

Sharing Christ's Compassion for Ukraine

*Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.
In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*

Proverbs 3:5-6

March 17, 2014

Dear Prayer Partners:

What a comfort God's Word is! During the turmoil and uncertainty of Ukraine, this has reminded me of how critical it is to not lean on my own understanding, but to trust the Almighty God, Creator of the Universe, to direct my steps. He promises to always be with us through difficulties and give us peace that surpasses everything. You have probably heard about the increasing protests in eastern Ukraine, in which a few people were killed in Donetsk and many injured in Kharkov and Donetsk. Russian forces have been seen entering the Kherson oblast. Threats have been made against Nikolaev and Odessa. The referendum yesterday in Crimea to return to Russia promised to be a flash point for more trouble. Many ATM's have insufficient funds, and banks continue limiting withdrawals. Due to all these increasing problems, our ABWE administration made the decision for **all ABWE missionaries to evacuate from Ukraine**. I am currently sitting in the airport in Vienna, Austria, awaiting my flight to Sofia, Bulgaria. ABWE colleagues David and Penny Winget, with whom I led many medical teams in Kharkov, have begun a new ministry in Bulgaria, and invited me to take refuge with them for a few days. It was a gut-wrenching decision to leave Ukraine, my patients in village clinics, the blossoming pro-life ministry. But we believe God was leading us to evacuate before the violence spreads to Odessa. There are further events in March that could also be flash points. It is impossible to predict what will happen, or when we can return to Odessa. It would be wonderful, if we could go back in just a couple of weeks! I will be in close touch with Pastor Lonya German to get his input on the situation, as to when the climate will be calm enough for us to go home to our ministries.

Pray for peace in Ukraine! Pray that the turmoil and uncertainty will **turn people to trust in Jesus Christ**. Pray for the interim government of Ukraine which faces incredibly difficult decisions. Pray that we missionaries will be wise and discerning in listening to God's direction. I have plenty of computer work to do in preparing seminars, catching up with correspondence, preparing lessons for the restricted access country in May, doing continuing medical education. It is hard to plan the trip in May and purchase plane tickets, when I do not know where I will be at that time, or where I can go to get my visa. Our Father knows!

March 8, the "Women's Center" held an open house for church leaders and volunteers and their families. Holly Friesen and a hard-working group from our "Choose Life" steering committee planned the opening. About 100 people saw our new office and heard the plans for the ministry there. We have had to put the further training of our volunteers on hold, until Holly and I can return to Odessa. So we do not know when the "Women's Center" will officially open to receive clients. Pray for our volunteers to keep up their enthusiasm for this new ministry while we are in this "wait and see" phase.

The Church Ministries Institute cancelled their 20th anniversary celebration in light of the crisis in Ukraine. Our "Forgiven and Set Free" post-abortion groups began in February and are persevering despite the uncertain times. I hope I can be back in Odessa for the closing service for these groups! I hope to meet with the group leaders via Skype at the end of March. Thank the Lord for Ira Lupanova who will lead the meeting in my absence.

Your prayer support means so much through these difficult days. This letter is written in haste to let you know what is happening. I will write more next week, when I have a chance to process recent events.

*Clinging to The Rock,
Miriam*