

Dear friends and partners in ministry!

“Do not be afraid, calm down!
He who sleeps peacefully in a manger,
Will pacify the storms of the world.”

One evening a week ago, my mother had an acute episode of severe hypertension. I was terrified, watching her have seizures and not being able to help. The ambulance arrived 30 minutes later, and I was sure God sent two special angels disguised as paramedics. They did their best, helping to normalize my mother’s blood pressure and stop her seizures. But they didn’t have any good news for me. They were not even sure that she would regain consciousness, much less be able to talk. The future looked scary.

Miraculously, my mother regained consciousness the next day, though she was very weak. I told her that it was Christmas Eve and asked if she remembered any Christmas song. She immediately recalled the lines I quoted above!

I remembered that this song was also one of my father’s favorite Christmas hymns. I did a quick Google search and found out that it was translated from Swedish to Russian over 100 years ago. May it be a New Year wish for all of us on the threshold of 2021!

Now let me give you a very short update about REALIS and our family.

REALIS: Research, Education and Light

- Even though our family has managed to stay away from COVID-19, five members of the REALIS team and their families caught the virus. For two of them, it was quite an ordeal. Tanya, a researcher who got sick back in spring, is still battling severe long-term symptoms of the illness. As a result, our **forgiveness research project** slowed down. We had to work at double speed during these past few months and hope to get back on track by the end of January 2021.
- In November we had an online graduation ceremony for students of our **Digital Theology** program. Seventeen students received their certificates, and six of those are now working on their Master’s thesis: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qfQt-O5c5W8&feature=emb_logo
- This spring we plan to open **enrollment** for two programs: Digital Theology and Christian Counseling.
- Last fall we started a new program called **Leadership in Ministry**. This one-year program was designed for believers who are already engaged in ministry but lack theological education. We accepted 30 students, plus we regularly have several people audit courses.
- Our “**Preaching Club**” – a learning community of preachers who encourage and challenge one another – continues to meet three times a month. In just one year we

achieved excellent results: more preachers who love to work hard on their sermons and more good biblical expository sermons!

- Our **Counseling Clinic**, equipped with two full-time and three part-time counselors, has been working nonstop. Our goal is to bring the light of the Gospel to both believers and unbelievers who have heard about REALIS' counseling ministry and come for help.

Tymchenko Family Update

The year 2020 didn't bring too many changes in our lives, besides those common to everyone in a pandemic. We already miss Katya, who is working hard through a very demanding MBA program at Rochester University. We also feel blessed to have Ilya and Nathalie stay in Kyiv through this summer. Ilya deferred his acceptance to Tufts University until September 2021. Andrey continues to teach corporate English lessons and has enjoyed developing his video DJ-ing skills. So we will continue to enjoy the company of Ilya, Nathalie, Andrey, and Mariana (Andrey's fiancé) every weekend during the first half of 2021. Masha's husband, Michael, was unemployed in 2019, but miraculously got a contract job with eBay right before the pandemic started. Just two weeks ago he was hired as a full-time attorney at eBay, and they are both feeling very blessed. Masha is still enjoying her research job in the University of Utah's Advancement department. Despite our children scattering around the globe again, we all keep in touch daily through a WhatsApp group chat and frequent video calls.

Irina continues to create a safe and cozy haven for the family and plans to enroll in an online interior design program this year.

Last but not least, I mentioned in my last newsletter that we needed a new car and we hoped that the Lord would provide an extra few thousand dollars. We want to thank you for your prayers and generosity. With your gifts we were able to get a car that I could not even dream of. It is a 2016 Honda CR-V: spacious, comfortable, and very reliable on Ukrainian roads. Praise the Lord, and thank you for being good friends and faithful partners.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Sergiy and Irina

