

March 31, 2017

Grace and peace to you, dear friends!

By the grace of God, we have lived through another month in Moldova. March is a month of transition between winter and spring. The snow on the ground is gone; the temperature is slowly going up. However, it is not unusual for sharp changes in the weather during this month – sometimes it is quite warm outside, sometimes it is cold. Such changes in the weather are not healthy and our bodies are reacting with high blood pressure. With God's help, we are trying to keep it under control. Our prayer is that the Lord would help us adapt physically to the local climate.



March was marked by active work at the University and participating in ministry at the Union of Baptist Churches of Moldova. Also, a very important event was our son's (Ben) visit.

Below are a few highlights of the past month.



As I have mentioned in my previous newsletters, the student body of the University I am teaching at is multinational. Many of them came from the former republics of the USSR, located in Central Asia. At the beginning of each class I ask one of the students to pray in his/her native language. It is moving experience to hear prayers in Kirgiz, Kazakh, Tadjik, Uzbek, and Moldovan. It is very touching and joyful to me. For me

it is a visible illustration of God's creative power demonstrated in creating different cultures and people groups. Also, it is proof that the course I am teaching, *Cross-Cultural Communication*, has its importance for students not only in their future professional and ministry life. It is important for them now since they are part of a multicultural student body. They can practice what they learned in class in their relations with other students on campus right now.

During one of the conversations about culture shock, I asked out of the students what impressed them the most when they came to Moldova. Students who came from Central Asia shared that they were impressed by the religious freedom they observe in Moldova. They were surprised to hear Christian radio programs. Also, they told me that they saw a group of Christian youth playing guitar in the park and singing Christian songs openly, and nobody

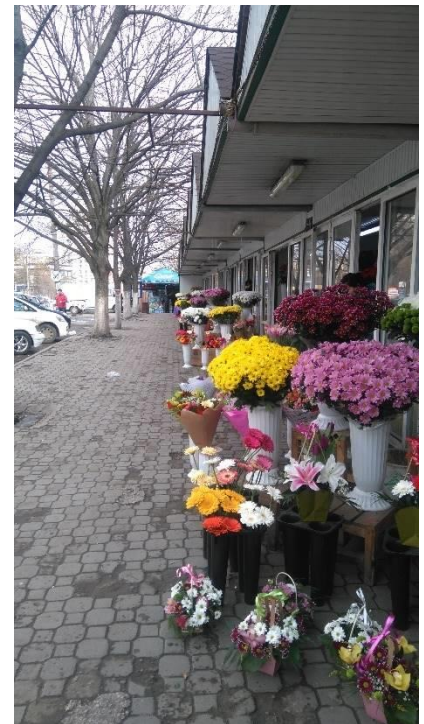
prohibited them from doing that. For Christians in Central Asia, this kind of freedom is only in dreams. Praise God for such freedom that the people in Moldova have today!



Every Tuesday morning, the Moldova Baptist Union office team has a meeting. They come together to pray and discuss plans for the day and week. I was invited to one of these meetings to share a devotional. I was glad to have this opportunity to meet all workers of the Union office and to pray

with them. In the office, there are elected officials – Bishop, Vice-Bishop, and Executive Secretary. Also, there is staff in the office, like an accountant, attorney, leader of youth department, mission department and others. God brought together a good team of people dedicated to His work. I am privileged to serve them and with them.

It was interesting for Nina and me to observe how people celebrate the March 8<sup>th</sup> holiday. We felt like we were back in time for about 40 years! This is a state holiday in Moldova. No work for government employees. There are a lot of flowers offered for sale in town on that day. In addition to regular flower shops that are in operation around the clock, there are many other people selling flowers on every corner in the city. There are tulips of different kinds, roses and other flowers are available to be purchased and given to the most beautiful part of the humankind. Excitement is expressed on faces of people on the street. Men are everywhere with bouquets of flowers. The weather was nice as well – sunny and warm.





On one of Sundays, March 12, Nina and I had the opportunity to visit a church with an unusual name – *Church Without Walls*.

The senior pastor of the church is Alexandr Belev who is the son of a much-respected Baptist minister in Moldova of the past, Ivan Belev. The church we attended on that Sunday was planted in post-Soviet time. Its



ministry focus is care for the social needs of people and evangelism. The style of the Sunday service worship is more modern and is different from traditional Baptist churches. I was given an opportunity to preach at that service. After the service, Nina and I were invited to the pastor's home. While having a good lunch, we learned more about the church ministries. Also, we learned about Alexandr Belev's ministry as Director of *School Without Walls*. This is an educational program designed for training young church leaders. It was developed by the mission organization *Mission Eurasia* (formerly *Russian Ministries*) based in Chicago, IL. Classes are held at local churches around the former Soviet Union. Many practical, useful courses are developed and are available for churches to train their youth.

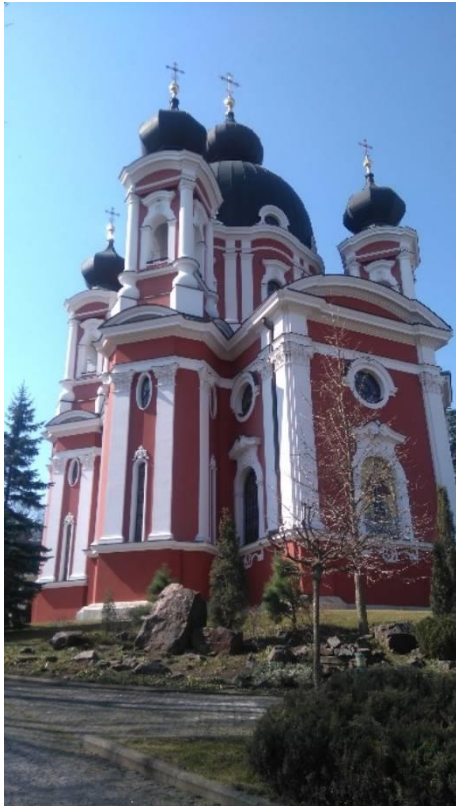


A very joyful event for Nina was a meeting with her friend from her youth, Vera. They have not seen each other for 39 years. Many years ago, they lived together in the city of Gomel, Belorussia. Later, they moved in different regions of the country – Nina moved to Riga, Latvia, and Vera moved to Chisinau, Moldova. And now, after learning that Nina and I have moved to Chisinau, Vera found us and this exciting meeting took place.

A special blessing for us during this month was a visit of our son, Benjamin. He is teaching high school math in LA. During his spring break, he visited us. His presence with us brought some comfort to us in terms of the heartache we feel because of our separation from our



children and grandchildren. He spent one week with us, March 19-27. We introduced him to our life and ministry. He had an opportunity to visit local churches and the Christian university I am working at, sitting in on my classes. Also, I asked him to make a presentation on Chinese culture to my students. Last summer, Ben taught English in China. So, he has something to say about China and its culture. Students in my class were happy to hear about China from an American who speaks Russian.



We also provided Ben with some introduction to the city of Chisinau. Also, we have shown him some special places in Moldova. On March 23, Dmitriy Sebastian, Vice-Rector of the University, kindly sacrificed his valuable time to take us to a famous place—a monastery in the caves built in 1675. It is in Old Orhei—a very picturesque area, one hour drive from Chisinau. The monastery is situated on the side of a steep gorge. Also, we were able to visit one of the most beautiful monasteries in Bessarabia, the Curchi monastery. It was founded in 1773 and is in operation today. It is 55km from Chisinau. We were very impressed by what we saw at these two famous places.

After Ben’s departure, Nina and I are alone again, and a little bit sad.

On March 19, during Sunday morning service I preached at the *Bethany* church in Chisinau. We plan to join that congregation as its members.

On March 30, I had a unique opportunity. The bishop of Moldova Baptist Union, Ion Miron, invited me to preach to the leaders of the Union. On that day, more than 50 leading pastors overseeing groups of churches in different geographical regions (there are nine of them in the Union) gathered for their regular meeting, in Chisinau.



This group of ministers together with Bishop, Vice-Bishop and Executive Secretary create the



governing body of the Union and is called *Sovet Souza*. It provides leadership for the Union between Congresses that are called once in four years. All these brothers are experienced ministers and preachers. To speak to such an audience is quite challenging. It was a privilege and honor for me to do so. After delivering a sermon, I had the opportunity to observe personally how the *Sovet Souza* works. I had a chance to experience the atmosphere of the meeting. I was pleased to witness that the leadership of the Moldovan Baptist brotherhood is united in leading their churches.



On March 31, I was invited to take part in the business meeting of pastors of churches that are part of the Baptist Union and located in Chisinau. For me it was a good opportunity to observe how pastors work at the local level. My impression was positive. The atmosphere of the meeting was friendly with mutual respect between participants.

I was pleased with what I observed.

Nina and I are very grateful to all of you who are praying for our ministry. Please continue doing that. We need prayer support. Please pray that God would provide us with physical health and wisdom – both are needed for ministry.

We are praying for all of you as well, asking God that He would fill your hearts with love and grace.

**«Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all!» (2Thes. 3:16).**

With love,

Vyacheslav and Nina Tsvirinko  
Chisinau, Moldova