new covenant. I preached the first message, and Dennis preached the last. Andrei Levin (a pastor from Minsk and one of our students) preached on David.

The intention, obviously, was not to beat about the bush but to introduce the attendees to the basics of covenant theology right from the start.

We had 80 people (in Minsk 150-180). For a small regional town like Kobrin it was a crowd. And it was a Reformed conference on covenant theology!

The situation in Dennis' church is not all roses. As a young minister, he has several challenges to deal with. We hope and pray for God's grace for him and his ministry.

Rejoice with us!

And I never stop thanking you all for your prayers and support.

Armenia

An Old Christian Country with New Needs

By Pastor Peter Adams, board member of 'Christians for Armenia'

"In my reading of the story of the 10 virgins and the oil in their lamps, God spoke to my heart. I realized that I was among the five foolish virgins without oil. I was not prepared to meet Jesus. Now I am ready. Thank you for making the Gospel clear by creating this new translation." –Rosa

Armenia is the oldest officially Christian nation, dating back to its conversion in AD 301. But it is in need of a fresh understanding as to what it means to be truly Christian. How can this happen without a journey back to the truths of the word of God?

The Bible used in the Armenian Apostolic/Orthodox Church dates from the 600's, and even the newer translation dates back to the 1800's. These translations are almost like reading a foreign language for the modern Armenian reader. The people need a Bible they can understand. Reformed Faith and Life/Christians for Armenia has taken up the task of providing a literal and faithful translation into Armenian from the Hebrew and the Greek. So far, the New Testament and Psalms have been published and distributed. Work is underway on the Old Testament. The

first 14 books are near completion, and the translation team is busy working on the rest of the Old Testament.

We are trusting God for a generational impact upon Armenia that can only be accomplished as the Word of God spreads and grows. Reports of its usefulness are beginning. In fact, the Lord converted Rosa, one of the linguists supporting the project, through her interaction with the text! Also, already 10,000 Gospels of John from the new translation have been printed and are being distributed among Armenians living in Russia. We need this new translation for the re-evangelization and reformation of the churches in Armenia.

Thank you, brothers and sisters from Come Over & Help, for partnering with us in this vitally important work. May Jesus be glorified in His Word.



Come Over & Help supported Dennis and his family throughout his studies



Translation Team in Yerevan



The Cascade, Armenia

Training and Equipping in Eastern Europe

By Raymond Roth, Project Director

Across the former USSR, small local Bible schools, academies, and internship programs are developing in ever-increasing numbers and impact! For example, in:

Tyumen, Russia

A group of about 70 local church members and pastors, many from non-Reformed churches, gather at the Source of Life Church Bible school each month to be taught the Word by Reformed instructors.

Tirana, Albania

A cadre of 7 men have committed to meeting for 57 weeks to go through R. C. Sproul's *From Dust to Glory*, a robust introduction to Biblical theology.

Kharkiv, Ukraine

The John Knox Theological School gathers 40 men remotely to study Reformed theology at 3 levels: beginner, intermediate, and advanced.

Riga, Latvia

Baltic Reformed Theological Seminary trains men for gospel ministry, but at the same time operates a Bible school for laypeople, to "equip the saints for the work of ministry" (Ephesians 4:12).

Almaty, Kazakhstan

The Charles Simeon Trust, which develops the abilities of pastors and Bible teachers to faithfully exposit Scripture, is conducting 4-day intensive workshops. Over 40 men participated last year!



Bible school in Tyumen, Russia

All it takes is for God to get hold of a man or group of men and infuse them with a passion for His glory that shines out through Reformed theology and worldview. Pastor Mihai Chisari of Chisinau, Moldova, a newer partner with Come Over & Help, has a vision to spread God-exalting Bible teaching across Moldova and has formed the Imago Dei Academy as a vehicle for this. Mihai writes:

The work of Imago Dei Academy has proven to be a tremendous blessing for all those attending during the last two years. What started as an enthusiastic idea turned out to be the foundations of, hopefully, an ongoing equipping ministry for ministers here in Moldova. During this past period, with the support from Come Over & Help, we were able, besides monthly teaching sessions, to provide a key book which was added to the library of each pastor after they read through it. We received very positive feedback from all those attending. Most of the men both work and are the main preacher in their church.

Full-time seminary study is not a viable option for them, so our format (reading through a book a month and one full day of teaching every month) proved to be ideal for them. We started two years ago with almost 20 students, and after two years we are still at 15 – which is great for Moldova!

All those who attended were so encouraged and blessed by Imago Dei Academy that, at their request to continue, we decided this coming fall to kick off a follow-up program with a one-year Preaching Hub.

Raising the level of competency and knowledge and feeding the souls of pastors and other church leaders is vital for thriving churches, hence it is a priority for us here at Come Over & Help. We believe the Lord has plans for the church in Eastern Europe as is evidenced by these new learning institutions sprouting up in quite a few places and are humbled and grateful for the place He has given us in partnering with the church there. "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes" (Psalm 118:23)!



Pastor Mihai Chisari of Chisinau, Moldova



40 men participated in a 4-day expository preaching workshop in Almaty, Kazakhstan

Book Ministry 2024

By Igor Semenov, Director of Light of the Resurrection Literature Ministry, Ukraine

Greetings from Zaporizhzhia! My wife and I live in this frontline city, just 50-100 km from the front lines. Among the 700,000 residents, nearly 200,000 are displaced persons. Zaporizhzhia hosts about 20 Protestant churches, each a small oasis of hope and support. We have partnership relationships with each of them and work together on this vital ministry.

Our ministry focuses on three main areas:

- **Book Presentations in Churches:** We give sermons based on the themes of books and then distribute these books to anyone interested. This is not just about handing out books; it is about encountering truths that inspire and comfort.
- **Support for Ministers:** We assemble pastoral kits to support the spiritual development of ministers. This is our way of recognizing their hard work and dedication to spiritual growth.
- **Mercy Ministry:** We provide material assistance—food, clothing, bedding, and books. We also offer pastoral care talks that help people



A young pastor being given literature for his growing library



Reformed literature being shared and promoted after a church service

both physically and spiritually. Our activities do not stop there. We conduct evangelistic events using illustrations and distribute food and books to those in need. We also travel to partner churches and participate in conferences.

Here is what we have accomplished this year by God's grace:

- Visited **36 churches**
- Participated in **4 youth and pastoral conferences**
- Undertook **10 missionary trips**
- Distributed **70 pastoral kits**
- Sold books to **800 people** at affordable prices
- Engaged with **700 displaced persons**, giving them literature
- Organized **12 picture-based evangelistic events**, reaching **1,200 non-believers**
- Distributed over **3,000 books**

We also run three Bible study groups each week, with eight people in each group. This is our small world where people find support and spiritual nourishment.

Out of those we care for, three individuals have already been baptized, and four more are preparing to take this important step.

Here are a few touching stories we have shared with our beneficiaries:

Tamara Shepel's story is one of restoration even in the darkest times. Before the war, Tamara was a respected mathematics teacher and school principal for 37 years.

At the height of the war, Tamara was diagnosed with a brain tumor, which required immediate surgery. The surgery was complex and required significant funds for treatment. We saw how this situation was affecting her life and decided to do everything possible to support her during this difficult time. We found funds for the surgery and subsequent treatment, allowing Tamara to receive the necessary medical help. When we learned that Tamara also needed a new bed, we gifted her Paul David Tripp's *New Morning Mercies*. By giving this book to Tamara, we hoped she would feel God's support and find comfort in difficult times. She indeed clung to this hope like a lifeline.

Today, Tamara continues to actively participate in our community life. She is preparing to join the church and attends all church services with a renewed spirit. Tripp's book has become more than just reading for her; it is a source of inspiration and inner renewal. Tamara has found in the Lord and His grace the strength that supports her on this challenging journey.



Pastor Mikhail from Melitopol, Ukraine

Mikhail from Melitopol

My name is Mikhail, and I am a church minister and father of two children. When the war began, we were forced to leave our home in Melitopol and urgently relocate to Zaporizhzhia. Among other things, we

had to leave almost our entire library behind. All this spiritual literature that I valued so much was left behind.

However, I am very grateful for Light of the Resurrection mission that distributes sound spiritual literature, especially in these challenging times. I found support and comfort in Paul Tripp's books. This author not only shares profound thoughts about grace but also honestly talks about his own mistakes and lessons. Tripp's books have become a source of strength and confidence for me during these difficult times. Especially helpful to me were *Dangerous Calling* and *New Morning Mercies*. These works not only strengthened my faith but also taught me to be more sensitive and compassionate in my ministry. They support me in my preaching and service, reinforcing my confidence in



Literature being given to a wounded Ukrainian soldier

Christ's love and helping me pass that love on to others.

In the context of war, with so many broken lives around us, our church is actively engaged in evangelism and mercy work. In this situation, the books we distribute become a source of enrichment for people and give them hope in the Lord. Despite the severe economic situation and uncertainty on the front, we see how difficulties open new opportunities for evangelism. People are seeking the Lord and finding comfort in His word.

We are grateful to you, our partners, for your faithfulness and support. May God bless your families with the strength and love of the Lord Jesus Christ. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13).

A Journey to the Balkans

By Adam Radsma, Project Director



From left to right, Raymond, Pastor Cedo, Pastor Dragisa, BTS Director Emmanuel, and Adam.

This past summer, when I started serving with COAH as a Project Director, I was given responsibility for the Balkan countries, where we currently have partners in Albania, Serbia and Kosovo. A trip was planned to visit some of these areas in September, so I joined the trip, together with Raymond and board member Ross Derksen.

The Balkans are an area that I didn't know much about, although I did have some recollections of wars and tensions in the recent past. Brushing up on my high school history shed some light into what I might find in the field. I worked through past trip reports and partners reports to Come Over & Help, but there were still many questions about the state of the church and the people I would meet. With a head full of reports, names, budgets and statistics, we set off. I would like to share with you some of my overall impressions.

A Complicated History

We spent some time in Bulgaria, Serbia, Kosovo, and North Macedonia on this trip, driving between the different countries. While they are all fairly close in geography, they are often very far apart in their relations to each other. Serbians claim Kosovo as part of their country, while the Albanian-majority Kosovo declared

their independence in 2008. Bulgaria and Serbia have a long back-and-forth history of battles and territorial conquests. All of these countries were battle grounds in WWI and WWII, and then under communist oppression until the early 1990s. In all this tumultuous history there are countless battles, slights, atrocities, and scars that have left their mark on the collective memories of the people groups. This has had the result of bonding these various ethnic groups tightly together around their language, history, and cultural religion.

Cultural Religiosity

In Bulgaria the predominant religion is Bulgarian Orthodoxy, connected to the Eastern Orthodox Church. It is a mystical practice of religion, shrouded in images, incense and incantations, but lacks a personal knowledge of the Scriptures and a relationship with the God of the Bible. Serbia is also mostly Orthodox, but with its own spin and a wholly independent Serbian Orthodox church. When we drove through the mountains of Kosovo there were many minarets of mosques visible in the towns, with 95% of the country claiming Islam as their faith. In each of the places we visited it seemed that, despite the appearance of outward forms of religion, it was very much a cultural identity and social norm to

identify with these religions. Sadly, we could perhaps say the same thing about the Christian identity in North America.

Faithful Service

The greatest impression that was left on me during my time in the Balkans was the faithful servants of the Lord working in these countries:

- In **Bulgaria** we met the leader of a small seminary training men to serve as preachers and elders, and another pastor who has been faithfully preaching and leading God's flock and planting churches in Bulgaria for many years.



Reformed Church in Sofia, Bulgaria

- In **Serbia** it was a joy to meet and worship with Pastors Cedo, Emmanuel, and Dragisa, who began the Balkan Theological Seminary (BTS) in the small city of Nis over 10 years ago for the training of men for ministry as pastors, elders, and church leaders, as well as being involved in relief work and church planting. We spent a Sunday evening worshipping with the believers in the small village of Bela Palanka, a church made up of mostly Roma (Gypsy) members and led in worship by a Roma pastor trained at the Balkan seminary. Though the space was tight, the worship was enthusiastic, and there was an eagerness in hearing the Word preached.

- In the church in Malisheve, **Kosovo**, where the five "Solos" of the Reformation are painted on the wall, we spent time in conversation and prayer with Pastor Xhevat. He is a calm, dedicated pastor who shepherds the small flock and leads a vibrant youth ministry – a light of Reformed preaching in a dark and lost Islamic community. The Lord used a youth ministry to lead Xhevat to faith as a teen, and the Lord continues to use this ministry to bring young people to a knowledge of the Saviour.
- In **North Macedonia** we enjoyed fellowship with a young seminary student at Balkan seminary who has begun to translate solid Reformed literature into Macedonian and feels called to gospel ministry in his home country.

Several things stand out in all these places we visited. First, the church in these countries is small and has few resources, and yet they have a strong calling to preach the Word, plant churches, and disciple the believers. I am thankful that Come Over & Help is a means to provide some of these supports and that through this ministry we can encourage these churches. Second, with so many members of the churches being first generation Christians (including the leaders themselves!) there is much teaching and discipling that needs to be done in the congregations. Church conferences, camps, and Bible studies are such an important part of their ministry. We are thankful to partner with these churches to help make these events and studies a reality. And lastly, the Lord is at work! This is evidenced in the testimonies of these leaders and other believers who were called from spiritual darkness to faith in Christ, and in the way the Lord is building His church. We are able to join together in this work in prayer, asking for the Lord to bring many to salvation and glorify His name in the Balkans.

Pastoral Internship in Moldova: Now We Can Rest in the Power of the Word

By Raymond Roth, Project Director



Practical, real-life experience is an essential aspect of effective training for pastoral ministry. This is not to diminish theological instruction in the classroom in any way; but walking alongside experienced pastors and church leaders as they shepherd the flock, and learning from their wisdom and experiences, adds an element of realism. Here is an account from Pastor Alex Ulinic of Moldova, who did an internship with our partner Pastor Mihai Chisari of Imago Dei Reformed Baptist Church. It illustrates just how transformational such an experience can be! We are thankful for you, our supporters, who allow us to provide men like Alex these kinds of impactful internship experiences in healthy churches all across Eastern Europe.

My name is Alexandru, and I am the pastor of Holy Trinity Church in Nisporeni, Moldova. My wife Nina and I have two boys. I was ordained about 6 years ago as a pastor, and, as the former pastor moved abroad, I was the only pastor.

After almost 4 years of ministry, I was even more confused regarding my calling as a pastor than when I began. What were my duties? How should the church function? I was confused in my ministry because, at the time I was ordained, I had received no theological training whatsoever. At first, it seemed like I was doing okay, especially since some influential people encouraged

me that I didn't need to have theological instruction.

I was in contact with another church that was a big influence on me, and thus on my church. This same church later denied the doctrine of the Trinity and eventually the gospel. After distancing myself from them, I was caught in another negative experience with a charismatic movement, particularly in the domain of miracles and demonology. These things had a big impact on our church and on my family.

In God's providence, two years and a half ago I met brother Mihai through my sister-in-law who was still a fresh

new member of his church. I don't know why, but I felt I could speak to him freely, and I could open up to him about the struggles I was having.

That was when he proposed that I should do an internship with him in his church and focus on some of the main doctrines and teachings that could help me in my ministry. My family and I moved to Chisinau for a whole summer and had the opportunity to study, read, and take part in the worship services at his church.

That summer was for us a refreshing experience both physically and spiritually. As I studied more, I saw how little I knew. That summer was the first time I was introduced to Reformed theology and the doctrines of grace.

It was a lot to take in on the one hand, but it was also easy on the other hand because I was ready to give up

my arrogance and learn. After I went back to my church, we started a more precise trajectory of Reformed beliefs in our church in Nisporeni which was both a challenge and a blessing.

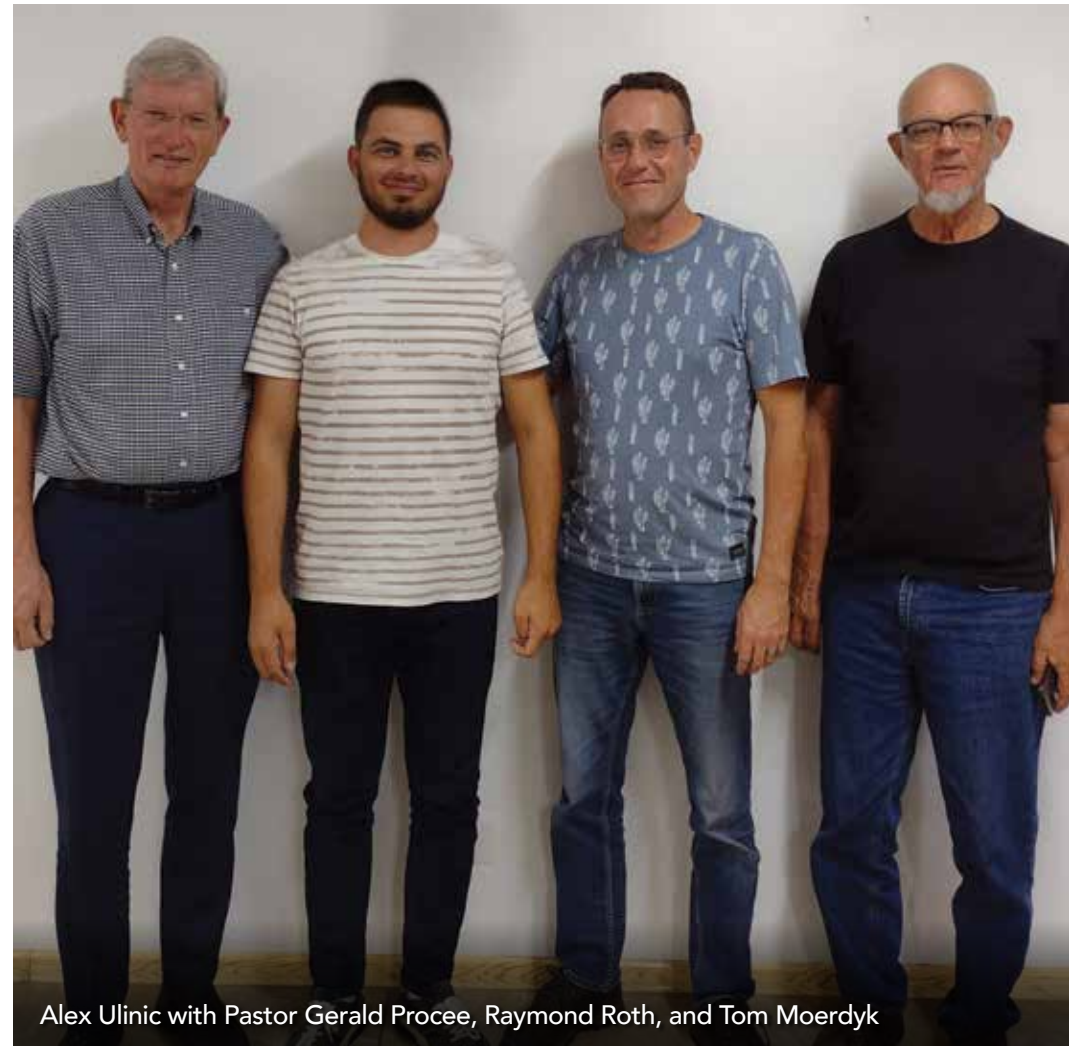
Our church benefited not only from my internship but also from the close partnership with Imago Dei Church. Despite the challenges, it is a huge blessing to be free from innovating and the pressure to keep creating or improvising things in the life of the church.

Now we can rest in the power of the Word and the Lord's providence.

Blessings to everyone who contributed so that the internship could be possible.

Alex Ulinic

Pastor of Holy Trinity Baptist Church,
Nisporeni, Moldova



Alex Ulinic with Pastor Gerald Procee, Raymond Roth, and Tom Moerdyk

A New Church Plant in Ukraine

By Pastor Eugene Grinishin, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine



Eugene & Yana with their two children Nazar and Anna

Greetings, dear friends! First of all, I would like to thank you for your prayers and financial support and share with you some updates about our life and ministry.

My name is Eugene Grinishin. I was born in 1991 in the city of Makiivka, Donetsk region (which has been occupied by Russia since 2014). The Lord saved me when I was 14 years old. After finishing school, I enrolled in a Reformed seminary. I was thrilled to study there and delve into God's Word. At seminary, I met my wife, Yana, and God blessed us with two children—Nazar, who is 7, and Anna, who is 3. In my free time, I enjoy spending time with my family and reading books.

In 2014, when Russia occupied my hometown, we were forced to relocate to the part of Ukraine that was still under government control. Shortly after, we began organizing a new church in the city of Pokrovsk, Donetsk region, which at the time was about 70 km from the front lines. We started holding church services and opened a daytime children's center. Later, we

were able to purchase a building for the church. However, in 2022, when Russia launched its full-scale invasion, a missile struck the building where our church was located, destroying it. For some time, we continued to minister to the people in Pokrovsk. We held out hope that everything would be alright and that the fighting wouldn't reach our city. But six months ago, Russian forces began advancing toward our area, and it is now one of the hottest points on the front line. We were forced to move again, this time to a safer location in Ivano-Frankivsk. Once again, we became displaced. When I think about it, it always reminds me that we are merely temporary residents on this earth, and our hope must rest in God.

I have a deep love for Reformed theology because it helps me understand that God holds everything in His hands. His plan is being fulfilled, and no matter what happens, God remains faithful to His Word and cares for His children.

After we relocated, we felt a strong

calling from God to start a new church and minister to those suffering from the war. We rented a building and began inviting people. Since we are displaced ourselves, many others who are also displaced began to attend. Another family from Pokrovsk has joined us, and we evacuated 15 teenagers who were attending our church back in Pokrovsk. Unfortunately, some of their parents have not yet been able to evacuate for various reasons—some are worried about their homes and belongings, others don't have the money to move, and some are simply too afraid to leave. We decided that while their parents figure things out, the teens would stay with us until their families could take them.

Every Sunday, we hold a church service where we study the Sermon on the Mount. This teaching encapsulates the core of Christian doctrine and is therefore very beneficial both for those who are new to church and for those who have been believers for a long time. We currently have about 40 people attending our services. After the service, we have coffee, fellowship, and get to know each other. Additionally, after the service, we study the Westminster Catechism with those who want to learn more about the church and God's Word. Right now, 12 people attend these meetings. Every Tuesday, we also study the catechism with the youth. On Wednesdays, we hold a Bible study group where we are going through the first letter of John, praying for one another's needs, and

having fellowship. On Fridays, we have youth meetings where we play board games, eat pizza, and study the Bible.

Please pray that the war in Ukraine will end as soon as possible and that the Lord will grant us peace. Pray also that God would give us strength to continue trusting Him and help us through the challenges we face.

Pray for the establishment of a new church in Ivano-Frankivsk, that more people would hear the Gospel and come to God.

Pray for the teens we evacuated, that the Lord would protect their parents, and that they would be able to evacuate and reunite with their children.

May the Lord bless you all.



Catechism class



Gathered for church in Ivano-Frankivsk



15 displaced teens are under the care of Pastor Eugene and his church



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