

“Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord,...”

(2 Timothy 1:8, ESV)

Reflections from the team...



Dear friends,

We're very glad to bring you some reflections from the life of VBH during the second half of 2013.

In the last newsletter I said that the summer term was defined by a hunger for God and his word. That has continued to be true. At the beginning of their winter semester students from the Prešov group prepared a questionnaire with one question: If you could ask God one question, what would it be? Students gave many questions to do with their future, career, marriage, identity, about injustice and suffering, the meaning of life, assurance of salvation and other different philosophical questions. The students from the group used these questions as themes for different evangelistic events and much interest has been shown. It's a great encouragement to see how students seek to engage their fellow students and look for opportunities to invite them to read and discuss the bible in an open and welcoming atmosphere. The kitchen workshop in Nitra is an example of students being in contact with their fellow students. Spending time learning how to cook new and tasty food is also a good way of inviting students to a bible study. In each city something original is happening thanks to the initiative of believing students. It needs to be said that it's not a guaranteed thing that someone gives their precious time to prepare different activities for their fellow students. It costs not just time, effort and money, but also courage and self-denial. It's not always popular to raise questions publically about God. That is why I pray that VBH groups would be a place where quality bible study happens, but also that it would be a place where people support each other and build loving relationships as a practical expression of God's love. With humility we want to continue to look for the best ways to encourage and help students to take the initiative and to continue to witness to the gospel, which brings fruit.

Martin Mražík (VBH General Secretary)

Heledd Job

Looking back over this last semester it's hard to think of one thing that stands out. But here are a few things that have encouraged me.

I've been encouraged to see that VBH groups are places that students who are not sure about their relationship with God can come and find encouragement and help. It's been great to see the love and welcome VBH students show them. It's also been a privilege to talk to them personally about Jesus and why they should follow him.

I've been encouraged by the perseverance of students despite discouragement. I've been meeting with a student in the veterinary university to try and start a new group. We've had no response so far, but the student has continued to pray, especially for her roommate and has had opportunities to talk and pray with her.

Another encouragement has been seeing VBH students desire to grow and live out their faith in the everyday reality of life. Over the last week I've been reading Hebrews and these verses from chapter 10 struck me: "...let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together... but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the Day approaching". I've seen this happen and that is also a great encouragement to me.



Beata Szrejder

September marked three years since I came to Slovakia. I'm very thankful to God for that time, for all His blessings. Last semester was again full of God's grace. It was a great joy for me to see how God brought new students to groups. The Lord God himself through his word encouraged student groups and helped them to be a faithful witness to His goodness and grace amongst other students.

The group in Nitra this semester regularly studied the letter to the Ephesians. We were

able to see in detail what we have in Jesus by God's grace. We also had a special meeting with guests who spoke to us about what a good marriage looks like.

In Bratislava students continue to use their lunch break for prayer meetings and for strengthening each other in God's Word. Despite not having a place to meet, they still want to continue to pray and so use the university corridor.

In Trnava the group is no longer functioning, though I believe that the Lord God hears prayers and that other students will come who will want to get involved. I'm grateful to God for personal meetings that I have had with students there, and for the opportunity to study God's Word in the pizzeria!

The biggest joy for me has been the kitchen workshop, which we have organised and invited students to in Nitra. Together we have learnt how to cook healthy and tasty food. Through this we've had many good experiences. What's encouraged me most is that after cooking together someone has always stayed longer and we've been able to talk about God, another aim we had for this kitchen workshop. We've spent a lot of time chatting with one student in particular, we've shared our testimony with him and we pray that God will continue to work in his life.

Nicholas Haydock

Where can I flee from your presence?

If I go up to the heavens, you are there;

if I make my bed in the depths, you are there

If I rise on the wings of the dawn,

if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.



(Ps. 139:7-10)

My testimony is God's continuing presence with us. Of course I personally know this in a geographical sense because I have experienced it on both sides of Europe. Yet it is also true on a deeper level. The psalmist here talks about knowing God in the heights and the depths, and this is something I have known personally and we've experienced together as a team.

For me personally there have been times of great encouragement; where I have seen students find fellowship and grow in their relationship with God, times when I have seen students catch the vision and share the gospel with boldness, and in these times it is easy to rejoice in what God is clearly doing.

Even still there have been times of discouragement, difficulties facing us as a team as we look to grow, times when things don't go as planned or you see students struggling to grasp the vision of God's mission. We can have comfort in knowing that- even in such times His hand leads us and His right hand holds us.

This assurance that God is with us through all situations is a reality. Please pray for us as a team as we seek to grow and transition, that we would remain attentive to God's presence with us.

Student testimonies

Discovery Camp (VBH Summer English Conversation Camp)



One student, Milka, writes about her experience: "I went to the camp so that I would experience something new and different to what I was used to and because I wanted to be with people, because I had been at home for a long time and I'm a very sociable person. I also wanted to get to know new people, and I knew that some people from Britain would come, and so I was looking forward to speak to them during the camp.

I registered and looked forward to going. The first day I got to know everyone and got an idea of what the camp would be like. I was surprised by how it all was. I really liked the program, it felt very laid back. We had lots of time to chat and get to know each other. It was great because I could make some new friendships. During my whole time there I sensed that God had called me there. It was like a spiritual balm for my spirit, which I had needed for a long time because I was exhausted by a year of school, relationships and problems in my family. Through the words I heard in the talks, prayers and through conversations with people I knew that I should be exactly where I was. Every day was great for me and all those problems and cares didn't exist for that week. I felt really welcomed there, as if I belonged. Even though at the beginning I had some inhibitions because I belong to a different church, God gave me the feeling that it was a blessed place and time. I found some great friends from this country as well as from Britain, great people which you don't find every day. That's why in the end I stayed at the camp an extra day. I really didn't want to go home.

Lastly I want to say that I was really encouraged in my faith through the testimony of some of the participants. It really was great and I haven't forgotten it. I believe that for all the other participants too it was a very encouraging and blessed time." Milka

Ponorka 2013 winter semester

On our website for over a year we've posted news from Banska Bystrica about the project Ponorka public discussions for students, teachers and public figures, on themes to do with ethics, philosophy and community. Bibiána gives us some reflections on the winter



term:

"In the winter semester of 2013 we ran a series looking at "science vs. faith?". In October's Ponorka with researcher Ladislav Hromada who led us to think about ethics and faith in chemical research. He used concrete case studies that the audience could discuss. At the following Ponorka in November we looked at the field of quantum physics with Daniel Nagaj, PhD., who works with Slovak Academy of Science Bratislava. We looked at some ethical and theological questions that are relevant to his field. At the last Ponorka we explored physics through the lens of faith and ethics. Our guest speaker was

Dr. Dalibor Krupa, D.Phil. from the Institute of Physics at the Slovak Academy of Science who gained his doctorate in Oxford and is the former president of the Slovak Physical Association and a member of many physical associations abroad. This last semester in Ponorka we've had the opportunity to invite scientists who have presented science from a non-traditional view, they have given us lots of interesting information and have motivated students to look for answers to their questions. We are very grateful that this semester again we have been able to create dialogue in the academic world and fill that need to give strategic answers to the big questions of life, and most significantly to see the relevance of Christ emerge."

You will find more current information at www.vbh.sk.

International group in Košice

Since there are many international students studying in Slovakia, during the last two semesters Nicholas has been working to find international believers and start a group. The group is now up and running and Iryna tells us a bit about it:

"The term has been going great, though maybe not exactly the way I was expecting or wishing. In the beginning, there was some tension and inconvenience about the focus/aim and the leading of the group, little interest from the university students, hindrance and ridicule from classmates and friends. But God has been faithful, worked in our hearts in the challenges - brought more openness, comfort & obedience; grew our earnestness in prayer, leading and studying Scripture. I believe we grew a lot in knowledge and love for our Heavenly Father and His children, in leadership and learned many new ideas and ways for it. We grew bolder in witness and were constantly encouraged by the Scriptures and mutual support and prayers in the midst of mocking and opposition from others. One Christian, Esther, a general medicine student from England, joined our group of 4 believers (Jasna, Nicholas, Heledd, Iryna), and I'm excited and expecting one more believer from Portugal to join us next year. Praising and thanking The Lord for working in and through us, the international university community, and growing us in maturity, love, and service".

We pray that this group will not only be an encouragement for believing students outside their own countries, but that God also uses it to spread the gospel further amongst unbelievers too.

Current prayer point you can find at:

<http://www.vbh.sk/english/currentprayer>

SLOVAKIA



Please, pray for us!



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