

July 2017

Dear Friends and Family,

Summer is the time for camps for people with disabilities at our church and this year we had a camp for adults and a retreat for children with disabilities and their families. It was a blessed time as many friends gathered together at the beautiful retreat center in the forest.

The camp for adults with disabilities is always a special and wonderful time that I truly love because I can see all my friends and fellowship with them. This year many patients who recently underwent rehabilitation at the Agape Rehabilitation Complex were able to attend camp and hear the Gospel. In total, we had 46 adults with disabilities, 19 members of their families and 39 volunteers from various churches. The theme of the camp was "Timeline" and we talked about different events and people from the Bible and history.

I would like to share with you one incredible experience God has allowed me to witness over the past few years. This young man's name is Vasya and I first wrote about him in an update in 2016. Pondering his story recently has caused me to express deep gratitude to God for working in the lives of people and transforming them into His image over time. I first met Vasya in May 2015 when he came to our rehabilitation center for an evaluation. Vasya sustained a spinal cord injury in 2013 when he dove and broke his neck. He lives in the same village where our church has a retreat center and where we now have all of our camps. After his injury, he was very depressed because of his paralysis and inability to feel his body below his shoulders. During the two years after his trauma, he primarily stayed inside his home where he lives with his parents and brother. He tried to seek help from various so-called "specialists" (who promised "to put him on his feet" within two-three sessions). In pursuit of any hope, he traveled to many places around the country, but the only result was deeper despair and depression. He came to our center only because his brother insisted that he see one more specialist. In his heart, Vasya decided this would be his last trip to a specialist of any kind. After his evaluation, he asked me whether he would walk again. It was a difficult but I told him



honestly that it is not possible and then went on to tell him that he could definitely learn to be more independent at home. Later he shared with me that it was crucial for him that he heard the truth for the first time. He accepted it and decided to learn to perform other skills like rolling, transferring and dressing so he could become less dependent on his family. He came to rehabilitation for 2-hour sessions twice a week for a month. It was a 2-hour trip each way between his village and Lutsk. It was a big sacrifice for his family as his brother was unable to work during that time because he was transporting Vasya. Even after rehabilitation, he continued to make great progress and learned to do many tasks independently. Vasya also decided to come to his first camp in 2015, but he generally kept to himself, parking his wheelchair away from other people and observing everything from a distance. He was very solemn and did not talk much to anyone. However, that year he made a decision to start reading the Bible. In 2016, he was invited to the camp again and at the end of the camp he made a decision to follow Jesus. It was such a big joy for me to see how God answers prayer! This year Vasya came to our camp again and he was a different person from the man we first met. He was full of joy, peace and contentment and he readily shared about his life and how God saved him. He shared his testimony this year at the camp and encouraged many people who use wheelchairs not to give up and to look for hope and meaning in life in God alone.

I am so grateful to God that He allowed me to personally see His work in Vasya's life over these past three years, to witness the drastic changes in his heart and character and to rejoice over the transforming work of the Holy Spirit! I am grateful that God used me as well as His other children to do His work. It is an honor for me to be used by Him and to see what He does in my lifetime. I learned that persistent prayer and faith brings miracles and allows us to see the extraordinary work God does around us!

