



Nikopol Evangelism  
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A Ministry in Support of the Churches of Nikopol Evangelism



I remember a Ukrainian song we used to sing. Unfortunately, it doesn't translate well musically, so we have never translated it, but I will tell you the story. It was about a little paper boat embarking on a journey across the wide sea, even though the little paper boat is heading into so many dangers of hurricanes and storms, the paper boat says he has nothing to fear because God is with him. This is how I see the attitude of the Ukrainian people as the war continues to drag on. So many have left the Nikopol and the Zaporizhe region, but Slavic, Katya and numerous others have stayed to work. Their call to arms has been,

*"There are still people who want to hear the gospel."*

## Kakhovka Dam

On June 6<sup>th</sup>, the Kakhovka Dam near Nikopol broke and sent Nikopol's water source down river. Multiple dangers have arisen from these lower water levels.

The reservoir fed a cooling pool for the local nuclear power plant. Lower water levels do not allow it to be replenished, so there remains about two months before the current water in the pool will no longer do the job sufficiently, forcing a total evacuation of the area if no other solution is found. This is Europe's largest nuclear power plant and if a meltdown occurs, it will dwarf Chernobyl. While both sides point fingers at each other, the reality is that such a disaster will greatly impact both Ukraine and Russia as prevailing winds from the Black Sea will push fallout north and east.

This area was fought over in the 2 World War as well, and the water draining has exposed skeletons, armor, weapons from the WW 2 era. There are significant amounts of unexploded munitions from both WW2 and the current war that now lie exposed on the beaches, posing dangers to local inhabitants.

Ukraine has always boasted a thick layer of soft, rich topsoil. This has become a detriment in many areas as mud slides have occurred with the draining reservoir, which has caused damage to the railroad tracks, roads, and bridges.

Of course, the immediate threat is the water shortages. This is causing panic among the remaining populace of Nikopol and surrounding areas. They are currently bringing in water trucks to alleviate the shortages, but it is insufficient for the 50,000 that remain.



For several weeks, the faucet at the church building miraculously still had water after all other water sources were gone. Even stranger was the fact that the neighboring houses had no water. Slavic thought it may have been because we share a line with a nearby pipe plant. The neighboring community was able to come to the church building and fill up bottles to take home.

Still, this is not enough for a church of 70, so a longer term solution of a well has been looked into and we have begun raising funds. Originally, we looked at a goal of 5500-7000 for a deeper well, assuming that the water table had dropped significantly. When that well, about half as deep as expected, produced water, a second was dug.

Both of these are on the properties in the village of Pokrovskoe where the rehab facilities are located. Neither well has been outfitted with mechanical or electrical pumps or walls or pipes. They are merely holes at this point, so there are still funds to be raised. There is also the question of a possible well in the city of Nikopol, which has a higher elevation, being away from the river.

Through it all, Christians remain faithful and use this resource to draw others to drink of the living water that can't be taken from them.

At the end of April/ beginning of May Slavic was unable to withdraw money from the bank because sirens warned of incoming missiles and the banks closed. This happened several times. A missile struck a farm neighboring the men's rehab. Christians were terrified then, yet they feel that was small compared to the water crisis the area is experiencing now.

From this there is the slightest pieces of good news: the flood waters in the south of Ukraine forced Russian forces to retreat further than the Ukrainians were able to. However, as the reservoir provided a barrier to keep the Russians out of Nikopol there is concern that the narrowing river will not prove as significant an obstacle if Russia advances. Additionally, Ukrainian counteroffensives seem to move Russian attacks by inches, impeded by the muck along the river.

## How goes the battle?

Christians from the church in Kyiv said the Russian military has concentrated efforts on Kyiv, putting Ukraine on the defense. A friend there said May 16 was about the loudest night they had experienced since the beginning of the war. Ukrainian defenses were able to detect and destroy all Russian missiles before they hit, but the debris caused a lot of damage, they praise God his protection.

Slavic said the questions many newcomers ask as they come through the door is "Why?" "Why is God allowing this to happen?" "Why isn't he stopping bad things from happening?" This question is an excellent launching pad into our own burden of sin, and what should be done about it.

The reality is that we don't know why this is happening. It is not ours to know the reasons God has for doing or allowing what he does. Many people ask us for news of the war, as though we would have special insight into military strategy and progress. We all want it to end, but this will happen in God's time, and not a moment before.

No one knows what it is happening. Both sides are fought by human governments. Both use misinformation. For us it is to look at the spiritual things that are happening and focus on how God is using this to further his kingdom. This is where joy will be found.



Christians conducted street evangelism in the square in the city of Nikopol twice since my last writing. The first time they had 8 visitors or so to church, the second time, they had a few visitors, but then it began to snowball, and those visitors began to invite visitors.

By May 28<sup>th</sup>, they had so many, they used every extra seat from classrooms and kitchens and finally had to bring the bench in that is on the patio outside. **Seventy-one** people, the most we have ever had. This is after splitting the church and starting a second congregation in Pokrovskoe despite many of the Christians have yet to return to Nikopol.



*Kids from Club Smile receive food packages to bring home for their families.*



## Pokrovskoe Church

The new church plant in Pokrovskoe received donations through Jason Casey that had been donated to Nikopol Evangelism toward the beginning of the war. They are using a portion of these funds to finish a small apartment behind the church, where three men will be able to stay. This will provide security for the building (Someone has to be at the building at all times), and they will be able to provide upkeep, while also relieving the tight quarters at the rehab.

## Men's Alcohol Rehab

*Get to know a few members of the church.*

**Artem** came to the rehab 2 years ago. A year later he was baptized. He is from Nikopol. Zyenya Cherbanov invited him in 2020 and a year later he became a Christian. He lived at the church until he started to realize friends from his former life were dragging him back into his old ways. Artem does maintenance at the train station. He also has a lot of responsibilities, since so many have fled. It is a very dangerous job because train stations have been targeted. Artem baptized his eighty-one-year-old grandmother a year ago.

**Sergei** distinctly remembers he came to the rehab on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May 2021. He is from Nikolaiva. He was an alcoholic and came to the rehab a broken man. He wanted to join the military to break out of his vicious cycle of drunkenness when his brother encouraged him to go to the rehab facility. He left his wife and daughter in Nikolaiva and he misses them terribly, she can't



*Artem*

come to Nikopol because of the heightened military conflict, and he can't go to Nikolaiva because of his own history with alcohol.



*Sergei and son, Zhenya*

Sergei's son Zhenya came to the rehab to live with him. Zhenya wants to be a Christian, but Sergei wants to be sure he understands what the impact of his decisions are. Sergei says his relationship with his wife has gone in a good direction. He says "I take better care of my children. She trusts me. I buy the kids presents."

Sergei works with his hands. He repairs a veterinary hospital in Nikopol. A lot of people leave their animals behind as they flee the war. The hospital provides a home for the animals until the owners come back to claim them.

### **Lydia**

Lydia was an early convert in our ministry in Ukraine, baptized around 2006. Her daughter, Galina, was one of our closest Christian sisters. Galina passed away after a hard battle with cancer in 2019 after our return to the United States.

Lydia's grandson fought against the first Russian invasion in 2014 and has been defending the front line since the first day of the current Russian attacks. Lydia's father fought in WW2 1939-1942, when the German army wiped out 5.2 million Ukrainians.

During the occupation of Ukraine, women were forced to host Nazi soldiers while their husbands were away defending Ukraine. Lydia remembers a moment when she was five years old, and she got caught stealing a piece of the commander's sugar ration. This dangerous man, called little Lydia to him, and then broke his chocolate ration in half and gave her a piece.

The Commander later told Lydia's mother that he had three children at home that he missed desperately.

War is ugly for both sides. It is important that we remember how awful this is even for Russian mothers.

Lydia's son in law Oleg is in the hospital with injuries sustained in the war. Her grandson, Sergei, still serves with shrapnel in his leg. Sasha, Lydia's grandson once played with Benjamin outside, but now serves in the military, and suffered injuries when a rocket hit a nearby military vehicle.

*But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you Matthew 5:44*



*Lydia (center), with daughter, Galina, and granddaughter Natasha. Zhenya Tochilkin (back). Katie and Benjamin Green (right) - 2006*