

OBITUARY OF VYACHESLAV MIKHAILOVICH TSVIRINKO

Vyacheslav Mikhailovich lived a long life, full of many interesting events.



He was born in Belarus, in the city of Brest, on July 31, 1949. He was the first-born and the only son in the young family of Michael and Polina Tsvirinko, who ended up in Brest after the end of the II World War. There they met at a local Baptist church and got married in 1948.

Soon after the birth of Vyacheslav, the family moved to live in the Krasnodar region. Having changed several places of residence there, they settled in the urban-type settlement Afipsky, where Vyacheslav spent

his preschool childhood and school years. Here he graduated from high school in 1966 at the age of 17 with a silver medal. Unfortunately, Vyacheslav's father, after moving to the Kuban region, stopped following the Lord. Because of this, Vyacheslav's mother, Polina, found it very difficult to raise her son and two daughters in a Christian spirit. As a result, Vyacheslav adopted the materialistic views imposed in Soviet times on all schoolchildren and students.

After graduating from high school, Vyacheslav entered the prestigious higher educational institution - Odessa Higher Marine Engineering School (OVIMU) in the fall of 1966, at the ship-mechanical faculty. During his studies, he had the opportunity to go on long voyages on merchant ships. He visited countries such as Italy, Yugoslavia, Alexandria, Egypt, Cuba, and others. In 1971, Vyacheslav Tsvirinko graduated with honors from OVIMU and was assigned to work as a

leading teacher at the Admiral Nakhimov Naval School in Kherson, Ukraine. A year later, in the fall of 1972, he returned to Odessa to begin his postgraduate studies at the Odessa Higher Engineering School. Three years later, he had to finish his studies, defend his Ph.D. thesis and become one of the teachers of this educational institution. However, something unusual happened during this time: Vyacheslav believed in God, repented on August 24, 1974, and began attending a Baptist church. When the leadership of the School found out about this, the head of the School, the Head Admiral, personally told Vyacheslav that with the worldview that he had, he could not teach Soviet students. Vyacheslav Tsvirinko was expelled from the third year of graduate school.

Finding himself homeless - at that time he lived in a graduate student dormitory, without a residence permit and without a source of livelihood, Vyacheslav left Odessa for Brest, where his mother's younger sister, aunt Liza Sych, who was a believer and attended an unregistered Baptist church, lived. Vyacheslav was warmly received there, and was helped to get a job at a construction site - as an auxiliary. Instead of teaching at a higher educational institution, he now worked with a concrete mixer, brought bricks and mortar to stone specialists. A year later, in 1975, early in the morning at dawn, on August 4, Vyacheslav was baptized by Vladimir Alexandrovich Velchinsky.

Since the KGB did not allow Vyacheslav to have a residence permit in Brest, he had to leave Belarus. In the fall of 1975, he moved to Riga, Latvia, where he joined the local unregistered ECB congregation, whose pastor was Joseph Danilovich Bondarenko. The local church became the center of his life for him. He shared its joys and sorrows, experienced persecution from the authorities and rejoiced at the conversion of sinners. In this church he met his future wife, Nina Kotenkova. On May 22, 1977, they entered in a Christian marriage. The wedding service was conducted by one of the church's pastors, Vasily Danilovich Bondarenko. The Lord richly blessed their family life. As husband and wife, Vyacheslav and Nina lived in love, always showing mutual concern and respect for each other. God gave them six sons who were born in Riga.

In 1978, Vyacheslav was elected by the church to the deacon's ministry and was ordained to this ministry. Three years later, in December 1981, he was ordained to be a pastor. He performed both deacon's and pastoral ministry with zeal, striving to please the Lord and showing sincere attention and heartfelt concern to the members of the local church.

Nationalist sentiments that began to appear in Latvia, which did not welcome the presence of the Russian-speaking population in the country, as well as several

other reasons, prompted the Tsvirinko family to leave Latvia and immigrate to the West on August 22, 1989. Although the family's desire was to move to Australia, the Lord directed them to America. On April 7, 1990, they arrived in Los Angeles, California. On June 25, 1990, they moved to Fresno, where they lived for 25 years - until July 31, 2015. Then Vyacheslav Mikhailovich and Nina Nesterovna moved to live in Sacramento.

Even though many immigrants from the former Soviet Union left Fresno due to the hot climate and other reasons, for the Tsvirinko family, Fresno has become a blessed place. Vyacheslav and Nina, along with other fellow immigrants, had the opportunity to study English at the local Christian college of Fresno Pacific. After studying English at college, Vyacheslav Mikhailovich entered the local biblical seminary, which he graduated in 1995 with a Master's degree in Pastoral Ministry and Missiology.

After graduating from the seminary, Vyacheslav Mikhailovich was invited to work at Fresno Pacific College, which was later transformed into a university. For Vyacheslav Mikhailovich, the college leadership set the task of organizing a Slavic educational program, the purpose of which was to help the new Slavic immigrant churches in America in the field of education. Vyacheslav Mikhailovich attended churches, held seminars and conferences, and invited young people from the churches to study in Fresno Pacific. This program opened the door for many young men and women from believing families of Slavic immigrants to receive an education in America at a Christian university.

In general, Vyacheslav Mikhailovich worked at the University of Fresno Pacific for 19.5 years, holding various positions. For the last ten years, from 2004 to 2014, he worked as the director of the branch of the University of Fresno Pacific in Visalia, 40 miles from Fresno. The Lord abundantly blessed this ministry - from 2004 to 2014 the number of students in this branch increased from 150 to more than 850. Work in this educational institution brought joy to Vyacheslav Mikhailovich because it gave him the opportunity to serve both students from among his fellow immigrants and from among the local population.

In the spring of 1993, Vyacheslav Mikhailovich accepted the ministry of senior pastor in the new Russian-speaking church of the ECB in Fresno, which was then called Slavic Evangelical Missionary Church. Later, in 1995, this church united with another immigrant local church - the Slavic Church of Evangelical Christians Baptists. The united congregation became known as House of Gospel Church. In 1997, this congregation acquired a church building at 3941 E Mono. The Lord blessed the life of this congregation. The quantitative and spiritual growth of

church members was observed. For V.M. it was not easy to combine university work with pastoral ministry in the church. However, he did it with joy, serving the Lord and His church sincerely and sacrificially. In 2002, Vyacheslav Mikhailovich transferred the pastoral ministry to Viktor Alexandrovich Avdeev. In the autumn of the same year, he was elected as the President of the Pacific Union of ECB Churches. He served this ministry until October 2006. After V.A. Avdeev moved to Washington State, V.M. again pastored in the House of Gospel Church for one year from May 2006 to May 2007.

In 2014, he was re-elected as the President of the PCSBA. For a more productive fulfillment of this ministry, the Tsvirinko couple moved to Sacramento on July 31, 2015, where the office of the Association was located. Even though he could be re-elected to the post of President several more times, Vyacheslav Mikhailovich announced, when his first two-year term was approaching the end, that he would not run for the next term, because he would be leaving with his wife for missionary service. The Lord called them to teach at the Christian university in Chisinau, Moldova. On December 1, 2016, they flew to Moldova and started teaching at the university. In addition to this ministry, Vyacheslav Mikhailovich, to the best of his strength and capabilities, served local churches, visiting them with a sermon. His work was highly appreciated by the ministers of the churches. While many believers leave Moldova, the example of those who come from abroad to Moldova is an encouragement for local believers. Such an example was the move to Moldova of Vyacheslav Mikhailovich and Nina Nesterovna.

With the beginning of the war between Russia and Ukraine, a stream of refugees from Ukraine poured into Moldova. The churches of Moldova opened their hearts, homes, and church premises to receive refugees. Vyacheslav Mikhailovich and Nina Nesterovna actively participated in the ministry to these destitute people, testifying to them about salvation in Christ. It was one of the greatest blessings of their lives for them.

On December 22, the Tsvirinko's returned to America. The reason for the end of their missionary service was their significantly deteriorated health. Returning to the USA after six years of living in Moldova brought its own challenges and experiences. But with God's help, this was overcome also.

On August 26, 2023, Vyacheslav Mikhailovich crossed the threshold of eternity and entered the monastery of the Heavenly Father. He met Jesus Christ, whom he loved and whom he served for 50 years. He left behind a wife, Nina Nesterovna, six sons, four daughters-in-law, and eleven grandchildren. Thanks be to the Lord for the life and ministry of V.M. Tsvirinko!

