



Praying in the new year, 2022

*“I’m so glad we didn’t cancel, Jeni.”*

*“Me too, Moni. Me too.”*

I rang in 2022 in the same way I have come to appreciate and love ringing in every new year since moving to Macedonia – in corporate prayer. This year, eleven of us representing four different congregations in Macedonia gathered in Strumica to celebrate the coming of the new year. Originally, the event was designed as an overnight retreat for teenagers, but due to low registration numbers, Dejan, Simona and I (the acting Commission for Work with Children and Youth) decided to ask the few teens who registered if we could open it up to

older adults so we wouldn’t have to cancel. In the end, the event felt more like a family gathering than a teen event, but maybe that was closer to what we all really needed after two years in a pandemic.

The theme for our event was „Обновување на нашиот ум“ “**The renewing of our mind**” from Romans 12:2 “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” Pastor Dejan gave the evening message about the importance of renewing our minds with the Truth from God, but first, he gave us an interesting assignment. He handed us little blocks of wood and told us to pound them, scratch them, and dig holes in them however we wanted with the hammers, nails and other tools he had provided. We talked about how hard these last two years have been with all the restrictions, disappointments and losses due to the pandemic and took some of our frustrations out on those poor little blocks of wood.

Photo curtesy of Simona Tancheva





Scars in our wood representing life

When everyone was satisfied with the damage to their wood, Dejan brought out some wood-filler putty and showed us how to fill in the holes. He said this is similar to how God fills in the damage and scars done to us in our lives with His grace, love and truth. When the putty was dry, we sanded the blocks smooth, so they looked just like new. Well, almost. If you look closely, you can still see where the wood was scarred. Our lives and minds may never be healed in the sense that they are innocent and unscathed from living in this world, but God can renew our minds so that they are like how He intended them to be, able to discern the Truth about good and evil and to know God's will. Dejan reminded us, our Savior, Jesus, also has scars.



Dejan explaining his lesson

In addition to the message, we played a few get-to-know-you games, ate our fill of pizza and snacks, sang worship songs together and had a craft time where we turned our blocks into a reminder souvenir with our Bible verse on it. After we prayed into 2022, we played the white elephant gift

exchange game and then, those of us who still had energy, went for a walk around the town center and park. We had a lovely time hanging out together.



Craft time!

In the morning, I led a short devotion on the importance of knowing God's will and gave an example of how God renewed my thinking around fairness and financial resources while living in Cambodia. I challenged the people to seek God's renewal of their thinking around any area of their life where they did not have peace. I challenge you to do the same and pray 2022 is a year of peace and renewal for you and your loved ones.

In Him,

*Jennifer Moore*

### ***Finally joined the club***

After celebrating New Year's and Orthodox Christmas, the thing we've all been trying to avoid finally found me – I came down with the corona virus. Thankfully, I was able to get over it with chicken soup, several days of rest and some pain and cold medicine. I do not wish to catch this virus again, but I am thankful to have gotten it and gotten over it so at least I no longer fear the unknown!



Click [here](#) to donate

