



In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your **partnership in the gospel** from the first day until now.... Phil. 1:4-5

## A Closer Look at Life and Ministry in Ukraine

### Praise Reports:

- Thanks to God for directing Karissa in her decision to attend Boyce College in Louisville, KY for the next 4 years.
- The joy and blessing we have of reconnecting with friend from the past and seeing how God has faithfully worked in their lives.

### Prayer Requests:

- Discipline to make the Lord our treasure so that we eagerly trust and obey him.
- Continued provision of support as God directs.

### **We Need Your Help!**

We would like to make sure that we have the correct names and street addresses to go with your e-mail addresses.

If you can, please go to: [www.sendbenge.com/aboutyou](http://www.sendbenge.com/aboutyou) and fill out the information page. The username is **friend** and the password is **partner**.

Thanks!

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**Note:** In this edition of the *Benge Bulletin*, we want to give you a glimpse of the impact that theological education is having on the men and women preparing for Gospel ministry in Ukraine. This testimony comes from *Face Value*, a publication of *Kyiv Theological Seminary*.

Before his first meeting with Kolya, Joseph Todikash was more than a little uncomfortable. He was cautious not only because Kolya was sick, but also because he is a part of the Roma nation, often called Gypsies, who tend to have a bad reputation. Todikash's pastor ministers to Roma people and wanted to get him involved as well. "I didn't even want to get out of the car," Todikash said. "But when I visited Kolya something happened in my life. Later, as I studied the history of the Romas, I saw that these people are rejected by Ukrainians and that their behavior is motivated by this suffering and rejection." Now, three years later, Todikash is planting a church for Roma people in western Ukraine, and Kolya is his inspiration.

"Not long after I met him, Kolya was sent home from the hospital to die of cancer, but today he is still alive, and his life has changed completely," he said. Todikash saw his amazing transformation firsthand when Kolya accepted Christ. "Kolya is a constant reminder to me that God is able to radically change Gypsies' lives," Todikash said.

But the process has been much

slower and more challenging with other Roma people because they are mostly illiterate and unwilling to trust outsiders. And the struggles don't stop there. "Even after conversion, the process of discipleship feels like an uphill battle because many of them come from rough back-



*Joseph Todikash working with Roma young people in western Ukraine*

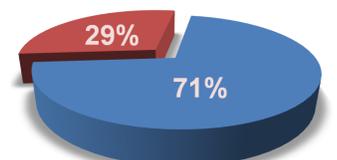
grounds," he said. Todikash needed help, and at Kyiv Theological Seminary he found it. Now in his third year of coursework in the church planting program, Todikash has been given the tools he needs to understand and reach Roma people better. "The program has helped me learn to be flexible and share the gospel and Scripture with them, despite their illiteracy," he said. Using storytelling and the chronological Bible, Todikash and his church planting team are gaining trust and credibility among the Romas.

As the son of a Baptist preacher, Todikash was convinced that he didn't want to be involved in ministry, but after coming to Christ at a Christian camp, he changed his mind. "I heard the gospel and promised that my heart would belong to the Lord. I knew I had to be involved in the church," he said. Todikash stud-

ied at a Bible college and worked with youth in the church. Then he studied with YWAM and a South African discipleship training program. Eventually he went to South Africa for 2 months.

In the midst of these cross-cultural experiences, Todikash felt no desire to ever become a missionary. In fact, he "stated firmly" to himself that he never would...but now he sees that his ministry to the Roma people is cross-cultural ministry. "I am on the mission field in my own country," he said. With a team of four people, including his wife, he is leading a Bible study at home that includes ten Roma young people. So far, six or seven new believers have been baptized, and the team hopes to plant a church for the Roma people this spring with worship services every Sunday. "We pray for the Roma nation every day and for laborers to join us in this important work," he said.

### Monthly Funding Update



■ Needed Monthly ■ Promised Monthly

Needed monthly: 29%  
(Current status: 71% promised)  
Outgoing expenses: \$48,000  
(Current status: 100% provided!)

**Note:** Contributions are solicited with the understanding that the donee organization has complete discretion and control over the use of all donated funds.