



Christian Youth Camps

of the
former
Soviet Union

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**“God is magnificent; he can never be praised enough.
There are no boundaries to his greatness.” Psalm 145:3 The Message**

CELEBRATING GOD’S AWESOME DEEDS

Hundreds of people enjoyed the inspirational banquets in Winnipeg and Abbotsford on November 1 and 9. Three of our staff and their wives joined us for the celebration. President of CCI /Transcaucasus, Valeri Buiglishvili and his wife Maia from Georgia unveiled the reasons for their commitment to Christian youth camping. “I met Jesus at camp and was baptized there. I met Maia at camp. Camp atmosphere is like heaven where everyone is happy. We show our love for each other without any pressure. There is pressure everywhere except at camp.”

Valeri and Maia told us about Georgia’s interesting culture and expressed their deep gratitude to attentive audiences for supplying the finances to build seven cabins this year at the campsite that serves many churches in Georgia.

Pavel Bakum, administrative director of CCI/ Ukraine, a camping organization consisting of 233 member camps, told us there was nothing interesting in the communist camp he attended as a teenager. “My counselor had no interest in me and was there only because he had to be. I decided never to attend another camp. But my friend had attended a CCI camp and persuaded me to join him the next year.

“My attitude changed. We built relationships in this camp. My counselor wanted to be there so the campers wanted to be there. My counselor took an interest in me and I took an interest in Jesus. My life changed. I loved what I was experiencing and returned every summer. When I was of age, I joined the camp staff working my way through the ranks and eventually becoming director. Today there are 23,000 youth in Ukraine attending a Christian camp every summer.”

Pavel told us about the war in the eastern regions of Ukraine.

cont'd on page 2



Instructors from Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and two other countries attending the Change Management and Innovation Seminar. They returned to their camps to teach their staff.

“Church buildings are being confiscated. 300,000 people have become refugees fleeing for their lives and four pastors murdered. Camp attendance was 30% less because parents were afraid of letting their children out of their sight. And many camps provided refuge for fleeing families, feeding and housing them at the camps’ expense.

“The Russian Orthodox army is persecuting non-Russian Orthodox churches. Pastors are told there is no room for other religions. Pastors are incarcerated for praying for Ukraine.

“I have a dream...I want thousands of youth to come to Christ in camp just like I did.”

Pavel added grace to the celebrations with his pleasant baritone voice and his warm heart as he sang The Love of God. And we will remember his passionate performance of Two Colours as he sang about love and sorrow mingled in their daily lives.

Vladimir Shevchenko, KVI’s lead staff in Ukraine, responsible for the entire camp leadership and curriculum development program, startled the banquet audience when he proclaimed, “I will never ever go to a camp again!” He spoke of his compulsory ten-week summer camp assignment as a university student. No program and no opportunity for relationship when responsible for 30 campers turned him cold to the Soviet camps.

But when his friend told Vladimir about his counseling experience in a Christian camp led by Canadians where each counselor had seven campers, he changed his mind.

We met Vladimir in 1992 when he served as our interpreter and eventually committed his life to Christ. In 1997 he joined our staff fulltime as interpreter, translator, then instructor and author of program resource materials. God blessed him, his wife, Vira whom he met at a leadership seminar, their two sons, and his ministry.

“God doesn’t call the qualified; He qualifies the called,” said Vladimir. “Success in the Kingdom of God goes hand-in-hand with challenges. Camps lack trained staff. Excellence can only be achieved through training. We need innovative leaders to work effectively with screen-agers.

Our leadership development strategy is Romans 12:1 & 2. Transformation and non-conformity to worldly ways comes only through the renewal of the mind by the Word, by prayer and by commitment.”



Vladimir’s passion is to inspire churches to develop consistent and authentic leaders to evangelize and disciple their youth. He ended his presentation with a strong appeal for prayer.



RISKING FOR GOD

– a Camp Director’s Report

The government cancelled the registration of our church. This makes all our activities, including camping, illegal. If caught operating our camp, huge fines or jail terms would await us and our church would be under attack and could even be closed. Despite all this, our pastor encouraged us to have a camp.

Our first step was to organize a prayer group which met twice a week for several hours to pray our camp into existence.

Finding enough staff under such circumstances takes much effort. Our faith was severely tested when some staff who had agreed to come cancelled at the last moment. We thank the Lord for

providing a mature, skilled, yet humble team that was ready to take the necessary risks.

As part of our staff training we instructed our staff what to do in the event of a police invasion. In our minds we were ready. We had already died with Christ; not only positionally, but also considered physical death should such circumstances and consequences arise.

When we took note of God’s work, our trust in Him increased and our fears evaporated. We arrived safely, ran the camp for 27 days, and left quietly. We did not see even one policeman or other authority. We thanked God for His protection and for the fruit from our summer camp. Many campers became followers of Jesus; 22 were baptized.



Who We Are...

Kingdom Ventures Inc. (KVI) founded in 1990 is a Canadian faith mission focused on training Christian Youth Camp leaders in the former Soviet Union. KVI’s Resource Teams in the former Soviet Union publish program resources and train camp leaders. KVI networks with Christliche Freizeiten Internationale (CFI) in Germany; Christian Camp and Conference Association/USA (CCCA/USA); CCI/Russia; CCI/Ukraine; and with other followers of our Lord.

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SMILE

by Vira Shevchenko

What do you think about my smile?
Do you like it?

If I smile like this in my country, people would think something is wrong with me. In my country people do not smile much. They do laugh. But smile... They do not smile much. Why not? I do not know. I think it is part of our culture.

On the other hand, as far as I know, you smile a lot. A smile here is like a message. Something like "I am fine. Everything is great with me. I have no problem." Why? We do not know. It is just the way it is. It is just your culture.

I am pretty sure that we can say the same about God. We do not know why He does what He does. He just does it. It is God. We can only observe what He does, accept it and learn from Him.

God has created His own culture – Christianity. And as any culture it has to be transferred from one generation to another.

Culture is not something you inherit. We inherit the form of our noses, the colour of our eyes or skin. But for transferring the culture you need to go through a process of education – 1) take time to learn, 2) keep and store what has been learned, 3) make a curriculum and then 4) teach.

Probably you who are sitting here, who committed yourselves to praying for children and for the KVI ministry, do not quite understand what a great role you have played in God's plan of Christian camping in Ukraine, Russia, Georgia, Moldova and other FSU countries.

Your Christian culture is an amazing thing! And Mennonites are famous as people, who have committed their own lives and lives of their family members to God; who pray hard; work hard; who seldom live in poverty and do not feast in vain. You are people whose lives exemplify God and His laws. You not only talk about God, but you do as

He has commanded. You have adopted a way of life that is a good example of Christianity.

When Dave and Elfrieda Loewen came to the FSU 24 years ago they brought 2 things – the Word of God and your culture. They preached about God and they showed the Living God with their lives. They brought the best practices. What is a best practice? It is something that works and gives good results.

So, what were the best practices they brought? First all of it was the practice of prayer. Your prayers! Everyone sitting here knows very well that the best way to reach out is first to talk to God about people, and then talk to people about God. Dave and Elfrieda taught our people to do so – they brought it from your culture and shared with us.

So today prayer is a vital part of CCI Ukraine programs. We teach children to pray to God in the way God wants us to pray to Him. It is not inherited; we are not born with it. It comes with education. So we teach our children how to pray to God.

The second thing that the KVI volunteers brought – is your *trust and support*.

Trusting God is a process. You and I know that everything we have belongs to God. How do we practice it? We learn how to trust. Probably at first we just knew about it, but did not practice it. But with time God showed us that He is trustworthy and we can put our trust in Him. Our hearts have opened and we are not afraid to give, because we know how wealthy and amazing He is, and how generously He repays those who trust in Him and Him alone. So we teach our children and leaders to trust in Him.



And the third thing is *commitment*. It is amazing how much commitment and sacrifice Dave and Elfrieda Loewen have shown these 24 years!

I am sure that they have extremely huge hearts! They gave us so much love and support. I am sure they care about Ukraine very much. You know why I know that? Their commitment has proven it.

So, every time you smile, think about the huge impact you have made on the Christian leaders, families, children and our whole culture in general. You have pushed forward the whole nation. You have done something incredible.

I am proud of my country, of my people, of those who have attended camps, who have worked and learned the best that has ever existed – to live by God's Word!

Today, a war is going on in Ukraine. The enemy wants to destroy what you and we in the name of Christ have been building for all these years. They want to destroy Christianity. Moreover, they consider Protestants as American spies and do terrible things to us.

But we have learned how to *pray*, how to *support* and how to be *committed* to what we have received from God. That is why we are sure that everything will be ok.

On behalf of the hundreds of thousands of us who have experienced your Christianity,

Thank you very much for your *prayers*.

Thank you very much for your financial *support*.

Thank you very much for your *commitment*.

Keep smiling!



TRIBUTE TO DAVE AND ELFRIEDA

- AS PRESENTED AT THE
CELEBRATION BANQUET IN
ABBOTSFORD

It is appropriate for the KVI board to give a tribute to the couple who obeyed God's call to the USSR in 1991, to train nationals to evangelize and disciple youth through church sponsored youth camps. These words come to mind as we think of Dave & Elfrieda and their work...

cont'd on page 11

GOD'S AWESOME DEEDS

Dave & Elfrieda Loewen

"This book is rich in stories that inspire and offer wonderful insights. More importantly, it is rich in stories of lives lived generously for Christ, starting with the Loewens. A quarter century after their first visit to the Former Soviet Union, the camps that emerged through a ministry they began have already touched hundreds of thousands of lives. A miracle indeed!"

Harold Jantz

"As you read this book you will be encouraged and surprised at what God can do through people who are committed to Him and believe that prayer and miracles go hand in hand."

Herb & Erna Buller



Available
December 2014

COMMISSIONING STAFF

The KVI Board of Directors commissioned their lead staff to take full ownership of the camping ministry in their respective countries. Each was presented with a hand-made engraved leather covered Bible as a symbol of the tools for their success. The Word is the Truth that sets us free for victory. The engraved praying hands symbolize faith and dependence on God. The engraved CCI logo symbolizes unity and fellowship in Christ. Each staff and spouse was prayed over by a board member.



Kneeling, left to right – Vladimir & Vira Shevchenko, Valeri & Maia Buiglishvili, Pavel & Viktoria Bakum

KVI
Victory Hymn Sing

Enjoy KVI's Final Hymn Sing
Sunday, April 12, 6:00 pm
Eastview Community Church
Winnipeg

Ruth Ens
Sing-a-long leader

Dean Pollard & Matt Neufeld

Celebrate KVI's 13 years of Hymn Sings.
Sing songs of victory in Jesus with Ruth Ens and an expanded group of singers and instrumentalists.

Hear and see Dave & Elfrieda's update on youth camps in the Former Soviet Union.

Sing The Hallelujah Chorus one more time.
Come, Celebrate Our Victory in Christ!

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www.kvicanada.org

Prayer Partner

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For those who love to pray



UKRAINE IN CRISIS

War continues in parts of eastern Ukraine. To date about 3,000 Ukrainians have died due to the war. Hundreds of thousands had to flee and have lost everything. Thank God for all who are providing food, clothing and shelter for those refugees. Many are living in unheated facilities.

Due to the war Ukraine's gas supplies have been greatly reduced and millions are facing the winter in a cold climate. Pray for peace in Ukraine. Praise God for the spirit of prayer which is very alive throughout Ukraine. Pray for unity among believers.



STAFF REQUESTS PRAYER

Vladimir Shevchenko gave a strong appeal for prayer at the banquets. He encouraged the audience to praise God for the thousands of camp staff who are committed to Christ and to Christian camping. And more staff are urgently needed. Ask God to call and send leaders who are open to be trained to lead with excellence.

Camps are not filled to capacity. Ask God to fill every camp and continue to raise up a new generation.

And most importantly, pray that God's will be done in Ukraine. Pray for unity and cooperation among the various denominations

About Prayer

"The Lord is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth. He fulfills the desires of those who fear Him; He hears their cry and saves them."

Psalm 145:18 & 19

The key to effective praying - prayer that produces results, is to align our desires with God's will. Calling on Him in truth and fearing Him, the two requirements stated in Psalm 145, means we are seeking His kingdom and His righteousness above all else. When God has first place in our lives, He trusts us with His answers.

We have seen many camp leaders stepping out in faith and getting into circumstances they cannot handle. God sees truth in them, responds to their cry, fulfills their desires and saves them. And the Kingdom of God is moved forward on earth.



WHERE CAMPS ARE ILLEGAL

Thank God for the churches and staff who took the risk of operating camps and that as far as we know, no camp experienced interference. Thank God for all the parents who took the risk of sending their children to Christian camps.

Ask God for the registration of the churches to be restored by the Committee on Religious Affairs.

Pray for the spiritual development of the campers as they participate in Bible studies and various youth activities provided by the church.

Ask God to provide the people with courage and faith to stay true to Him when they are persecuted.



SASHA AND MARINA

Marina, mother to 10 year-old Sasha, agreed to send him to camp. A friend had offered her a campership for Sasha. But when it was time for Sasha to go to camp, Marina worried about how he would adjust so asked if she could go to camp to care for him. Permission was granted on the condition that she would not interfere.

Everything was new and exciting in this Christian environment for both mother and son. They felt accepted and absorbed the atmosphere. During a chapel service Sasha responded to the call to repentance.

Marina stood in amazement watching Sasha. Her life changed. After camp both began attending church regularly. Marina is already baptized. Praise God for families who experience new life in Christ at camp.



ORPHAN CAMP

“Today I received a gift of enormous value – the Bible. I have waited for this moment for a long time,” exclaimed one camper. Many of the orphans accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour and are growing in Him through reading their Bibles and attending the follow-up programs. Many have formed good habits after experiencing forgiveness and healing of their deeply wounded hearts. “It was a miracle and we all noticed it,” said one of the counselors.

Praise God for His work of grace and ask God to supply all counselors, open doors in the orphanages and willing attitudes in orphans for fruitful follow-up. Ask God to supply sufficient funds for 80 orphans to attend camp in 2015.



cont'd from pg 6

These words come to mind as we think of Dave & Elfrieda and their work...

1. COURAGEOUS – like Abraham you entered a foreign land not knowing where or how events would unfold. You had more than 25 years of experience in the camping ministry in Canada, but not in a culture like the Soviet Union. You had the courage to step out.

2. CALLED – You have an unwavering sense that this is where and what God had called you to do, that God would direct your paths and also walk before you. You knew you were doing God’s work.

3. DETERMINED – After the Arnes’ years when the FSU challenge was given, you grabbed on and pursued the goal of training camp leaders with all your might. This determination was expressed through strong leadership that was needed there as it is needed here.

4. ENTHUSIASTIC – I don’t know of a time or any board meeting when you were not excited about this ministry. It was part of you. You were always enthusiastic about what God was doing through youth camps in the land from which your parents came. Your enthusiasm was contagious and inspired the board and staff.

5. COMPETENT – God was preparing you for this ministry during your years at Camp Arnes. You came to the FSU with expertise that was needed and appreciated. You learned a lot more there and God blessed you.

6. COMMITTED TO PRAYER – The Prayer Partner is testament to this. You never apologized for appealing for prayer. You were convinced that only through the prayers of God’s people would the work succeed. Your legacy, as a board member put it, is your belief in the power of prayer. May God continue to bless you as you devote the next leg of your journey to writing leadership manuals that will inspire the pursuit of excellence in Christian camps!

This prayer bulletin is published bi-monthly. If you are not receiving it bi-monthly and would like to, please notify us at kingdomventures@msn.com or call us at 204-224-4175 or write to: Kingdom Ventures Inc. PO Box 38144, East St. Paul MB R2E 1H3 to receive the bi-monthly issue by post mail.

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE TO GIVE . . .



KVI STRATEGY FOR 2015

We are clearing the deck for Dave & Elfrieda to give priority to writing urgently needed books promoting excellence in camp leadership. Therefore this newsletter will be the last issue of the Christian Youth Camps of the former Soviet Union.

We will keep in touch with the Prayer Partner which will be published six times in 2015 – February, April, June, August, October and December. Sending it by email saves much time and money so please send your email address to kingdomventures@msn.com

If you do not have email, you can receive the Prayer Partner via post mail. We need your continued prayer support.

God has blessed KVI with sufficient financial resources in 2014 to carry out all leadership development programs, pay staff salaries, sponsor an orphan camp and a boys' camp, and pay all administrative expenses. Thank you for your help.

Your continued generosity will make it possible for our five fulltime and four part-time staff to carry out the leadership development events planned for 2015 and to prepare the program resources needed for the camps. 80 orphans and 72 teenage boys are also counting on your generosity so they can attend camp.

Donation Policy: Spending of funds is confined to KVI Board approved projects. Gifts designated towards approved projects are used as designated with the understanding that when the need for a project has been met, or the project cannot be completed for any reason determined by the Board, designated gifts will be used where needed most. Gifts are acknowledged with a receipt for income tax purposes.

RESPONSE TO KVI – DECEMBER 2014

Donation for: Training Camp Leaders \$ _____; Where Needed \$ _____

____ I would like to be added to the KVI bi-monthly Prayer Partner mail list.

____ I am purchasing ____ book(s) \$16 & \$5 shipping = \$21 x ____ book(s) = \$ _____

Name _____ Telephone _____

Address: Street _____ City _____

Prov/State _____ Postal Code _____

My email address is _____

Please make cheques payable to Kingdom Ventures Inc. and send to:
Kingdom Ventures Inc. PO Box 38144 East St Paul, MB R2E 1H3

To donate by Pay Pal go to www.kvicanada.org.