

Greetings from the Lord's churches in Moldova!!!

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We pray and hope this report will find you doing well in the Lord!

There have been many wonderful events and developments for which we are endlessly grateful to God and to those used by Him for the work in Moldova during the last four months. We praise the Lord for the baptisms of Elena and Igor, for the conference and the many additional lessons conducted by Brace Rutledge, John and Randy Gentry, Don and Lou Sieg, Evan Casey and Connie Adkins during their visit in April, for continued active involvement of so many local saints in the spiritual work, for the new visitors and new opportunities and, of course, for all the difficulties and challenges that has provided extra opportunities for spiritual growth.

Our schedule of regular activities has received a considerable addition since the last report:

Starting from March we have had practically daily study and discussion meetings in Chisinau first attended by Andrei, Igor, Lina and myself, then we were joined by many other members and visitors (during the visit of the brothers and sisters from the States), and then the meetings were attended by Andrei, Andrei the visitor, myself and, periodically, by Igor. We also kept the former regular activities:

On Sundays – the worship and, then, study and/or discussion meetings in all four cities (Chisinau, Balti, Benderi and Tiraspol) conducted mostly by Serghei (Vinocurov), Vasilii and me; plus Ira Vinocurova's children's classes in Chisinau with two separate groups (5 children of ages 9-14, and 4 children of ages 2-7);

On Tuesdays and Fridays – the online study in Chisinau conducted by John Smith and/or Steve Niemeier attended most frequently by 7- 9 members and visitors from Chisinau, by 4-5 members and visitors from Benderi, by 3-5 members from Tiraspol and, from time to time, by others;

On Saturdays – the study in Transnistria.

Also, during the week Ira Vinocurova had, depending on circumstances, up to 2 and more studies with two separate groups of teenagers in Chisinau (5 children of ages 9-14, and 5 teenagers of 15-18) or with individual children.

The conference in April and other efforts during the visit of the saints from the States.

I pray and hope there are all the reasons to say that was another successful, needed and very much appreciated conference. Comparing to the previous year there were a little bit fewer participants (from 40 to 50 instead of 50-55), but they came from 5 cities of Moldova. For the first time we had two visitors from the city of Soroca (the far North of Moldova), plus a new family (the relatives of Vera, one of the most active members in Tiraspol) and a new visitor (a student of Vasilii, Vera's husband) from Transnistria, plus two new visitors from Balti. We also were very glad to see quite many guests from the "theater group" and Peter the translator (he is a Baptist, and usually helps with translation) who on this occasion was as open as never in considering the Biblical issues that were most challenging to him. Sadly, there were some members from Balti and Benderi who couldn't come because of health problems.

The theme of the conference was Commitment to Christ, and there were in total 15 lectures, 3 question-answer sessions, two singing meetings and a lot of private discussions, conversations and just spending time together. Among other good things it should be also mentioned that two of the lectured were for the first time presented by local preachers, Serghei Vinocurov and Vasillii Vladov. All the lessons were both very challenging and encouraging, and they were greatly appreciated. The time went too quick! Praise to the Lord! And many thank to all the teachers and many other brethren whose efforts and sacrifices made everything possible!

Both before and after the conference there were many studies in Chisinau, Balti and Transnistria. Lou and Connie concentrated their efforts on the work with the women in Balti and Chisinau, while the others were taking daily trips to Transnistria. Every evening there was a study in Chisinau for the members and visitors plus the Transnistrians could join us via the Internet. Brace, John, Randal, Don, Evan, Low and Connie did a lot of hard work indeed! We were so grateful to God and to them for all their love and patience! They had so little time for adjusting to time change, plus the extra big challenge was, I am sure, the terrible Moldovan roads that were as rough as never (at least in my memory) after this winter!

The situation in Chisinau

It was great to see the continued active involvement of so many members in spiritual work. Serghei Vinocurov continued to preach regularly in Balti and Chisinau and helped with transportation to Balti and Bender. Ira Vinocurova kept working with her three groups of children plus had additional Bible classes for the children who came with their parents to the conference. Lina and Nelia were doing their best to keep the meeting place clean and ready for the worship and study meetings, plus Lina did a lot of work translating the materials for the conference and translating during the conference. Vera and Anna were taking care of the elements for the Lord's Supper. And Andrei, as usually, kept trying to work among his neighbors and their friends. I have already shared the story of Igor's conversion that resulted from Andrei's efforts. The daily studies in Chisinau mentioned earlier were started immediately after Igor's baptism and were intended as an encouragement and help to him in his very difficult circumstances. His addiction to alcohol was too heavy to be treated lightly. For about 25 days Igor had been able to resist the temptation and then, as soon as he stopped coming to the meetings, he immediately fell. For the next about three weeks he had been drinking almost in a non stop regime and nobody could stop him. Then, after he almost reached the bottom, he came back with a renewed desire to quit. Now he is receiving a special medical treatment that is supposed to prepare him for a surgery. This surgery provides nothing but a very high probability of death if the body receives any noticeable quantity of alcohol. It is the fear of death that is supposed to work as a remedy, and Igor is quite determined to be "saved" by this fear. So far he is able to keep being sober, but I am very saddened to see that his spiritual interests have substantially decreased since that fall and I wish I knew the efficient way to help him. The good thing was that Igor started telling others about our congregation and especially those who like him desperately needed help. One of them, Andrei (I call him here Andrei the visitor) started regularly meeting with us from April 20. Andrei is a young man of 35, before coming to us he had been constantly drinking for about 6 months and almost died because of intoxication the day before the first visit. Like Igor, he spent many years in jail, he used to be heavily addicted to drugs too but later was able to quit (having first destroyed most of the veins in his arms and legs), as for alcohol addiction, it happened to be irresistible to him. When he first came he could hardly say or understand anything. The only thing he knew was that he wanted to survive, and he humbly asked for help. Igor said that he had first met Andrei in jail and that in that time Andrei was a rather cruel and evil minded man. Igor also said he could hardly recognize Andrei in his present state, so much

crushed in spirit and health. Indeed, the suffering and desperate circumstances made Andrei a very humble man. As in case of Igor, we started meeting as often and as long as possible. At first, Andrei accompanied us in our trips to Balti and, while Connie and Lou were teaching their class, I talked and studied with him. Then he would spend the middle of the day either with “the Americans” or with the Vinocurovs or in our place and, then, he would join the evening study in Chisinau. Later, while he little by little was getting stronger, we started meeting in the evenings, and during the day he would stay at home and talk to nobody else. Andrei was recovering amazingly quickly. His hands stopped trembling, his mind became clear and, with our help, he started looking for job opportunities. All the time we kept studying about God and His ways. Andrei was quite interested in listening, but, sadly, not more than that. Then, starting from last Sunday he disappeared and we could hardly find him. Later we found out that he had fallen to temptation and had been drinking for 5 days. Yesterday he came back, very sorry and willing to start all over. He also said the owner of his apartment (another Andrei), who is an alcohol addict too, wanted to start coming to our studies and that he will try to bring with him his girlfriend, Natasha, too. I hope to meet all three of them later today. Please, keep all of them in your prayers, as well as Nick whose situation has not changed. Also, pray for Elena Ivanovna, who was baptized back in March. She never came back and we don’t know what to think. She is quite a complicated lady and didn’t give us any contact information, so we don’t know where to look for her. She could get sick, or her daughter could heavily influence her like some years ago, or anything else. May God help her and be with her!

The situation in Balti

Among the many positive consequences of the conference was the resumed attendance of one of the ladies in Balti, Ada. Also, Lidia the visitor, who was invited to the conference, continued to regularly attend the meetings in Balti. Zhenia said that besides those meetings she personally regularly reads the Bible with her (Lidia is her neighbor). I hope and pray this is a sign that the things keep going in Balti! At the same time, there still are misunderstandings and complications between the ladies. Besides that, Nona, Dora and Sveta are very sick physically. Nona has been to hospital many times and Sveta is there right now. So, all the ladies there need a lot of prayers!

The situation in Tiraspol and Benderi

The new visitors in Transnistria are a good evidence of the continued efforts of the saints there to preach the Gospel. I forgot to tell that Nicolai, the one who quit attending in Tiraspol because of the problems with his wife, joined the conference too. Both Vasiliis have kept encouraging him and little by little he becomes stronger in the ability to do right things. May God help him!

The biggest challenge like in many other places of Moldova is relative poverty. One of the members in Benderi, Serghei the driver, decided to move temporarily to Russia in order to improve his financial conditions. The rest of the members did their best trying to get by themselves and, besides other things, to keep their meeting place running. So far they were successful but by now most of the money is gone and they don’t know what to do. They still cannot sell the house because they don’t have all the documents. At the same time if they don’t pay taxes and other things the government, I guess, will be happy to confiscate everything. On the other hand, I personally think that for the church in Benderi as well as for all the saints in Transnistria it would be better to find a way to keep the house rather than to sell it. The “palace” provides them with good opportunities for spiritual work for each other and for visitors, and it would cost them as much to pay for renting a small and much less convenient apartment. Of course, they would survive just by meeting at somebody’s house (like the saints in Tiraspol do), but my personal experience tells me this way will discourage many from coming too often. Nobody wants to be a burden to the host and that frustration gets bigger the more people come... and the church in Benderi is much bigger than in

Tiraspol. So, if the Benderians are not successful in figuring out how to keep the house by themselves (they are still trying to find a way) my plan is to suggest the saints in Chisinau to start helping them at least partially. The Chisinau church benefited a lot from a similar help in the past and it is our turn to step in. However, we will need to think twice to make sure the collection money is spent without deviations from the Scriptural way.

Thank you again and again for the interest and all the participation in our life!

God be with you!

Serghei and everybody

P.S.

I am sorry for the delay with the reports on the funds for the work in Moldova! I have been extremely busy all the time. At first I urgently needed to finish the things in the new apartment to be able to move the family before the central heating was off (to avoid usual health problems related to this season), then came the need for preparations for the conference, for the conference itself, for the daily studies and for many other things. But I will email the reports as soon as I have enough time to prepare them.