



ukrainian education center

Issue 23

Annual Report for 2008

Please visit our blog at www.ukrainianeducationcenter.blogspot.com

New Sister in Christ

by Ira Ikonnikova



Liuda and Ira, two sisters, working at the UEC

Many of us know that wonderful feeling of joy and happiness that fills our hearts when we enter a new family - a family of believers. Isn't it a great gift from a Father - to give us not just His love, but brothers and sisters to support us. I have experienced the warmth of Nivky church and since the day I came there I also acquired a dream - to have my natural family join me in this spiritual one. Last year my dream came true.

Liuda Ikonnikova is my sister. If you have brothers or sisters, you probably know that relationships between siblings aren't always the best. There might be arguments or even fights, disagreements and then not always easy peacemaking process. And Liuda and I weren't an exception. But after I came to Christ our relationships started to change. I wanted to show her the love God has for her but it was impossible without showing my love too. We

became much closer, and after I finished my first year in the university in Kyiv in the summer of 2006, I invited my sister to come and visit me for a week. That was the first time Liuda met the Nivky church family. She attended a small group meeting and a Sunday service at the church and since that vacation she never was the same any more.

A year later, in September of 2007, Liuda moved to Kyiv to study in Kyiv-Mohyla academy. As for any freshmen, it was hard for her at first to get used to being away from home and living in the dorm, so the Ukrainian Education Center became a second home for Liuda. She would come here almost every day and spend time with people who helped her grow and mature in her

"...it was a surprise and the best birthday present I couldn't even dream about...my sister Liuda was baptized and now is not only my blood sister, but my spiritual sister as well".

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Our Mission

Promoting a living faith in Jesus Christ by meeting educational needs in Kyiv

New Sister in Christ

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faith. After Christmas she started coming to Nivky church trying not to miss even one Sunday. Our center library also helped her share her faith with her friends and fellow students. She uses the books we have on religion to present a perspective on theological topics which is different than described in the textbooks offered by the university.

Liuda was also actively involved with the Let's Start Talking team which was working with us in the summer of 2008. She attended

reading sessions and also helped organizing parties or taking our American guests sightseeing around Kyiv. I could say that communication with strong Christians really helped her grow in her faith. After the classes with the LST team were over Liuda came to me and said she had a surprise for me. She told me she decided to get baptized. Indeed, it was a surprise and the best birthday present I couldn't even dream about.

So two months later, on September 28th 2008 my sister Liuda was



Liuda Ikonnikova, a new Nivky church member

baptized and now is not only my blood sister, but my spiritual sister as well. It was also symbolic for us because exactly three years before, on the last Sunday of September, I came to Nivky church for the first time.

Now Liuda is an active member of her small group and the church community as well. Now she is the member of our family.



Liuda is welcomed into the family after the baptism



Liuda cooking for the Nivky church outreach

UEC's Impact on Youth

by Vitaly Samodin



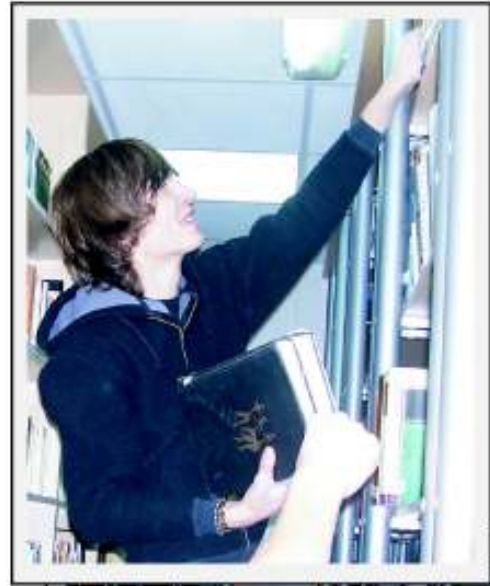
Katya Gornaya, a new UEC patron

Katya was among many National Economic University students invited to attend English Bible study led by Vitaly Samodin on Wednesday nights at the Ukrainian Education Center. Katya came to the UEC to seek answers at a crucial time in her life. Her mother had just passed away from cancer and being

from Orthodox background, Katya wanted to learn about heaven and hell, eternity and life's hardships. Very soon it became evident that she had a very sharp mind, that does not cease looking for the truth until it finds it. Katya comes every time and our study of the Word goes deeper and deeper. She also became a frequent library user. She recently read *A Grief Observed* by C. S. Lewis to help her cope with the loss of her mother. And now she is reading *A Case For Faith* by Lee Strobel and *The Great Divorce* by C. S. Lewis. These books shed more light for her on the subject of Christianity and faith. Katya also likes to check out books from our history collection.

Last time we talked about how the world treats us if we choose to follow God in the context of cheating. It is quite common for university students in Kyiv to cheat on their exams because education is often equaled to receiving a diploma, rather than learning. After the study Katya wrote me a moving email, where she shared how she decided not to cheat last summer - and as a result despite studying day and night for a month, she still got a 60 on her entrance exam to MBA program. She was very stressed out because that would mean that she would have to pay 2,500 dollars for her tuition, the money that she could not afford. She prayed and prayed and finally as the results were posted, she found out she was accepted into the program. 60 was ruled to be the lowest passing grade for MBA. But ever since that time she was disappointed in trying not to cheat - because she said it is very difficult to watch other students excel as they pay bribes. Through our study God was able to encourage her to stick to integrity and accept consequences. That is one of the ways to testify to the world. During our last study she also said something that really moved me: "I come to the study because this is the only place where people listen to me". That was also the first time we prayed aloud together. The Ukrainian Education Center makes a huge difference in the lives of young people like Katya. Please pray for her that she continues to grow in faith.

Pictured on the right: students at the UEC library



2008 in Review

by Vitaly Samodin

Finances

Financially, it has been a difficult year for us. We have run a deficit of over \$8,200 this year. But God has not abandoned us in the midst of the financial crisis. There were several situations when we could clearly see God's grace and provision. Unexpectedly, someone would give a large donation or local Christians would show their

support. This year a new record has been set in terms of financial support from the local community. Never before did we have almost \$4,000 donated locally. We praise God for our faithful supporters in the United States and Ukraine.

Thank you for going through the recession with us.

Summary of UEC Donations and Expenditures in 2008

Donations		Expenditures	
Churches and Individuals	\$34,192.10	Development	\$768.12
Kyiv Donations	\$3,845.13	Kitchen/Cleaning Supplies	\$725.64
Gifts Through Amazon	\$37.12	Legal Expenses	\$237.78
Interest	\$13.59	Library/Computer Center Supplies	\$2,476.99
		Maintenance/Equipment	\$844.70
		Regular Monthly Expenses	\$3,685.77
		Salaries and Taxes	\$37,580.26
TOTAL	\$38,087.94	TOTAL	\$46,319.26



Pictured on the left: older patrons enjoying a cup of warm tea and a conversation in the UEC kitchen.

Pictured below: UEC employee Ira showing a new library collection to Masha, a regular patron.



Financial Donors

We want to say a special thank you to everyone who made donations to the UEC this winter. It shows us again and again that God cares for us and what we are doing here in Kyiv and continues to provide money for the operation of the Center. We are thankful that despite the full-swing global recession we are able to keep our doors open to Ukrainian students, needing a place to study, rest and learn more about God and Christianity. Thank you for partnering with us to reach out to the young people here!

We thank these generous 2008 donors and anyone we might have overlooked.

Mr. and Mrs. Bogdan Andriychenko

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Library and Resource Center



Nikolay, one of the UEC patrons, donating hundreds of books from his church's library

Of course we are not the only ones affected by the crisis - our patrons also experience hardships related to it. In an effort to help them, we opened internet access to our patrons. At a very low cost for us (\$15 a month) we are able to provide internet access which would cost our patrons at least \$2 per hour at any internet cafe. Many of our patrons are using internet to study, yet there are those who are looking for jobs and we have been able to provide internet access and train them to use it to email their resumes to different companies.

Our library collection continued to expand beyond our ability to shelve it. Dr. Houk from Highland Street Church of Christ donated many chemistry books, which we used to minister to the National Medical University in just a ten minute walk from the Ukrainian

Education Center. The Head of the Chemistry Department was exulted as she saw the books we donated. Since the university offers an English language program for foreign students, and there is always a shortage of textbooks, our donation is invaluable.

We are also indebted to our brothers and sisters who donated over 140 DVDs to our media collection. Movies in the digital format are of great value to our library as many patrons can improve their language skills by watching them with English subtitles on. Many DVDs in Ukraine don't offer this option. We also use donated DVDs for our movie night outreach. Thankfully every time there is always a good movie to show, not just to entertain but make our patrons think beyond their day to day activities.

Ministry

This is the most exciting part of our report as there are so many good things to share with you. In the fall I started two outreaches. On Tuesday night I facilitated free discussions on God and the Bible. We invited our patrons to come, share their ideas, and ask any questions they had about Christianity. The first several weeks I just spent sitting at the study room on my own, but slowly people started coming. I had so many conversations with so many people, which made me aware of the many hidden influences on the minds of young people in our country. I talked to a Croatian man, who believed in Zoroastrianism. I talked to Ukrainians influenced by Hindu religion. I talked to Christians affected by emotionalism and positive thinking in their churches. After several meetings Rick Walker who used the Center before to teach Bible classes before, came along to help in these discussions. Thanks

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Dr. Kalibabchuk, Head of the Medical University Chemistry Department, grateful for books donated by Dr. Houk

Financial Donors

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 news at our blog**

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Ministry

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Four preachers from Nivky church meet for a weekly encouragement at the UEC

to him we were able to have more formal teaching on the proofs of Bible's uniqueness and validity, which spurred even more interest and further discussion. This study now has a life of its own and we are very thankful to God for enabling us have this time when anyone interested in spiritual matters can come and receive real nourishment for their minds and souls.

I dedicated Wednesday night to English Bible study. There are always people interested in practicing their English speaking skills, while also learning something about God and the Bible. I was quite surprised by the people God brought to this study. Lilya, a designer and a psychologist, came to find out more about the purpose of life. Katya, came to find answers to the question of suffering in this world - there is a separate article dedicated to her in this newsletter. There is also Masha, whose parents died when she was only 15 years old and she had to learn the hard way how to cope with life's hardships. She is now opening her heart to the gentleness of the Lord. There are many other people like that, whose

stories I can share, whose lives are not the same because of the UEC.

Also throughout the week, I offer one on one English Bible classes. I continue to study with a Muslim Iranian and his Christian friend, who helps me communicate ideas to him in his native language. I am also meeting with Kostya who has come under heavy influence of Eastern thinking. He is now reading *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis, which we plan to discuss. I also meet with Luba, whom I met just a year ago. She has shown tremendous growth in her faith. These meetings provide a great opportunity to share faith on a personal, deep level with each individual.

Most importantly, through all these ministry activities we meet young people and are able to minister to those, who are either completely or partially submerged in the darkness of this world and need the light of Christ to shine into their hearts. The Ukrainian Education Center is that kind of light to them, shining brightly with the hope of glory, Christ in us.