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# THE ATTITUDE OF THE PROTESTANT COMMUNITY TO DISABLED PEOPLE IN UKRAINE

By Olga Polumysna

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## Annotation

In this article, we research those publications that show examples of Protestant social service to people in need, including people with disabilities. Ukrainian scientific studies have not considered this issue but only briefly mentioned their charitable deeds. This article demonstrates that Protestant denominations in Ukraine--whether Baptists, Pentecostals or Adventists--are sympathetic to people with disabilities. They establish various organizations, foundations, and volunteer actions to care for them. Protestants rely on their religious teachings that call them to help those who need it. They help both morally and materially. The assistance is provided selectively, in those places where a certain community operates, so the effects are largely felt by those who belong to this denomination. In addition, there is an uneven distribution of Protestant communities in Ukraine. Most members of these denominations settled in Volyn, Lviv, and Bukovyna, and are virtually absent in eastern and southern Ukraine. Protestants do much to arrange a more comfortable life for people with disabilities, taking care of their health and communication. The members of these denominations were recommended by the media to cover all charitable activities more actively, not only their own but also the general Ukrainian population, so that more people get acquainted with them, helping to develop a more tolerant attitude towards people with disabilities and providing a more positive view of the Protestants.

**Keywords:** Protestants, Baptists, Pentecostals, Adventists, religion, philanthropy, denomination, social service.

**Introduction.** There are a large number of believers of different denominations in Ukraine. According to the analytical portal "*Slovo i Dilo*" [Word and Deed], Orthodox people predominate: in 2018 there were 67.3% Orthodox, 9.4% Greek Catholics, and 2.2% Protestants.<sup>1</sup> Despite the fact that there are far fewer Protestants than representatives of other

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<sup>1</sup> "До яких церков ходять українці: як змінювалася релігійна прихильність населення останні п'ять років." Слово і діло, 2018. <https://www.slovoidilo.ua/2018/10/23/infografika/suspilstvo/yakux-cerkov-hodyat-ukrayinczi-yak-zminyuvalasya-relihijna-pryxylnist-naselennya-ostanni-pyat-rokiv>. ["Which churches do

denominations, the Ukrainian media showcases a large number of social projects that Protestants do for people with disabilities. This category of the population is the most vulnerable and needs special attention. The problem of protecting such people is on the agenda of almost every country. Ukraine has legislation that protects the rights of people with disabilities and provides them with material assistance, including the laws "On State Social Assistance to Persons with Disabilities from Childhood and Children with Disabilities," and "On Fundamentals of Social Protection of People with Disabilities in Ukraine." There are no scientific works in the Ukrainian information space that cover the attitude of Protestant communities to people with disabilities, which points to the relevance of this study.

### Analysis of Literature

V. Lyubashchenko researched the history of Protestantism in Ukraine in the course of lectures titled "History of Protestantism in Ukraine," where she wrote about Protestantism, from the birth of the Reformation to the present time, studied Protestant trends, and argued that Protestants "not only accept new realities . . . but also take part in some changes currently taking place in the life of Ukraine. This participation is seen in the right of free and most effective embodiment by every believer of the sacred purpose to provide service to one's neighbor."<sup>2</sup> It applies to the domestic, pragmatic sphere of life, which affects the interests of ordinary people. In addition, trends in the development of Protestantism were studied by P. Yarotsky,<sup>3</sup> V. Dokash,<sup>4</sup> M. Palinchak,<sup>5</sup> E. Buga,<sup>6</sup> M. Babi,<sup>7</sup> and others. These are general works that cover various currents of Protestantism.

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Ukrainians go to: how has the religious affiliation of the population changed over the last five years?" Word and Deed.]

<sup>2</sup> В. Любащенко. "Історія протестантизму в Україні Сучасний протестантизм в Україні: динаміка і тенденції розвитку." Релігійно-інформаційна служба України, 2017. [https://risu.ua/lekciya-14-suchasniy-prottestantizm-v-ukrajini-dinamika-i-tendenciji-rozvitku\\_n83007](https://risu.ua/lekciya-14-suchasniy-prottestantizm-v-ukrajini-dinamika-i-tendenciji-rozvitku_n83007). [V. Lyubashchenko. "History of Protestantism in Ukraine Modern Protestantism in Ukraine: Dynamics and Trends of Development." Religious Information Service of Ukraine.]

<sup>3</sup> П. Яроцький, "Протестантизм як предмет релігієзнавчого дослідження," *Українське релігієзнавство*, no. 40 (2006): 171–87. [P. Yarotsky. "Protestantism as a subject of religious studies." *Ukrainian religious studies*]. And П. Яроцький, "Стан пізньопротестантських конфесій," *Українське релігієзнавство*, no. 46 (2008): 302–31. [P. Yarotsky. "The state of late Protestant denominations." *Ukrainian religious studies*.]

<sup>4</sup> Докаш, В., and О. Докаш. "Релігійна мережа Буковини в її інституційних виявах." *Релігія та соціум*, no. 1(5) (2011): 102–8. [V. Dokash and O. Dokash. "Religious network of Bukovina in its institutional manifestations." *Religion and society*.]

<sup>5</sup> М. Палінчак and М. Лешанич, "Мережа релігійних організацій в Україні: стан та перспективи розвитку," *Актуальні проблеми політики* 55 (2015): 205–14. [M. Palinchak and M. Leshanych. "Network of Religious Organizations in Ukraine: Status and Prospects for Development." *Current policy issues*.]

<sup>6</sup> Є. Буга, "Протестантизм в українському суспільстві: історія виникнення та специфіка функціонування," *Релігія та соціум*, no. 2(8) (2012): 159–64.

Most of the research is on Adventism. For example, I. Chernushka in his dissertation "Current state and main trends in Adventism in Ukraine" explores "varieties of Protestant theology and practice, characterized the views of Ukrainian Adventists on their place in the social space in connection with the historical transformations of the early XXI century, made a comprehensive research on forms of missionary work and social service of the SDA [Seventh-Day Adventist] Church in Ukraine,"<sup>8</sup> in particular service during the ongoing military conflict in Eastern Ukraine. His scholarly work, *State-Church Relations in the Context of the Social Doctrine of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, is also worth mentioning, as the author outlines the vectors of relations in the state both before and after the Revolution of Dignity and shows the attitude of the SDA Church to these events.<sup>9</sup> The book *The History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ukraine* describes "the history of the birth of Adventism in the context of national history, as well as information about the formation, development, and structure of the SDA Church. Particular attention is paid to the issues of doctrine, social service and spiritual life of the Church."<sup>10</sup> The trends of medical and sanitary work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ukraine were considered by V. Kuryliak.<sup>11</sup> I. Zavalnyuk researched the role of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the formation of religious tolerance in Ukrainian society.<sup>12</sup>

As we can see, there is a certain amount of scholarly research on Protestantism and some of its currents, which briefly mentions their social, charitable work for the benefit of others in Ukraine. But there is no serious, structured, generalizing scientific research on this topic, in particular the attitude of Protestants to people with disabilities. There are only a

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<sup>7</sup> М. Бабій and Л. Филипович, "Свобода релігії та протестантизм: історичний та сучасний контекст," *Релігійна свобода*, no. 20 (2017): 122–27. Бабій, М., and Л. Филипович. "Свобода релігії та протестантизм: історичний та сучасний контекст." *Релігійна свобода*, no. 20 (2017): 122–27. [M. Babiy and L. Filipovich. "Freedom of Religion and Protestantism: Historical and Contemporary Context." *Religious freedom*.]

<sup>8</sup> І. Чернушка, "Сучасний стан та основні тенденції розвитку адвентизму в Україні" (дис. канд. філос. наук: 09.00.11, 2016). [I. Chernushka. "The current state and main trends in the development of Adventism in Ukraine."]

<sup>9</sup> І. Чернушко, "Державно-церковні відносини в контексті соціальної доктрини церкви адвентистів сьомого дня," *Релігія та соціум*, no. 3-4(1516). (2014): 193–98. [I. Chernushko. "State-Church Relations in the Context of the Social Doctrine of the Seventh-day Adventist Church." *Religion and society*.]

<sup>10</sup> *Історія Церкви християн Адвентистів Сьомого Дня в Україні* (Київ: Джерело життя, 2004). [History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ukraine.]

<sup>11</sup> В. Куриляк, "Напрями медико-санітарної роботи Церкви Адвентистів Сьомого дня," *Актуальні питання гуманітарних наук* 1, no. 31 (2020): 37–44. [V. Kuryliak. "Directions of medical and sanitary work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church." *Current issues of the humanities*.]

<sup>12</sup> І. Завальнюк, "Церква АСД як інститут громадянського суспільства: до питання формування релігійної толерантності," *Вісник Житомирського державного університету імені І. Франка*, no. 35 (2007): 34–37. [I. Zavalnyuk. "The Church of the SDA as an Institution of Civil Society: On the Formation of Religious Tolerance." *Bulletin of Zhytomyr State University named after I. Franko*.]

large number of internet articles that testify to the activities of individual organizations. Thus, research on this topic is extremely relevant.

### **Presentation of the Main Part of the Study**

In Ukraine, Protestantism dates back to the 16th century and is represented by denominations such as Baptists, Evangelical Christians, Adventists, Pentecostals, and Jehovah's Witnesses.<sup>13</sup> According to V. Leshan, the largest Protestant movement in Ukraine is Baptist, in second place is the Pentecostal movement, in third place the Adventists. Protestant denominations in Ukraine intensified their activities in 1991 after the collapse of the USSR and gaining independence. The catalyst for this was liberalization and freedom of religion. Religious associations have shown concern for children with disabilities, poor families, and people in need of material or spiritual assistance. Since independence, denominations have created various projects, institutions, and organizations that function effectively to help these categories of the population.

2017 was a grand event for the entire Protestant world: 500 years had passed since the beginning of the Reformation, when, on October 31, 1517, Martin Luther nailed to the door of the Wittenberg Church 95 theses against the abuses in the Catholic Church. Many Protestant movements have emerged since then, but this originating event unites them all. The Evangelical Christian Association published "The Call will be heard by everyone," a summary of its activities, and concluded that "Protestants are an attainment of Ukraine."<sup>14</sup>

In particular, Evangelical Christian believers identify social problems and try to solve them. They contribute to the development of society and promote their mission of doing good in educational, volunteer, medical, chaplaincy, political and many other spheres of life. Churches, foundations, and organizations are constantly providing the necessary assistance to the disabled and the needy. Social service for most Protestant churches operating in Ukraine is, firstly, a confirmation of the relevance of Luther's doctrine of "good works." Believers see it as evidence of the meaningfulness of their earthly existence, the search for the most effective means of practical implementation of the Christian commandments. Secondly, the program envisages a means by the Protestant communities of Ukraine of meeting their as yet unrealized social and ethical potential. Philanthropy occupies

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<sup>13</sup> В. Лешан, *Основи релігієзнавства: Підручник* (Чернівці: Рута, 2005). [V. Leshan. *Fundamentals of Religious Studies: Textbook*.] These denominations are called "Late Protestantism" in Ukraine (or Neo-Protestantism" in many other regions of the world) in distinction to Lutheranism and Calvinism in Classical Protestantism.

<sup>14</sup> Протестанти – надбання України." Поклик почує кожен, 2016. <https://poklik.org/projects/protestanty-nadbannya-ukrayiny/>. ["Protestants are the property of Ukraine." Everyone will hear the call.]

a central place in the social service program, is primarily for moral assistance. Undoubtedly, Protestants do not avoid material philanthropy, such as donations to the disabled. However, the main thing is the practical participation of the believer in the life of a particular person.<sup>15</sup>

There are many internet resources and individual cases where Protestants of various denominations have helped people with disabilities, organized special social projects, established schools for sick children or rehabilitation centers for people with disabilities.

Almost every Protestant church includes a number of areas in its program, including assistance to community organizations.<sup>16</sup> Evidence of this can be found in the articles "Helping the Disabled and Children: Charitable Activities of Protestants in Volyn,"<sup>17</sup> which details various events organized by young people and even old grandmothers to help people with disabilities, as well as giving information about a private school with all necessary conditions for teaching children with disabilities.

The published work, *Protestants in Culture and Art*,<sup>18</sup> states that the singer-evangelist Velvet has in recent years through cultural events and gifts presented a number of projects for orphans and children with disabilities, including the project "Waiting for a miracle," through which she gifted love and care to more than 7,000 children from orphanages and hospitals during the Christmas and Easter tours.

### **Evangelical Baptist Church**

In the first place, Baptist preachers have moral and instructive topics, attitudes towards people, especially those who need help. According to V. Leshan, "it is very attractive for Baptists to adhere to simple moral norms (mutual support and assistance, abstinence from alcohol, etc.)."<sup>19</sup>

The official website of the All-Ukrainian Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches states that special attention is paid to people with disabilities, the elderly, and large families

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<sup>15</sup> В. Любашенко. "Історія протестантизму в Україні Сучасний протестантизм в Україні: динаміка і тенденції розвитку." Релігійно-інформаційна служба України, 2017. [https://risu.ua/lekciya-14-suchasniy-protestantizm-v-ukrajini-dinamika-i-tendenciji-rozvitku\\_n83007](https://risu.ua/lekciya-14-suchasniy-protestantizm-v-ukrajini-dinamika-i-tendenciji-rozvitku_n83007). [V. Lyubashchenko. "History of Protestantism in Ukraine Modern Protestantism in Ukraine: Dynamics and Trends of Development." Religious Information Service of Ukraine.]

<sup>16</sup> П. Яроцький, "Стан пізньопротестантських конфесій," *Українське релігієзнавство*, no. 46 (2008): 302–31. [P. Yarotsky. "The state of late Protestant denominations." Ukrainian religious studies.]

<sup>17</sup> "Допомога інвалідам та дітям: благодійна діяльність протестантів на Волині." *Волинські новини*, 2017. <https://www.volynnews.com/news/society/dopomoha-invalidam-ta-ditiam-blahodiyana-diialnist-protestantiv-na-vo/>. ["Assistance to the Disabled and Children: Charitable Activities of Protestants in Volyn." Volyn news.]

<sup>18</sup> "Протестанти в культурі та мистецтві." *Поклик* почує кожен, 2017. <https://poklik.org/protestanty-v-kulturi-ta-mystetstvi/>. ["Protestants in Culture and the Arts." Everyone will hear the call.]

<sup>19</sup> В. Лешан, *Основи релігієзнавства: Підручник* (Чернівці: Рута, 2005). [V. Leshan. *Fundamentals of Religious Studies: Textbook*.]

living along the delimitation between Luhansk and Donetsk regions.<sup>20</sup> Evidence of their activity is the article "They brought us dry firewood!,"<sup>21</sup> where children from a small village in the Slovyansky district, whose parents died, were provided with dry firewood to keep them warm.

With the help of a public organization the "Special Child," which unites parents of children with disabilities, assistance to children with leukemia is provided. Families with children with support problems also receive help from the Open Bible Charitable Foundation, in which evangelical Baptist Christians are actively involved.<sup>22</sup>

In 2014, the Church of Evangelical Baptists in Sviatoshynskyi district held a charity event for children with disabilities of the NGO Cerebral<sup>23</sup>. A big New Year and Christmas concert and scenes about biblical stories became a great event for children.

On April 22, 2020, a charity foundation founded by Evangelical Baptists and Bevar Ukrainy from Denmark donated medical equipment to fight coronavirus to hospitals in the Ternopil region. Namely, 31 modern ventilators and consumables were provided.<sup>24</sup> Protestants have not been indifferent to the events in their country; they quickly adapt and help the victims.

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<sup>20</sup> "Комітети." Всеукраїнський Союз Церков Євангельських Християн-Баптистів, 2020. <https://www.baptyst.com/komitety/#1587043389184-43495904-f68a>. ["Committees." All-Ukrainian Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches.]

<sup>21</sup> "Нам привезли сухі дрова!" Всеукраїнський Союз Церков Євангельських Християн-Баптистів, 2017. <https://www.baptyst.com/nam-pryvezly-suhi-drova/>. ["They brought us dry firewood!" All-Ukrainian Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches.]

<sup>22</sup> "Комітети." Всеукраїнський Союз Церков Євангельських Християн-Баптистів, 2020. <https://www.baptyst.com/komitety/#1587043389184-43495904-f68a>. ["Committees." All-Ukrainian Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches.]

<sup>23</sup> "Подаруй ближньому радість: Церква Євангельських християн-баптистів провела благодійну акцію для дітей-інвалідів ГО 'Церебрал.'" Святошинська районна в м. Києві державна адміністрація, 2014. <https://svyat.kyivcity.gov.ua/news/3214.html>. ["Give joy to your neighbor: the Church of Evangelical Baptists held a charity event for children with disabilities of the NGO 'Cerebral.'" Sviatoshynskyi District State Administration in Kyiv.]

<sup>24</sup> "За участі баптистів Тернопільщина отримала безпрецедентну для України партію апаратів штучної вентиляції легенів – 31 штуку." Всеукраїнський Собор, 2020. <https://sobor.com.ua/news/ternopilshina-otrimala-partiyu-aparativ-shtuchnoyi-ventilyaciyi-legeniv>. ["With the participation of Baptists, Ternopil region received an unprecedented for Ukraine batch of ventilators - 31 pieces." All-Ukrainian Council.]



**Fig. 1 Rest for people with disabilities in a camp organized by the Fimiam Baptist Church**

A camp, organized by the Fimiam Baptist Church, implements a number of programs for people with disabilities that provide an opportunity to get acquainted with biblical life, to understand the life of the Jewish people in ancient times.

During the year, a team of people prepares to meet people with disabilities in the camp, doing everything possible to fill the lives of these people with positive emotions. Outdoor recreation, Bible studies, spa--all these entertainments contributed to a good mood and positive communication of the participants. According to O. Nechyporuk, "as they left, people said goodbye with tears of gratitude until the next meeting. According to them, it was a wonderful time spent together, which the Lord gave them!"<sup>25</sup> Similar meetings are arranged by this church for children with disabilities. They are involved in supporting the Johnny and Friends Mission (USA, Poland), a team from the Cleveland Church (Ohio, USA) in conducting such events.



**Fig. 2 Holidays for children with disabilities in a camp organized by the Fimiam Baptist Church**

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<sup>25</sup> О. Ничипорук. "Відпочинок для людей з інвалідністю." Всеукраїнський союз церков євангельських християн-баптистів, 2018. <https://www.baptyst.com/vidpochynok-dlya-lyudej-z-invalidnistyu/>. [О. Ничипорук. "Rest for people with disabilities." All-Ukrainian Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches.]



The organizers helped children with disabilities to have fun, communicate with each other, which, accordingly, had a positive effect on their spiritual condition. The participants shared their impressions: "This camp is a separate country with sincere, joyful and loving residents! And everything in it is beautiful."<sup>26</sup> For these people and their relatives, first of all, it was important that they were treated as equal members of society: "As a result - smiles appeared on their faces more often, they became more open to communication not only with relatives but also with people which they saw for the first time."<sup>27</sup>

Thanks to the Polish guests, training was provided on the adaptation to an adult life of children with disabilities, and they also shared the experience of cooperation between the state and non-governmental organizations to improve the lives of this category of the population. According to the guests, "20-30 years ago, those who were affected to some extent by disability-- their own or a family member--managed to intensify this work. The team from the neighboring country wished the parents not to give up, but to learn from their experience and do everything so that people with disabilities in Ukraine can study, live, and work on a par with the healthy."<sup>28</sup>

Before the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Baptists usually take an active part in organizing various events. For example, in Olevsk, an event for children with disabilities and their parents was organized at a children's music school, a concert was held, after which the pastor of the Evangelical Baptist Church presented sweet gifts to the children.<sup>29</sup>

The information portal of the city of Sumy even contains several messages related to assistance to people with disabilities. It has already been noted that the representatives of the Church of the Light of the Gospel Evangelical Baptists conducted seasonal work in the neighborhood where people with disabilities live, provided assistance in chopping firewood,

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<sup>26</sup> "Луцька церква 'Фіміам' організувала відпочинок для людей з інвалідністю." Всеукраїнський союз церков евангельських християн-баптистів, 2020. <https://www.baptyst.com/lutska-tserkva-fimiam-organizuvala-vidpochynok-dlya-lyudej-z-invalidnistyu/>. ["Lutsk Church 'Fimiam' organized a holiday for people with disabilities." All-Ukrainian Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches.]

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> "В Олевську відбувся захід до Міжнародного дня людей з інвалідністю." Офіційний сайт Олевської територіальної громади, 2018. <http://olevsk-gromada.gov.ua/2018/12/04/v-olevsku-vidbuvsya-zahid-do-mizhnarodnogo-dnya-lyudej-z-invalidnistyu/>. ["An event dedicated to the International Day of Persons with Disabilities took place in Olevsk." Official site of Olevsk territorial community.]

in gifts of food, and providing spiritual and psychological assistance to people who found themselves in difficult life circumstances.<sup>30</sup>

Under quarantine, the social committee of the All-Ukrainian Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches considered plans for service, namely for orphans, dependents, prisoners, and people with disabilities. Despite the quarantine restrictions, active work with people with disabilities continued: education and worship were carried out with the help of ZOOM, in particular, work continued on the translation of the Bible, there were trips to nature,<sup>31</sup> etc.

Baptist Christians organize sports competitions for people with disabilities. This has a positive effect on their well-being, as they can demonstrate "true independence from difficulties and problems, strength and inspiration to live and create."<sup>32</sup> The main task of such games is "to allow them to leave the four walls and start communicating not only with each other but also in teams, with representatives of different areas and to show that they can do any sport, regardless of certain physical characteristics, and do it on a professional level."<sup>33</sup>



**Fig. Third Olympics among athletes with disabilities in Fastiv**

Oleh Stralkivsky, who is responsible for serving people with hearing impairments, is concerned about the problems of deaf people in Ukraine. He notes that

Ukraine lacks the resources to serve the deaf. There are no special textbooks on preparation for baptism, wedding of the deaf, etc. Information is received late due to lack of sign language translation. Another problem is that the modern educational system releases deaf people from educational institutions who can hardly read the Bible on their own. There is no Bible for the deaf yet. Difficulties are encountered in

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<sup>30</sup> "Допомога особам з інвалідністю." Information Portal of Sumy City Council, 2016. <https://smr.gov.ua/en/2016-03-14-08-10-17/volonterstvo/dopomoha-osobam-z-invalidnistiu/10379-dopomoga-osobam-z-invalidnistyu.html>. ["Assistance for people with disabilities."]

<sup>31</sup> "В Україні діють 60 реабілітаційних центрів баптистів." Всеукраїнський Собор, 2020. <https://sobor.com.ua/news/v-ukrayini-60-reabcentriv-baptistiv/>. ["There are 60 Baptist rehabilitation centers in Ukraine." All-Ukrainian Council.]

<sup>32</sup> "У Фастові відбулась відкрита спартакіада міста серед спортсменів з інвалідністю." Фастів Офіційний сайт міської ради та її виконавчих органів, 2019. <http://fastiv-rada.gov.ua/u-fastovi-vidbulas-vidkryta-spartakiada-mista-sered-sportsmeniv-z-invalidnistiu/>. ["A congress of people with disabilities took place in Stobkyhivka." Volyn Association of Evangelical Christians.]

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

creating and maintaining in proper condition the website of the site of deaf Baptists of Ukraine. We are trying to work on this.<sup>34</sup>

But a lot has already been done: "Creating and strengthening a fraternal council among the deaf, organizing and developing a daughter church, "Gesture of the Gospel," working on a project to translate the Bible into sign language, creating a family camp, and more."<sup>35</sup>

### **Pentecostal Church**

According to O. Bornovolokov, one of the largest late-arriving Protestant communities in modern Ukraine is the Pentecostal movement, which ranks second (after Baptist) in Protestantism<sup>36</sup> in terms of the number of communities and believers. The basis of their doctrine is "the account of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles on the 50th day after the resurrection of Christ."<sup>37</sup>

Among scholars, the topic of Pentecostalism has been studied by O. Bornovolokov. The aim of his dissertation was to "comprehensively investigate the historical and theological features of the process of institutionalization of the Evangelical Faith Churches from 1929 to 1939 as a determining factor in shaping the identity of the Ukrainian Pentecostal movement."<sup>38</sup>

S. Gubnya studied the charitable and cultural-educational activities of the Pentecostals in Ukraine during 1991-2011, who writes their social activities are implemented in Ukraine by the Voice of Hope mission. Thus, missionaries, according to S. Gubnya, "annually hold more than 90 summer camps, in which children from low-income and disadvantaged families rest and recuperate.... [working] in 506 settlements, which includes work with the disabled, including deaf and blind people, orphans and the homeless, and low-income families."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> А, Пустовіт. "Служіння людям із вадами слуху. Розмова з Олегом Стралківським." Всеукраїнський союз церков євангельських християн-баптистів, 2020. <https://www.baptyst.com/sluzhinnya-lyudyam-iz-vadamy-sluhu-rozmova-z-olegom-stralkivskym/>. [A. Pustovit. "Service to people with hearing impairments. Conversation with Oleg Stralkivsky." All-Ukrainian Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches.]

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> О. Борноволок, "Ідентичність українського п'ятидесятницького руху" (Автореф. дис. на здоб. наук. ст. канд. філос. наук Спеціальність 09.00.14 – богослов'я., 2019). [O. Bornovolokov. "The Identity of the Ukrainian Pentecostal Movement."]

<sup>37</sup> В. Лешан, *Основи релігієзнавства: Підручник* (Чернівці: Рута, 2005). [V. Leshan. *Fundamentals of Religious Studies: Textbook.*]

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> С. Губеня. "Культурно-просвітницька та добротина діяльність п'ятидесятників в Україні у 1991 – 2011 рр." Digital Repository of Ostroh Academy Digital Repository of Ostroh Academy. 2012. [https://eprints.oa.edu.ua/1335/1/S.Gubnya\\_110512.pdf](https://eprints.oa.edu.ua/1335/1/S.Gubnya_110512.pdf). [S. Gubnya. "Cultural, educational and charitable activities of the Pentecostals in Ukraine in 1991 - 2011."]

On December 5, 2017, a round table meeting, "Government and Civil Society," was held. The discussion focused on the interaction between the government and ordinary citizens, and only a Pentecostal Pastor, Vitaliy Kozachkov, called for intensified and united joint efforts to provide assistance to children with disabilities and people in difficult circumstances.<sup>40</sup>

In July 2018, a summer camp for children with disabilities was organized near the city of Kovel for Pentecostals and secular children. The first arrivals were people with hearing problems, then people in wheelchairs, then with vision problems. These activities affected both people with disabilities and the volunteers who helped them, as they were able to re-evaluate their lives and opportunities, and this is "good practice for every Christian. ... Bible lessons, needlework, prayers, singing with enchanting hands, enchanting eyes... sports, group communication. ... People who have never seen, played musical instruments, navigated the territory as if they see."<sup>41</sup>



**Fig. 4 Children with disabilities in the Unity camp organized by Pentecostals**

Such meetings show that Pentecostals do their best to unite people with disabilities and facilitate their communication. The congress of people with disabilities in Stobkyhivka is held twice a year. The organizers note: "The atmosphere that prevailed during the meeting is difficult to convey; it is special. These people have something to share. Rarely are they

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<sup>40</sup> "Відбулося засідання 'круглого столу' 'Влада і громадянське суспільство.'" Новопсковська районна державна адміністрація, 2017. [http://nvp.loga.gov.ua/oda/press/news/vidbulosya\\_zasidannya\\_kruglogo\\_stolu\\_vlada\\_i\\_gromadyanske\\_suspilstvo](http://nvp.loga.gov.ua/oda/press/news/vidbulosya_zasidannya_kruglogo_stolu_vlada_i_gromadyanske_suspilstvo). ["Round table" Government and civil society "took place." Novopskov District State Administration.]

<sup>41</sup> "Єдність, яка єднає!" Волинське об'єднання церков християн віри євангельської, 2018. [http://vhve.com.ua/novyyny/2018/07\\_tabir.html](http://vhve.com.ua/novyyny/2018/07_tabir.html). ["Unity that unites!" Volyn Association of Evangelical Christians]

wanted to be heard by someone; few understand them. And the convention is a good opportunity to meet, talk, and share."<sup>42</sup>

A meeting of 13 families with children with disabilities was held on the territory of the Church of Christ the Savior in Lutsk. This was initiated by Iryna Kochemba, who during her research on the lives of people with disabilities found that both parents and children lack communication. This event was held for the first time and was called "Precious Treasure." Children with disabilities were organized separately; they were shown a play, conducted a Bible lesson, had needlework classes, and played. During this time, parents talked to each other, talking about the difficulties they face every day caring for their children.<sup>43</sup>

In general, Protestants unite for certain actions. Thus, for the first time in Ukraine, on the initiative of the National Council of Evangelical Protestant Churches, Thanksgiving was celebrated as a national holiday. A large number of people gathered on Khreshchatyk. The celebrations were held on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation of the church. Nick Vujcic, one of the world's most famous Protestants, a motivational speaker, arrived in Kyiv.



**Fig. 5 Nick Vujcic on Khreshchatyk  
on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation**

In the first ranks were people with disabilities, including anti-terrorist operation veterans, who listened to his speech with interest. In total, more than 700 wheelchair users came. Nick Vujcic shared his impressions: "A veteran with special needs was present at the meeting. He heard my story the last time I was in Ukraine. During this time, he married, now

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<sup>42</sup> "У Стобихівці відбувся з'їзд людей з інвалідністю." Волинське об'єднання церков християн віри євангельської, 2018. [http://vhve.com.ua/novyny/2018/04\\_invalid.html](http://vhve.com.ua/novyny/2018/04_invalid.html). ["A congress of people with disabilities took place in Stobychivka." Volyn Association of Evangelical Christians.]

<sup>43</sup> Н. Оніщук. "У Луцьку почали служіння сім'ям, які виховують дітей з інвалідністю." Волинське об'єднання церков християн віри євангельської, 2019. [http://vhve.com.ua/novyny/2019/11\\_invalid.html](http://vhve.com.ua/novyny/2019/11_invalid.html). [N. Onishchuk. "Services for families raising children with disabilities have started in Lutsk." Volyn Association of Evangelical Christians.]

his wife is pregnant. For me, it's incredible. The point is not that half a million people have gathered, but that at least one person has changed his life."<sup>44</sup>

### **Seventh-day Adventist Church**

In third place among Protestant movements in Ukraine is Adventism. The current state and peculiarities of Adventism development in Ukraine have been studied by I. Chernushka. The purpose of his dissertation was "to carry out a comprehensive philosophical and religious study of the current state and main trends of the SDA Church in Ukraine in the context of its interaction with the state and society."<sup>45</sup> According to V. Dokash, "The Church of the SDA attaches great importance to the implementation in society of such functions as legitimizing (affirming the civic position of believers), charitable and philanthropic (various forms of social service)." In general, Adventists hold the view that society, together with the state, must create all the conditions (political, economic, and social) for each person to develop peacefully as a person--free, harmonious and responsible.<sup>46</sup> They also hold these views in relation to people with disabilities, as equality and independence are very important for this category of people. For them in the first place is the good of humans, to help those who need it. Adventists believe that "the happiness of social service is a continuation by Christians of Jesus Christ's service to people and is based on two principles: human dignity (not pity, but help to restore oneself) and the common purpose of earthly goods (maintaining equality and helping the neediest)."<sup>47</sup>

In general, as V. Leshan notes, the activities of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are characterized by large-scale philanthropy, numerous social programs, among which there are three main ones: health services, programs to help the needy, and cultural activities. Hospitals, dispensaries, clinics, orphanages, healthy food factories, schools, universities and publishing houses have been established for this purpose.

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<sup>44</sup> Н. Воронцова. "Вперше в Україні День подяки відзначили у центрі столиці України на Хрещатику." Городской центр помощи, 2017. <http://aidcenter.org.ua/вперше-в-україні-день-подяки-відзначи/>. [N. Vorontsova. "For the first time in Ukraine, Thanksgiving was celebrated in the center of the capital of Ukraine on Khreshchatyk." City assistance center.]

<sup>45</sup> І. Чернушка, "Сучасний стан та основні тенденції розвитку адвентизму в Україні" (дис. канд. філос. наук: 09.00.11, 2016). [I. Chernushka. "The current state and main trends in the development of Adventism in Ukraine."]

<sup>46</sup> В. Докаш, В. "Соціальна доктрина Церкви адвентистів сьомого дня як концентрований виклад форм служіння суспільству." Протестантизм в Україні, 2017. [https://ugi.edu.ua/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/%D0%97%D0%B1%D1%96%D1%80%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%BA-R500\\_2017-%D1%80%D1%96%D0%BA\\_%D0%9D%D0%9F%D0%9F.pdf](https://ugi.edu.ua/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/%D0%97%D0%B1%D1%96%D1%80%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%BA-R500_2017-%D1%80%D1%96%D0%BA_%D0%9D%D0%9F%D0%9F.pdf). [V. Dokash. "Social Doctrine of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a Concentrated Exposition of Forms of Service to Society." Protestantism in Ukraine].

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

The Adventist Medical Association of Ukraine has been operating for more than 20 years, and, with the assistance of the Ukrainian Lutheran Church, it has been running the Medical Clinic on Wheels. Protestants are active among volunteer movements, the essence of which is to create small groups of people who provide personal assistance to people with disabilities or the sick.<sup>48</sup>

The Adventist Relief and Development Agency (ADRA) is involved in charity, as well as working with government agencies and community organizations. From 1999 to 2001, the agency implemented many social projects, including assistance to people with disabilities: it provided material and medical assistance to children with disabilities affected by the Chernobyl disaster.<sup>49</sup>

Representatives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church care for children with disabilities by periodically visiting social rehabilitation facilities. Thus, on the eve of Christmas, preacher V. Serak, together with his pupils, visited the territorial center of social assistance of the Prydniprovsky district of the Department of Social Policy of the Cherkasy City Council and held a Christmas nativity scene.<sup>50</sup>



**Fig. 6 "Fabulous Christmas" for children with disabilities at the Prydniprovsky territorial center**

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<sup>48</sup> В. Токман. "Соціально значуща діяльність релігійних організацій України в сучасних суспільно-політичних умовах." Національний інститут стратегічних досліджень, 2017. [https://niss.gov.ua/sites/default/files/2017-09/relig\\_org\\_Ukr-953c2.pdf](https://niss.gov.ua/sites/default/files/2017-09/relig_org_Ukr-953c2.pdf). [V. Tokman. "Socially Significant Activity of Religious Organizations of Ukraine in Modern Socio-Political Conditions." National Institute for Strategic Studies].

<sup>49</sup> "Адвентистське агентство допомоги та розвитку." Церква адвентистів сьомого дня, 2019. <https://adventist.ua/history/adventistskoe-agentstvo-pomoshchi-i-razvitiya>. ["Adventist Relief and Development Agency." Seventh-day Adventist Church].

<sup>50</sup> Казкове Різдво для дітей-інвалідів Придніпровського терцентру." Черкаси: Офіційний портал міської ради, міського голови, виконавчого комітету, 2014. <http://chmr.gov.ua/ua/newsread.php?view=6625&s=1&s1=18>. ["Fabulous Christmas for children with disabilities of the Dnieper Tercentre." Cherkasy: Official portal of the city council, mayor, executive committee.]

In Volhynia, Protestants demonstrated their charitable ministry and social activities. They have a school where children with disabilities are taught. The school principal notes: "The school provides in-depth study of a foreign language. We have children sitting in wheelchairs, and we focus on children with musculoskeletal disorders."<sup>51</sup>



**Fig. 7 Charitable activity of Protestants in Volyn**

In addition, Protestant volunteers care for people with disabilities who are being treated at the Agape Rehabilitation Complex (Boratyn village). The complex is so arranged that people with disabilities do not feel disabled, because everything is adapted to them. One of the patients, Oleksandr, who does not feel anything below his chest and cannot actually work with his fingers, says:

I was in the hospital for about three months, where I was treated for bedsores, which I received in intensive care. There was no one doing exercises that would prepare us for independent living. My house is on the eighth floor, so it makes my life very difficult, because I constantly have to ask someone for something. Being here, I have full access to everything: I go to the yard myself, eat myself.<sup>52</sup>



**Fig. 8 People with disabilities in the rehabilitation complex "Agape"**

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<sup>51</sup> Допомога інвалідам та дітям: благодійна діяльність протестантів на Волині." Волинські новини, 2017. <https://www.volynnews.com/news/society/dopomoha-invalidam-ta-ditiam-blahodiy-na-diialnist-protestantiv-na-vo/>. ["Assistance to the Disabled and Children: Charitable Activities of Protestants in Volyn." Volyn news.]

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.



ADRA conducts training for social workers and psychologists of Donbass. Thus, in Sviatohirsk, training was conducted for teams of social and psychological assistance from Luhansk and Donetsk regions. They talked about “the guidelines of international humanitarian aid, the importance of adhering to security rules and methods of resolving conflicts. The training covered the direction of body-oriented psychotherapy, which aimed to work with people, including people with disabilities, and young children affected by armed conflict.”<sup>53</sup>

ADRA cooperates with the Popasna District Center for Comprehensive Rehabilitation "Leleka" (Luhansk region) to promote the fact that children with disabilities have mastered certain professions and taken various courses. This organization has worked to organize similar events, hold workshops, provide free buses for their use.<sup>54</sup>

Adventists are working to open a variety of institutions for people with disabilities. For example, the rehabilitation center for children with disabilities "Dawn of Hope" was opened in Ternopil. According to the press service of the Religious Information Service of Ukraine, "such a center appeared thanks to David Andrushchuk, whose parents have long harbored the idea of creating such an institution for other disabled children in the region."<sup>55</sup>



**Fig. 9 Opening of the rehabilitation center of children with disabilities  
"Dawn of Hope" in Ternopil**

<sup>53</sup> “Тренінг для психологів та соціальних працівників Донбасу.” ADRA, 2020. <http://www.adra.ua/trening-dlya-psihologiv-ta-sotsialnih-pratsivnikov-donbasu/>. ["Training for psychologists and social workers of Donbass."]

<sup>54</sup> “Безоплатний автобус відвіз дітей з інвалідністю навчатися кулінарії.” ADRA, 2020. <http://www.adra.ua/bezoplatnij-avtobus-vidviz-ditej-z-invalidnistyu-navchatisya-kulinariyi/>. ["A free bus took children with disabilities to learn cooking."]

<sup>55</sup> “Адвентисти відкрили на Тернопільщині центр реабілітації дітей з інвалідністю.” Релігійно-інформаційна служба України, 2018. [https://risu.ua/adventisti-vidkrili-na-ternopilshchini-centr-reabilitaciji-ditej-z-invalidnistyu\\_n93472](https://risu.ua/adventisti-vidkrili-na-ternopilshchini-centr-reabilitaciji-ditej-z-invalidnistyu_n93472). ["Adventists have opened a rehabilitation center for children with disabilities in Ternopil region." Religious Information Service of Ukraine.]

His mother, Alla Androschuk, appealed to the Kremenets Regional Humanitarian and Pedagogical Academy named after Taras Shevchenko with a request to promote the development of rehabilitation treatment in this area. For some time, various events were organized, including sports, to occupy people with disabilities.

Adventist philanthropists set up a tent camp "Friends of Jesus" for children with disabilities who are students of the public organization "Coast of Hope." These children and their parents lived for a few days on the shores of Lake Shatsk, exercised, swam in the lake, played beach volleyball, and other games. The children were able to try their hand at various sports. The organizers prepared special classes, during which, "despite the limited physical capabilities, children rode on a hinged tourist crossing, could feel the force of the wind under the tension of a real parachute." Pedagogical college students held master classes in needlework as part of the event, children "learned how to make and decorate postcards, painted fabric in the batik technique." Olga Magdyuk "was specially attentive and sensitive to each child, patiently explained, prompted, helped them feel the joy of what they did with their own hands."<sup>56</sup>



**Fig. 10 Three days on the lake for children with disabilities from Adventist philanthropists**

Adventist communities in several cities (Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Sumy) organized Christmas celebrations for children in difficult situations and children with disabilities, staged holiday performances, and distributed about 872 gifts. One of the coordinators of this program, Mykhailo Prodanyuk, commented: "It is strange to watch when people get more pleasure from doing good to others. If earlier people simply received gifts from abroad, this

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<sup>56</sup> "Три дні на озері для 'Берега надії' від благодійників-адвентистів." Слово правди, 2017. <https://slovopravdy.com.ua/try-dni-na-ozeri-dlya-berega-nadiyi-vid-blagodijnykiv-adventystiv/>. ["Three days on the lake for 'Coast of Hope' from Adventist philanthropists." A word of truth.]

year families prepared and packed gifts for other children. And people get real pleasure from it."<sup>57</sup>



**Fig. 11 Victor Dvoretzky, presbyter of the SDA religious community, communicates with children with disabilities**

Victor Dvoretzky, a presbyter of the ASD religious community and a senior researcher at the Bila Tserkva Museum of Local Lore, tells Public Space how to make friends with children with disabilities. He has been friends with such children who live in the Bila Tserkva orphanage for about 11 years. His work focuses on the inclusion of people with disabilities. As boarding schools are currently being reformed in Ukraine, communities may provide the necessary social services to children with disabilities and promote their inclusion in local communities. Viktor Dvoretzky proposes to join the socialization and empowerment of children from the boarding school:

1. Start by getting acquainted with the management and educators of the boarding school.
2. Decide what exactly you are ready to do with the children of the boarding school.
3. Choose a format and schedule of meetings that is acceptable to you.
4. Agree on a mandatory schedule.
5. The first meeting can be general, and with pupils, the oldest and the best prepared for it.
6. Become a member of a support group if you still find other formats of communication with the inmates of the boarding school difficult for you."<sup>58</sup>

The emphasis is on communication with children with disabilities, common points of contact in communication with them.

<sup>57</sup> “Адвентисти провели різдвяні програми для дітей з інвалідністю та з проблемних сімей.” Всеукраїнський собор, 2020. <https://sobor.com.ua/news/adventisti-proveli-rizdvyani-programi-dlya-ditei-z-invalidnistyu-ta-z-problemnikh-simei>. [“Adventists have conducted Christmas programs for children with disabilities and troubled families.” All-Ukrainian Cathedral.]

<sup>58</sup> “6 порад як стати приятелем дитини з інвалідністю.” Громадський простір, 2019. <https://www.prostir.ua/?news=6-porad-yak-staty-priyatelem-dytny-z-invalidnistyu>. [“6 tips on how to become a friend of a child with a disability.” Public space.]

The Ukrainian Institute of Arts and Science has opened a Rehabilitation Camp for children after cochlear implantation. During the opening of the camp, the problems of deaf children were discussed together with the Commissioner of the President of Ukraine for Children's Rights, M. Kuleba. If before the state arranged for such a child to be in a boarding school, now it is trying to provide deaf children with equal access, opportunities, and rights alongside other children. According to M. Kuleba, "there are specialists at the Ukrainian Institute of Arts and Science who will conduct classes with children and parents. We see that here the children say their first words. And we cannot but rejoice."<sup>59</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Having examined the various publications, we can conclude that Protestant denominations in Ukraine, whether Baptists, Pentecostals, or Adventists, are sympathetic to people with disabilities, establishing various organizations, foundations, and volunteer activities to care for them. Protestants try to respect the rights of people with disabilities, but they need to be aware that excessive care can also negatively affect people with disabilities, as they strive for independence and self-realization without assistance. Protestants rely on religious teachings, as each of these movements is characterized by helping those who need it. It is noteworthy that they help both morally and materially. However, we see that assistance is provided selectively, in those places where a certain community operates, so it does not contribute to all people without exception, but only those who belong to this denomination. The assistance is selective, because it directly depends on the material support of the church in the region and the church members themselves, who are usually not rich. There are cases when help is provided to secular people, but this is the exception rather than the rule.

As Protestants do a lot to arrange a comfortable life for people with disabilities, care about their health, and communication, all their actions should be more actively covered in the media, not only their own local media, but also national, so that more people get acquainted with them. This will help develop a more tolerant attitude of Ukrainian society to people with disabilities, as well as to members of the Protestant denomination.

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<sup>59</sup> "Адвентисти відкрили реабілітаційний табір для нечуючих дітей." Релігійно-інформаційна служба України., 2017. [https://risu.ua/adventisti-vidkrili-reabilitaciyinyi-tabir-dlya-nechuyuchih-ditey\\_n86333](https://risu.ua/adventisti-vidkrili-reabilitaciyinyi-tabir-dlya-nechuyuchih-ditey_n86333). ["Adventists have opened a rehabilitation camp for deaf children." Religious Information Service of Ukraine.]

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