

Newsletter **CALLING**

Fall 2010 – Winter 2011

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Odessa Theological Seminary exists to train members of the evangelical Baptist churches – brothers and sisters whom God has called to a variety of Christian ministries.

Graduates are expected to display Christian character, possess knowledge of the Bible and theology, and practical skills in ministry.



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The Word of the President

So, the year of 2010 is in the past. Time always runs ahead, inexorably and without delay. But it feels as if, for the last few decades, Time has found, somewhere in its reserves, the key “turbo” and now flies forward twice as fast, changing the world and people along the way. Indeed, for the last several decades, the world has changed more than it has changed for ages. It is not only new technological innovations which have steadily entered our lives. But the age of postmodernism, in which we are living, has forced people themselves to change – to change their way of thinking and approach to life. In these postmodern days, white is not that white, and black – not that black. More often, you can hear voices saying that Jesus Christ is not the only way to God, and that this opinion has just as much right to exist as anyone else’s. Talking with non-Christians, I used to confront the problem of unbelief in the form of people just not believing that God existed. Now nearly everybody thinks that God exists, but they cannot decide how they should believe in Him. One truth is replaced with plenty of so-called truths, and confused people find themselves before the vast choice of those “truths,” not knowing to which one to align themselves with. Thinking of this, I often recall the words of one wise man: “We don’t need new revelations. We need more of the same.”



As a leader at Odessa Theological Seminary, I see the role of our school as, first, training servants who are able to correctly evaluate the condition of our society, and second, enabling them to offer people looking for truth, the simple Good News about Jesus. Please, pray for us, our students and teachers, so that in our fast-changing world, their ministry would be pleasing to God and useful to the Church.

Volodymyr Shemchyshyn,
President of Odessa Theological Seminary

THE COLOURS OF CHRISTMAS

The first days of the New Year have finally come... very quietly... with silent steps... Outside is winter with its fresh and cold eyes. At such moments, people long for warmth. Have you ever thought that you could give someone a bit of your warmth - that you could do a tiny miracle for someone?



In the beginning of 2011, God gave us such a chance. He worked in a special way through one OTS team, which consisted of both teachers and students lecturers. The participants included lecturers Alexander Kirillov, Dana Shavlovskaya, and “Bachelor of Theology” and “Bachelor of Christian Education” students Rezo Heviashvili, Joseph Akhalmosulishvili, and Oleg Yakovenko. They all had a real chance to use their academic knowledge in a practical way and have some fun.



Ilinka village is located not far from Odessa, but in wintertime, when it is snowing and everything is frozen, life in the village gets quieter, and people prefer to stay at home close to fire. It is just kids who have “itchy feet.” And during their winter holidays, they can’t stay in one

place: they wander around, trying to find and learn something new.



Just such a new experience for them in the first days of January was the winter camp “Colours of Christmas”, where they had a closer look at the Christmas story, which was presented to them in fresh colours. They learned that the Son of God came to earth as a tiny baby, and became a Man to die for us on the cross.



Each day was dedicated to a different colour: red, green, and white – the traditional colours of Christmas.



During camp kids had a chance to make Christmas gifts for their relatives, friends, and neighbours, they learned new carols, and on the last day of the camp they marched through the village singing carols and proclaiming the good news of Christmas.



Finally, happy kids left our camp. We saw their warm smiles coming from deep inside their hearts. A miracle had happened!



They enjoyed playing games enormously, especially on a new “wii” game console, which they played on for the first time in their lives. You should have seen their sincere joy and delight!



This Christmas had become different for them – it had become real and warm.



Dana Shavlovskaya

CHRISTMAS FAIR

The Christmas fair project described in the article below was carried out by the Ilyichevsk Baptist church. Many people, adults, teenagers and children, were involved in this project. Students from a number of OTS programs took an active part in the realization of the event.



Christmas is one of the most favourite holidays for children and adults alike. Many of them look forward to the end of the year (7 January in Ukraine), hoping to get a long-awaited Christmas gift. And yet the most precious gift of all is the gift of Jesus Himself and the eternal life that He offers to the world.



For many Christians and even unbelievers, the beautiful and matchless story of the birth of Jesus is the most heart-warming and wonderful story of the entire Bible. The incarnation of the eternal Son of God, the miracle of miracles, exceeding the power of human understanding, was manifested in the most plain and humble setting, in the manger surrounded by hay and domestic animals. But while beyond our comprehension in many ways, the message of Christmas – of the divine babe in the manger – is also so simple: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given...” (Isa 9:6).

In the beginning of January, the people of Ilyichevsk had an opportunity to see a nativity play in the city park. At the entrance to the park, a hospitable Ukrainian family welcomed visitors and treated them to pancakes and tea. Those who came were then invited to see a kaleidoscope of sketches about the birth of baby Jesus, the magi in Herod’s palace and the shepherds’ account of the appearance of angels in the field. After viewing these pictures, people heard a Christmas carol as they were moving towards a stable where Mary and Joseph were standing near the manger.



The visitors travelled through time and learned what kind of work Jesus used to do as a carpenter. The joinery shop was not the only echo of Jesus’ times in our program; visitors also witnessed the work of a blacksmith, producing among other things nails similar to those which were used to crucify Jesus on the cross.



Finally, people met Simon of Cyrene and heard his story about how the Man whose cross he helped to carry had changed his life.



At the foot of a hill in the park, there was a symbolic cross to which, using a hammer and nails, everyone could nail their letters to God. Visitors wrote about their problems, asked God to forgive their sins, bless their families or sort out their problems.



Christian literature and copies of the New Testament were handed out to all wishing to have a Christian book in their personal library.



Children and adults were offered an opportunity to participate in various contests or competitions. Visitors rode horses, fed sheep and a donkey, and even climbed up a high pole for a prize!



The project helped us to bring the message of our Saviour's love to many children and their parents and grandparents. We hope that they were able to discover the deeper meaning of Christmas and see the holiday in light of the good news of salvation in the person of Jesus Christ.



We enjoyed organizing the event for the people of Ilychevsk and hope that they will respond to our invitations and come to our worship services and Sunday school classes.



Alina Vakukh
Student (Bachelor of Christian Education)

MISSIONARY TRIP

In November 2010, under supervision of Odessa Theological Seminary teacher Alexander Abramov, second and third year “Bachelor of Theology” and “Bachelor of Christian Education” students undertook a missionary trip to the Chernovtzy region. Here is the brief report they have offered about this trip:



- During our trip we met lots of local people and were convinced of their legendary hospitality. Indeed, very kind and open people live here.



- We met the head pastor over the entire Chernovtzy region, Peter Petresku, who shared with us his ministry experience, the history of his church, and how Christians lived during Soviet times. It was very edifying story.



- We had a chance to meet other pastors as well. One of which was brother Sergei Shevchenko, an Odessa Seminary alumni from the “Bachelor of Theology” program (1997). He told us a lot about his time as a student, about his ministry, and the Bible school in which he is teaching.



- We also visited a Romanian church. This church features a unique order of service. Usually a few brothers lead the service, but it flows in the form of fellowship, with everybody taking part in it.



- We all prepared well for this trip. And in all the churches we visited, we took an active part in the services, including preaching in them.



- On Friday we visited a Baptist Church in the village of Nedoboevtsy. The little village is located in the mountains, and to our surprise, the church turned out to be not as small as we expected: it has more than 300 members! Well done, the village church in the mountains!

- It turns out that Nedoboevtsy church is one of the largest village churches in Ukraine. There are many youth in the village and local Christians actively work among them. The fact that work among children and youth will pay back in future, a truth that we had heard many times in our lectures, was vividly illustrated in this church.

- As far as recreation is concerned, the highlight of our trip was climbing to the Nichmich Pass (It is hard to call this climb “recreation and rest” since we literally had to strain every effort on the way up, but none of us regrets the effort). The pass is about 586 m above sea level. It is hard to express the magnificence of the view which opened to us on the top. What a beautiful world God has created for us!



- This missionary trip was interesting and eventful. We learned many useful lessons. Most of all, it was really meaningful to listen to testimonies of people who have lived hard lives and have stayed faithful to the Lord.

