

the Gazette

Music Mission Kiev
Музична місія Київ

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A Force for Good
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The Force At Work in MMK

“May the force be with you.” One of the most familiar lines in the past 42 years. December 20, 2019, the final episode opened in theatres across the world. Can you believe the first Star Wars trilogy started in 1977 with a young Skywalker being mentored by Yoda, the special Jedi Warrior? Many expressions have been launched off this series. On May 4th we often hear, “may the fourth be with you.” When we share this quote in churches, “may the force be with you” our congregations normally reply, “and also with you.”

More of Yoda’s “wisdom” were comments like, “Do or do not. There is no try.” “You must unlearn what you have learned.” “Fear is the path to the dark side....”

“Pass on what you have learned.” These are some of the quotes occasionally used by people today. However, when you place these quotes inside the context of faith, they really do sound like biblically-based wisdom.

One other interesting observation in this series is they did three trilogies over the course of time. As Trinitarian believers, I must ask, “Is this a coincidence” in the mind of the writers? Yes, tongue in cheek saying this am I (or am I?) because pastors can make a theological analysis out of almost anything today. We can also make it sound like Jedi wisdom. Proud would be, Yoda of me.

Although the stories you read in this edition may not be Jedi stories, they are about faith-building opportunities we had in our mission opposing Satan’s empire. The PTSD training for counselors near the eastern front of Ukraine deals



with the emotional healing the people and especially children received with the team who went to serve. The “force” we count upon is the power of the Holy Spirit to heal and comfort all who are afflicted.

The widow’s banquets and pictures share the joy our widows and pensioners experienced during the Christmas and New Year in Ukraine. They shared a meal, listened to the Christmas story, shared their own stories, and sang Christmas songs, and received wonderful gifts many of you sponsored for them. Our homebound widows were not forgotten and got personal Christmas visits from our staff or volunteer widows/pensioners.

The KSOC Christmas concerts perennially generate the most

joy and hope through the familiar Christmas music our musicians and singers share. What a glorious time they have listening and singing along with the music centered around the birth of Jesus and all it would mean for humanity and creation.

Therefore, it is appropriate that our appeal letter at the end of our newsletter is going to focus on the orphans and children. They are the future and the hope for a renewed and better Ukraine. As you read through our stories, please say a prayer for each of them. May the Holy Spirit “force” be with you!

Grace and Peace,

Greg

Masks, Monsters, and a Good Man - MMK Sponsored Trauma Healing Training for Leaders

In Druzhkivka, located in the eastern part of Ukraine, the laughter of the children filled the crisp cold October air with hope and anticipation as they arrived at camp the first day. Their faces were as vibrant as the colors of their coats.

The team of leaders who were there to greet them came for a special trauma healing training, sponsored by MMK and our partnership with Dr. Jim Witty and Care Corp International. The purpose of the day-camp for children ages 7-14 years, was to teach the facilitators who live in the Donbas areas - through their participation in the program - how to work with spiritually traumatized children and operate special camps treating PTSD.

Over the next few days, thirty children - some fatherless, orphaned, or part of the internally displaced population (IDP) - joined in lots of fun games and activities. Every activity allowed the leaders a deeper insight into each child's inner condition. Their time together revealed the masks they wear, the monsters they fear, and the dream of a good man (father) at home.

The children laughed as the leaders acted out a hilarious improvisational skit of the Biblical story of Joseph, a dreamer. As funny as the actors were, they soon learned Joseph's story was no comedy - from a very young age he experienced trauma and great injustices. The children learned that throughout his life,

Joseph knew God cared, was always near, and he could trust Him - and they could too! They sang songs together and learned they could pray to God when they feel alone or afraid.

On the first day, everyone drew a picture of their dreams and shared their stories from a pedestal.

"Kostik", an outgoing talkative boy, quickly climbed onto the pedestal and talked a lot about his dreams. (He and his family live near the war zone.) He talked about his picture of a house and a man near that house. Earlier, he told one leader that he dreams about his own house and a "good man" who would live with them there. But when he shared his drawing with others he said it showed what he saw during a walk with his mother. It showed the team that even very talkative children may not open up, afraid to share their hopes and dreams with others.

During another activity the children were asked to draw a face divided into two parts - one to show their inner feelings, the other to show their external demonstrations. Surprised by what she saw, one leader exclaimed, "Their inner feelings and outer feelings - without any exception - did not match!" With this effective tool, the leaders were able to see the happy faces the children wore were only masks to hide the fear and loneliness they lived with every day from the trauma of war.



On the third day, children were invited to sculpt their fears using modeling clay. After working for quite a while, Kostik suddenly crumpled his sculpture in his hand. Visibly upset, he explained to the leader that he could not look at the monster he had sculpted, "because that monster haunts him everywhere...for a long time." After he sincerely prayed and asked God to take away the fear of that monster, after which he became cheerful and talkative once again.

Learning how to create a safe environment of trust and respect for children to open up is only the first step. With the training they received, these leaders will be able to continue to provide camps and work with children like Kostik, helping them heal from spiritual trauma, and discover the good news of God's love and His Son, Jesus - the only Good Man - who brings peace and forgiveness to every heart and home where He is invited in.



Widow's Banquets Filled with the Spirit of Christmas



Have you ever seen an 80-year-old, easily drop into a full-split like she was a 16-year-old gymnast? Our accompanying picture shows Larisa demonstrating her skills for the group and had everyone laughing and talking about it. Go Larisa go!

Larisa is a real firecracker of a woman. She attended one of our early December banquets. She is always filled with joy and is quite energetic. Larisa shared how she came to know Jesus and be part of MMK outreach ministries. For many years, she has been an active Stephen's minister and a very compassionate servant.

Story after story was shared and testimonies were given in word, personal poetry, and song. More than 330 men and women attended our Christmas banquets over six weeks. Each gathering had between 30 – 38 widows/pensioners for a meal and celebration of the birth of Jesus. They sang Christmas hymns and traditional Ukrainian Christmas songs. Pastor Ruslan read the Christmas story from the Bible and gave a great Word of encouragement. So many told

about the tremendous contribution the founders of the Mission, Roger and Diane made into their lives.



Katerina shared that it is a miracle she is even alive, as years ago she fell from the 11th floor at a construction

site and was caught by metal hooks on the 9th floor. When she regained consciousness at the hospital, she saw two women praying for her by her bed. They kept saying, "Don't be afraid. The Lord is with you." Later Katerina found out they were from St. Paul's Church. When she recovered from her injuries she visited St. Paul's,



accepted Christ and was later baptized by Roger McMurrin. Katerina said, "I am so thankful to God for setting me on the right path. Now I make hospital visits. I try to bring comfort to people who are seriously ill, especially to cancer patients."

A widower, Olexiy who used to be a professional singer, shared his testimony as well. Several years ago, he was hospitalized with severe pneumonia, and he developed significant complications. Olexiy had to spend two months in the hospital. He was asked, "Do you



have any special needs? Can we bring you anything?" He answered, "Please, bring me the Bible." Olexiy said that the Word of God and prayer lifted him out of



The entire staff from the Kyiv office worked diligently and very hard to make this a festive time of blessing and reflection on the reason we celebrate Christmas.

Our 110 homebound widows/pensioners were not left out. Most all

of our MMK staff and some of our Stephen Ministers from our church took the Christmas spirit to each of their homes. They shared Christmas stories, gave the gifts from MMK, and listened to many amazing stories. We are so grateful for all our servants who went and shared with those who could not come and participate at the banquets.

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This joy-filled time is a credit to YOU our partners in the USA who help make this mission a blessing. For those of us in the US, it is a privilege to give, but also a privilege to hear and see how much our giving blesses

our sisters and brothers in Ukraine. I hope that the pictures surrounding this article will bring a smile to your face and joy to your hearts. Thank you for your generosity in making this happen. All of us are blessed to be part of a great Christmas tradition in Kyiv for MMK. Thank you.

If you ever visit Ukraine, (which you can do by coming on our September Helping Hands Mission Trip), maybe Larisa can teach you how to do a split without ending up in the hospital!



(Pictures on front cover are new church members who received a quilt at the 10th Christmas Banquet that were lovingly handmade by SEW BLESSED QUILTERS for Christ Ministry of Markham Woods Presbyterian Church in Lake Mary, FL)



A BIG THANK YOU to our cooks Svitlana and Sasha K who prepared over 350 HOT MEALS!



**We are the clay
You are the potter
We are all the work of Your hands.**
-Isaiah 64:8

A Lump of Clay

Widower Mykola S. shared a very personal testimony at one of our Christmas banquets. He stressed how grateful he was to God for rescuing him from a tragedy. He was driving up a serpentine road in the Crimean mountains and the road was quite slippery.

At one point, the car skidded abruptly. He barely missed falling off a steep cliff. What stopped the car was a pile of clay on the edge of the cliff. The wheels got stuck in the clay. Mykola keeps praising God for this life-saving miracle.

His story of a pile of clay made me think of Romans 9: 21, “does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?” The Potter (Jesus) is transforming each of us for a purpose in this world. We all have a part to play.

We are in the “business” of changing lives through Jesus Christ to impact the world for good and in positive ways. Ukraine is in a precarious time of trying to change out of decades of

corruption. People there are passionate about this change happening now. We hear it in the news, but our teams in Ukraine hear it almost daily. They no longer want to accept corruption as the status quo for how you get through life.

Our mission and St Paul’s church exist to be part of this change. Our focus is serving the widows/pensioners, who most people push aside. However, our purpose is also to reach and train up the next generation of Ukrainians to be the change in their country. We believe the work of the Holy Spirit can transform their lives and lead them to become world changers. They are the “lumps of clay” Jesus can shape to change their country.

Our mission to children and orphans has a long-range plan as the lens we view our ministry to these young people. We need your help as this year the costs for our orphan’s program exceeds the financial resources we have to effectively minister to the select groups we serve. We even had to cancel our small winter camp program headed up by Oksana. We hope this is the only year that happens!

The Children & Orphan Ministries includes our children’s music club at St Paul’s church; a mentoring program for orphans who have

started trade school in Kyiv; music therapy to students with emotional and behavioral disorders at School 22; bimonthly interaction with over 70 orphans at Stara Basan and the PTSD orphans from Eastern Ukraine. ALL are part of our specific budget items we plan for each year.

Please pray about partnering with us at the start of this New Year 2020 and send your support for the orphans and children we serve. You can use the envelope included in this Gazetta to mail your financial gift to us.

You can also securely give online at www.musicmisionkiev.org. Click on the drop-down donation box to Children & Orphan Ministries.

We are thankful and filled with gratitude for the partnerships we have with you. We remain faithful to Jesus in pursuing these young people who need our love and teaching. May these young “lumps of clay” become all God intended them to be for His kingdom and His glory!

Grace and Peace,

Greg



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