



## Nikopol Evangelism

1200 E Moreland Blvd  
Waukesha WI 53186

A Ministry in support of the churches of Nikopol Eelvangalism



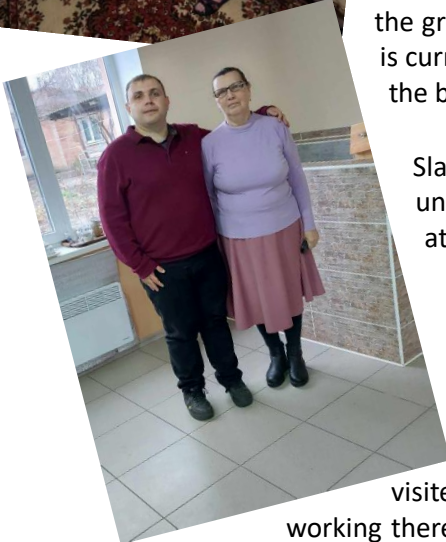
*And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. 2 Corinthians 9:8*

Christian brothers and sisters from in Nikopol send their warmest regards. They are always so grateful for your prayers and support.

### Conversions and Growth:

We have had three baptisms since September:

Tamara (top left) holds the record for the oldest conversion in Nikopol at 85. She is the grandmother of Zhenya Chabanov a former assistant to the work in Nikopol, he is currently residing in New Jersey, but we are excited to have his grandmother join the body of Christ.



Slavik's neighbor Valentina Pavlovna (bottom left showed no interest in the church until her husband passed away a few years ago. She became lonely and began attending services. She was baptized November 29.

Dmitri Dmitrovich (right) became a Christian December 13.

Pictured, standing to the left of Dmitri, is Yaroslav, a minister from Poland. He visited several times while Andrew and I were working there. He has done a lot to grow the ministry with Slavik and even considers himself a member of our congregation as there is no church in his little village in Poland. In October he came to relieve assist Slavik. He is an invaluable encouragement to the church in Nikopol. We have not been able to get another minister to commit to coming to Nikopol because of the extremely



dangerous conditions. So, we are extremely thankful he does this with his own resources.



Tamara and her husband and one daughter were in the basement of their home early Sunday morning November 12. When a missile went through their kitchen. One wall of her home was all that was left standing. Tamara stood in church that morning and echoed the words of Job, she praised God for what she had to be thankful for. Rather than focusing on her loss, she was thankful her family was safe. They are staying now in a government run, housing facility. We raised a few funds for them, but she refused any help. We set the monies aside and when they get a permanent home, the church will be able to at least help with furniture and appliances.

## Miscellaneous notes



Nikopol's Wednesday night Bible study is breaking records across Ukraine for attendance. They have had 90 people on Wednesday night several times. No benevolent assistance is being handed out on Wednesdays, only tea and sandwiches. People are coming with a sincere desire to just hear the hope that the scripture holds out to them.

Attendance on Sunday has been up to 120 people or so. These numbers are of course lower when fighting is heavier in the area. Attendance in Pokrovskoe remains steady between 30-40 people. Slavik conducts Woman's bible study on Thursday, and a prayer meeting on Tuesday.

Sasha Peletskiy was originally the minister the Church of Christ in Mariupol. He barely escaped with 30 members of the church after hiding out for 40 days. After arriving in Poland He recently was able to come back into Ukraine, bringing supplies from Poland. The woman at right holds up a warm sleeping bag and a packet of food supplies that they brought.



Our Media doesn't cover the war quite so heavily since the conflict in Israel began, but the fighting in Ukraine has increased recently as winter settles in. In recent days, Nikopol and Dnepropetrovsk regions have been under heavy attack. I was on a phone conversation with Slavik when he told us about a car

that had been shelled about 30 minutes after he had been at the exact intersection. The picture of that attack is from a news source.

I remember from our own time there, because of its northern latitude it gets dark around 3:00 in the afternoon in the winter months. This lack of light only compounds the depression of a war that approaches two years.

For Christmas, each of the children in "Club Smile" were given a box in the shape of Ukrainian cottage full of candy. The Ukrainian version of a gingerbread house. While there, we introduced them to our tradition as well. They loved a bit of gingerbread house with their tea.





# Prison Saved my Life

A special article regarding the need for ministry support in Ukraine

## A thriving prison ministry in a war zone

One of Ukraine's biggest challenges, before the war, during, and which will continue long after, is drug addiction. Every family in Ukraine is affected.

On the outskirts of Kyiv The Church of Christ at Obolon runs a prison ministry with Victor Shuka. His ministry and our drug rehab facility in Nikopol together form a comprehensive program that has given thousands of men and women a second chance.

In Ukraine drug use and incarceration are even more closely related than they are in the U.S. According to the Ukraine National Drug and Alcohol use report, in 2021, 29,587 drug related offences were recorded. The number of unreported offences is much higher as corruption in law enforcement fails to report many crimes.



Unfortunately, In Ukraine, once a criminal, always a criminal. The National Library of medicine conducted a study, taking a sample piece of 402 inmates and found inmates very likely to reoffend. The job market is already difficult. They often have very little social support. Friends or family refuse or simply don't have the resources to support them in any way. It is not possible to find work before they have documentation in order (which often involves having to work through the same barrier of corruption.) Meanwhile, they need somewhere to stay. The drug market is a lucrative business, and one that is very enticing to individuals who have nowhere else to go. With all of these obstacles, it doesn't take long for previous offenders to return to selling drugs and quickly return to prison.

Prison conditions are significantly worse than in the states. In 2020, 6,000 were actively sick with tuberculosis. Corrupt guards allow drugs in the prison, and the inmates often share needles resulting in high numbers of HIV and Hepatitis C cases. According to the same study mentioned earlier, 50% of inmates are impacted. The rate of incarceration in Ukraine is half that of the United States, yet suicide is the same. With the war and imprisoned Russian soldiers, the prison populations have soared leading to overcrowding, which will likely see these statistics skyrocket.

## God's intervention

In 2004 Victor was a prisoner in Nikolaev, he was invited by a fellow inmate to a Bible study, he hadn't been a spiritual person, but he was bored and so he went. The topic that week was on Mark 5, and for the first time Viktor saw his own image in scripture. He felt exactly like the demon possessed man. He felt like he had been among the tombs and covered in sin. He had no way of escaping from the spiritual bars that held his soul. He heard the gospel and, in that moment, like a switch was flipped, he felt drawn to the life that God had called him too. After study and prayer, he knew this was the direction he was going to go for the rest of his life. He was baptized and while in the prison, started telling others about his faith.

*As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. And he did not permit him but said to him, "Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." - Mark 5:18-19*

When Victor was released from prison, He did exactly this, he went home and began to tell his family about his new-found faith. His mother seeing the change in him, became a Christian and his brother and nieces soon followed.

Victor soon found himself back in prison, but not as a repeat offender - he was drawn back with purpose. He began visiting the very prison where he had been, sharing his own testimony of what Jesus had done for him. Zhenya Shevchenko met him while attending the church in Nikolaev. He saw potential in him, so when the prison where he had been incarcerated closed, Zhenya invited him up to Obolon to continue his prison ministry there. Victor now visits three prisons, and he shares the word of God with one-hundred fifty inmates on average every week. Many prisoners have become Christians and do their own evangelization within the prisons as they serve their own sentences. They even repurposed an old hot tub pool as a baptistry.

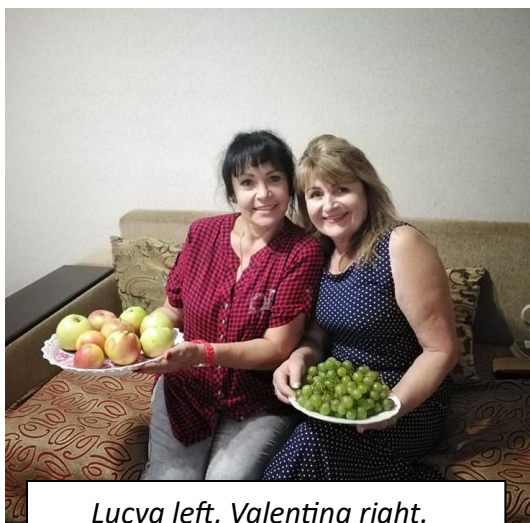


When prisoners are released, their old habits, friends and lifestyle await them. The Obolon Church of Christ has developed a program to meet their immediate needs, providing a place to sleep and food to eat while they get documentation together and look for work.

Victor's ministry is very unique, not many churches can do this on the scale that Viktor brings to the ministry. 60% of his congregation in Obolon came to know the Lord through his ministry.

His work has had an impact on the congregation in Nikopol as well as many other churches throughout Ukraine. Many women have come to the Lord through women's prison ministries as well.

### **Valentina and Lucya share their testimony**



*Lucya left, Valentina right.*

Valentina and Lucya grew up together in Donetsk. As the girls grew up their paths took them separate ways. Lucya landed herself in jail for the first time when she was only 14 years old. By the time she was 17 she was addicted to drugs. Valentina for other reasons, and at different times, also found herself in prison three times. By chance their paths came together again in the prison colony in Kyiv.

Victor came to the prison to conduct Bible study's he shared the story of the crippled man at the pool of Siloam. He looked directly at Valentina, and said to her, "Do you want to be saved?" All her life, like the crippled man, she felt like the opportunity for healing was never open to her. In that moment Valentina knew this was the last stop, if she continued the road she was on, hell awaited her.

“When I became a Christian, I understood my life was changed. I knew God lived in me, and he had freed me from sin.” At that time, not many churches visited the prison, but after my release, I joined Victor in the prison ministry. I cried when my former inmates saw me. They saw such a change in me. I told them there I found freedom from the bonds that held me previously. Since that time, I have worked in the adaptation ministry (this is the term for a halfway house) and have helped many other women get past their addictions and start a new life.

Two years after her conversion, Valentina brought her childhood friend Lucya, to Christ through Victor’s ministry. Lucya’s criminal background landed her in prison for a total of 27 years. She was thankful for her incarceration as she believed without it, she would be dead. She says she never woke up without a headache. As soon as she awoke, she looked for her next dose. She would do anything to get it. She didn’t want to be alive if she couldn’t get a dose. She says, “I didn’t know there was any other way to live.

All of that is behind me now. The person I am now is not that person I was. People who knew me couldn’t believe I was the same person. Now, instead of a headache, I wake up thinking how I can be helpful for others. I have ministered to some of my former friends, I tell them there is another way to live. I even worked in the women’s rehab facility in Nikopol for three years before the war started. In our country, drugs are its own war.

The church in Obolon is supported in part by the Ukrainian Bible Institute and in part by Zhenya Shevchenko, the individual who invited Viktor to start the prison ministry. The rest of the funds are raised by the congregation. Currently Victor travels approximately 1,400 miles every month, and the rate of gasoline is close to \$6 USD per gallon. The whole cost is \$2,800 USD a month. To continue this ministry, he is asking for \$300 USD a month.

Currently Nikopol Evangelism works with the rehab facilities on the outskirts of Nikopol, which Slavic runs. We do not have the means to assist the church in Obolon, though we wish we could. We also cannot allocate the resources to being a sponsor or agent for them. It would not be difficult to find someone to translate, but we need a congregation who is willing to take this ministry. The financial obligation is not prohibitive even for a small church which may be looking to get involved. If you are interested please contact Andrew Green at [Nikopolcoc@gmail.com](mailto:Nikopolcoc@gmail.com) or Katie Green at [Keileen1979@gmail.com](mailto:Keileen1979@gmail.com)

