



Mukachevo Minutes

Prayer letter of George & Sarah de Vuyst
Serving with Christian Reformed World Missions in Ukraine

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Our vision

We see healthy congregations emerging through church planting and leadership training as well as in partnership with existing Reformed congregations in Ukraine in order to bring healing and transformation to lives and communities throughout Ukraine and beyond her borders in the post-Soviet countries of Eastern Europe so that more and more people hear the gospel and lives and communities are transformed.

Points for praise

- Meaningful celebration of Christmas
- Church leaders who desire to develop healthy churches
- Permissions were granted by local and federal authorities for us to apply for a 3 year visa
- Ecumenical week helped strengthen relationship with other churches

Points for prayer

- God's blessing on our busy schedule ahead including various trainings, conferences, and volunteers
- Political stability in Ukraine and protection from governmental oppression

Christmas in January

The biggest holiday of the year, New Year's, had come and gone but in the center of town the decorated "New Year's tree" was still standing. Although minor in comparison to New Year's, Christmas lay ahead.



Christmas is officially celebrated in Ukraine on January 7 in accordance with the Julian calendar. Since our congregation started with a number of members who were related to ethnic Hungarians and thus celebrated Christmas on Dec. 25,

our church had previously observed Christmas according to the western calendar. After three years of painful deliberation, the pastors and elders decided that celebrating

Christmas on Jan. 7 is more in line with the church's mission to Ukrainians. Jan. 7 is when the majority of Ukrainians recognize Christmas. It is a day off from work which enables people to attend worship services. Dec.

25, on the other hand, is a normal work and school day thus prohibiting most people from attending a church service.

This year there was a celebratory atmosphere at church on January 7. Over 50 people were in attendance. The children sang and recited poems and everyone greeted each other with a heart-felt "Merry Christmas"!



National INsecurity

The Ukrainian government is taking big strides away from democracy. Authorities view small businesses as a threat, according

to the newspaper *Kyiv Post*. Crack downs on non-profit organizations are strangling many religious organizations including our friend

Arpi's ministry to orphans. Corruption has a firm hold on every aspect of society and threatens to break Ukraine into pieces.

How to contact us

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More stories and pictures at
www.devuysts.com and
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Equipping Leaders for Something New

If you've ever attempted to do something new without having ever seen it done, then you can relate to the majority of church leaders in Ukraine. In a culture void of good leaders and with a history of religious suppression, aiming to be an effective



Every other week eleven church leaders from various denominations come together in our home for an in-depth study of Christian Stewardship using Timothy Leadership Training's materials. A key to TLT's worldwide success has been their use of action planning. Every participant writes a plan based on the topic at hand and reports at the next meeting on the success and/or obstacles to that plan.

The old patterns of church and leadership are giving way to new practices and healthy churches are emerging!

leader in the church presents a lot of challenges.

One of our primary goals as missionaries in Ukraine is to equip leaders with the concepts, skills, and motivation to transform churches into healthy and dynamic congregations.

George spends a lot of time training the elders of the Mukachevo congregation. In January they spent a concentrated 48 hours on planning, developing a marriage policy, and preparing to visit every family in the congregation.

One In Christ

Our church was packed beyond capacity. Not a seat was left empty. A number of people stood in the



back. It was an unusual service not only because of the crowd but because pastors and priests from four different churches—Hungarian Reformed, Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox and our church—participated in the World Council of Churches' ecumenical week. During the third service that week, George led the liturgy explaining each step as he went

along. The Roman Catholic priest preached and a representative from each church offered a blessing. One week a year we put aside our differences and focus on the fundamental unity we have in Christ.

One visitor commented to us, "These ecumenical services are the most beneficial for your church," and we would have to agree. In Ukrainian culture, congregations without a



church building and/or a historical base are considered sects. We've battled this line of thinking because we don't meet in a church building and it's one reason we believe a church building is important in this cultural context. The ecumenical week, however, helped legitimize our church because people realized that the leaders of these "established historical churches"

recognize George as a pastor and our church as something other than a sect. We thank God for the unity we have in Him and for providing this opportunity for others to see our congregation as a legitimate part of the body of Christ.