

Sharing Christ's Compassion for Ukraine

*"Thou art my rock and my fortress;
therefore for Thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.
My times are in Thy hand."*

Psalm 31: 3 & 15

December 5, 2012

Dear Prayer Partners:

Merry Christmas! We have been praying much for wisdom and guidance and open doors in the village clinics and the pro-life ministry. God is answering our prayers!

Luba (Pastor Lonya's wife) and I went to visit **Valentina** in Krasnosyolka. She said that she has tried reading the Bible on her own but understood very little. She is hungry for spiritual truth! She was back at church Sunday. **We plan to start studying "The Story of Hope" in a couple of weeks.**

Grisha is an elderly man with many medical problems who has said in the past that he was a believer, but his lifestyle did not give any evidence of faith. One of his neighbors asked me to go see him at home last week as he was very sick. He probably has a bleeding stomach ulcer and is very weak but refuses to go to the hospital. He has no money so knows he would not get good treatment. He was very afraid of dying. **Lonya talked to him and Grisha prayed to receive Christ as his Savior!** *Pray for his spiritual growth and for the success of the treatment I started.*

The "**Bocharova clinic**" meets once a month at a new church in an old kindergarten on Bocharova Street in the city of Odessa, not far from my apartment. Mostly Christian retirees from various churches in the area come to that clinic, but we are thanking the Lord for bringing more unbelievers. One lady had come for several years, strongly Orthodox and resistant to the gospel. But as our relationship deepened over time, she started listening to the hope she could have in Jesus. The waiting area is quite a social gathering, and often when I arrive in the morning, the patients are singing hymns! One of the other patients invited her to a nearby church. **She started going regularly, was saved, and her face has changed from anxious to joyful!**

Natasha has been bedridden for a couple of months. Her 40-year-old son Andrei moved back to the village to care for her and his 45-year-old sister Luda who is crippled from cerebral palsy. It has stretched me to care for her at home as **she really needs hospitalization**. However, they refused her admission because she has been diagnosed with "Stage 4 colon cancer". The doctors give Andrei prescriptions for pain relievers, but they will not treat anything else. There are no other relatives and no government help for them. Natasha accepted Christ 9 years ago and Pastor Lonya baptized her. She has been a vibrant testimony of God's grace. **Yesterday though she asked me why God has abandoned her.** She was a meticulous housekeeper before, but now she lies in a tiny room with a wood stove, seeing only a dirt-covered floor, messy table, and stained sheets and blankets. She refuses to have strangers come in, even though I offered to pay for some help. She now has blood clots in one leg, fluid and a palpable mass in her abdomen, and severe anemia from the tumor bleeding. She just wants to die. We talked for a long time about God's sufficient grace, His peace, and our need to focus on Christ and heaven when we are in the midst of suffering. Lonya said Andrei was more open to the gospel yesterday than he has ever been. I encouraged Natasha to pray for the salvation of her children, the most precious heritage she could leave them. I shared Ps 31:15 with her, "My times are in Thy hands". God knows, He cares, He will never leave her, and He partakes in her suffering. As we prayed together to end our visit, she was much calmer and ready to endure. **Pray that she will know God's presence and peace in her last days on earth, as she prepares to meet Him in person. Pray for the salvation of Andrei and Luda.**

It took a stroke and the loss of normal speech to get Anatoliy's attention. After coming to our clinic for a few years and hearing about Jesus, he was saved and baptized 7 years ago. His wife and daughter-in-law were already members of the Makarovo church. **Recently his son Sasha repented** of his sin and came to Christ! **Pray for Pastor Volodya as he disciples Sasha.**

I could go on and on with stories of needy patients, but I trust these vignettes will motivate you to pray for many more patients to come to saving faith in Jesus. Check out photos and more information on our website: ukrainemedical.abwe.org.

November 17, twenty Ukrainians and four Americans representing 12 different churches gathered to talk about the post-abortion ministry. I shared with them the startling fact that **548 babies are aborted in Ukraine every day.** And that is only the reported abortions! For every two live births, one baby is aborted. These ladies were deeply stirred by the need and by the testimonies of those who have gone through the Bible study "Forgiven and Set Free". Then Nov 21, I spoke to a group of 30 pastors on this theme. In December **we are distributing 3000 brochures in churches** throughout the city of Odessa to invite more ladies to participate in FSF. **Pray for God to touch hearts as these brochures touch hands.** We are planning to have 5 small groups studying FSF during the first few months of 2013. **Pray for our group leaders** as they talk to inquirers and prepare for new groups. We currently have three FSF groups meeting who will get together for a closing service Dec 20. **Pray for God's life-changing grace and peace to grip these ladies' hearts and minds.**

Listen to a testimony from one of the ladies who has gone through the course "Forgiven and Set Free":

I was 18 years old when I had my one and only abortion. My mother talked me into it, saying that we couldn't afford to care for a baby. It was late in the pregnancy and I nearly died from the procedure. Because of complications, I would never be able to get pregnant again. Later the Lord saved me from my sin, and I married a Christian man. But my relationship with my mother was strained. For 17 years, I grieved over the fact that I could not have children, and felt guilty about the abortion. During the FSF course, I realized that deep inside I was still angry with my mother. I repented of that sin and truly forgave her and the Lord restored our relationship. God comforted my grief over infertility and helped me to realize that I did have a child in heaven. He took away my guilt so that I knew I was completely forgiven and set free! I became an FSF group leader, and during the first course I taught, my husband died. God used the message of this course again in my life to give me comfort and hope.

Pray that many other women may receive this same comfort and relief by joining us in small groups to study "Forgiven and Set Free" in 2013. Pray that God would call other believers to **become FSF leaders.** In the future we want to use this Bible study with unsaved women to give them comfort and hope through salvation. **Pray for me as I continue to direct this post-abortion ministry until God leads us to the Ukrainian lady who can take over.** I am also serving as president of "Choose Life!" as we lay the foundation for this new pro-life ministry. My missionary colleague Holly Friesen has been a great help in ministry and she is the director of the future pregnancy care center. She leaves for furlough Dec 17, so I will be shouldering the entire load of both the village clinics and the pro-life ministry. **Pray for God's strength and wisdom to enable me to persevere.** My stamina is still at a low level after all the health problems of last year and the vertigo has returned after a hiatus of 1½ years. The Almighty Creator of the Universe is my Rock and my Fortress!

Thank you for continuing to pray for me, the patients in the clinics, the ladies in FSF, and the organization of "Choose Life". May God help you to focus on Jesus Christ during this Christmas season, as we rejoice in His willingness to become a human embryo in order to become our Savior. What sacrificial love!

*Leaning on The Rock,
Miriam*