

Sharing Christ's Compassion for Ukraine

*"Many are the plans in the mind of a man,
but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand."*

Proverbs 19:21

October 13, 2012

Dear Prayer Partners:

Yes, it has been two months since I last wrote! Life has been very full, and God has accomplished much. I will start with some bullets to give you the highlights, then you can read the full story below.

- ☆ I received my one-year residency permit!
- ☆ God blessed the medical team September 7-22 with the opportunity to touch the lives of 675 patients in 9½ clinic days in Cherkassy, Kharkov, and Odessa. Read Valya's story.
- ☆ We now have seven Ukrainian ladies trained to lead the post-abortion Bible study "Forgiven and Set Free". They are starting 3 small groups this week.
- ☆ "Fair Haven" Church in Krasnosyolka, where Lonya is pastor, celebrated its 20th anniversary Oct 7.
- ☆ 'Tis the season for Zhatva! Our churches are thanking the Lord for the harvest.

Wednesday, Oct 3, **God gave me my temporary residency permit** to live in Ukraine until Sept 20, 2013! Our secretary had told me it would be ready on Wed morning. After waiting in line for an hour at the immigration office, the clerk told me it wouldn't be ready until 3pm. So I had some unexpected shopping time downtown, wondering if it would be ready. Thank the Lord, it was! Then I had to go to another immigration office for the area of the city where I live to register. An official of my apartment building has my papers now. I am waiting for the last registration stamp, but that should not be a problem. It is a complex process! What a relief to have this burden lifted and to know I should not have to deal with this again until next August.

Thank the Lord for the **medical team** anchored by ophthalmologist James Oakman. This was my **first trip to Cherkassy**, the home city of Victor, a translator with whom I have worked for more than 10 years. Pastor Pavel Shepel is carrying on the ministry of his father who started churches in a number of villages and spent several years in Communist prisons for preaching the gospel. Pavel is a delightful man, radiant with the joy of the Lord and boundless energy. We did clinics in two villages on Monday, seeing 94 patients. Their intense gratitude was palpable. Tuesday was ½ day at Pavel's church in Cherkassy before an 8-hour drive to Kharkov. ABWE colleagues David and Penny Winget arranged clinics with several new church plants. One day I saw more than 60 patients by myself, trying to address all their issues of family medicine from hypertension to arthritis to acute infections. Thursday we were in a small city an hour from Kharkov where **young men whom God has delivered from drugs and alcohol are starting a church**. Their enthusiasm was infectious! We would need to spend a week there to care for all the medical needs. I love to hear the happy cries of patients who can now see to read with their new glasses! **Dr. Oakman is praying for another ophthalmologist or an optometrist to join him on the next trip** so he can spend more time with each patient rather than seeing the hoards at "warp speed". The 2nd week of the medical team we were in the Odessa area at my regular clinic sites. The highest number of patients was in Makarovo where we saw 102. We had many opportunities to share the gospel with patients both weeks. Every morning we started the clinic with the preaching of God's Word and our team singing hymns in English and Russian. **Pray for these seeds to bear fruit!**

In Kubanka I received an urgent message to go see Valya who was very ill at home. She has been a patient for about 12 years and at times has shown great interest in spiritual things. She used to come to our Sunday services until she had a falling-out with some other villagers. Her son got into a drunken brawl with another young man and killed him. So her son spent several years in prison which stigmatized her whole family. But

she would still come occasionally to clinic and let me tell her about the hope she could have in Christ. This day in September, Lonya and I found her in bed, very weak with labored breathing and in great pain. Her daughter-in-law said she had been diagnosed with liver cancer and sent home to die but told not to take any injections for pain! Patients here are not told when they are diagnosed with cancer, so they are left to wonder why they are so sick and cannot talk to anyone. There is no support like Hospice for these families. I hate feeling so helpless! We read Scripture to her, shared the gospel, and encouraged a friend to read the Bible to her. She died two days later. Her friend later shared with me that Valya prayed for God's forgiveness after we left! **What a wonderful reunion there will be in heaven!** Lonya heard recently some gossip in Kubanka that our clinic contributed to Valya's illness and death. You know God is at work, when Satan resorts to spreading such lies. **Pray for other people in Kubanka to hear the truth and accept Jesus Christ as Savior.**

October 6 our **post-abortion ministry** leaders met to prepare for a new wave of small groups studying the Bible course, "**Forgiven and Set Free**". Three groups are beginning this week: Ira is leading a group in the town of Builik, Nadya in the southern part of Odessa called Tairova, and Alyona here in Kotovskovo. I will help Alyona's group at the church "Hope for the People". **Please pray for wisdom for the leaders in directing discussions and openness of participants' hearts to receive the answers of God's Word for their needs.** We will be organizing a **meeting November 17** to introduce this ministry to women's leaders from all the churches in Odessa. Holly and I will be meeting with a lawyer within the next month to discuss **registration of our pro-life organization, "Choose Life"**.

October 7 was quite festive in **Krasnosyolka** as "Fair Haven" Church celebrated the **20th anniversary** of their first baptism. Pastor Lonya's dad Victor began the church in his living room as soon as the Soviet Union fell and Christians were free to meet. Luba's dad Grigoriy was the first pastor. Their sister church in Canada, Emmanuel Baptist, helped them construct the church building, which opened in 1999. Lonya was ordained as pastor in 2001. We saw scores of photographs of baptisms, holidays, Sunday School, camps, clinics, village ministries. We thanked God for all He has done and prayed for wisdom for the future. At the end the young people presented flowers to four people who had had great impact on the history of the church—Victor, Lonya, Nina and me. I was shocked and humbled to be included in that group of four! **Nina reminded me that she came to Christ as a result of the clinic when it first began early 1999.** Praise the Lord!

Zhatva is a highlight of the year, as each church chooses a Sunday in Sept/Oct to thank the Lord for the harvest. Lots of special music, decorations, food and fellowship! **What a blessing to see patients from the clinics coming to visit these Zhatva celebrations in various villages.** **Valentina** saw Holly at the Krasnosyolka clinic when the medical team was there, then came to Zhatva. I saw her last week in clinic and she was very open to the gospel! She would like to study "The Story of Hope" with me. She came to church Sunday and asked when I was coming to visit her at home. **Pray for her salvation.**

Your partnership in prayer is vital to this ministry! Continue to pray for patients in all my regular village clinics to come to know Christ personally as Savior. Pray for wisdom and strength for me as I lead these various ministries, that I will fulfill God's purposes.

*Leaning on The Rock,
Miriam*