



Merry Christmas from Ukraine!

*“Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
And His greatness is unsearchable.
I will meditate on the glorious splendor of Your majesty,
And on Your wondrous works”.*

(Psalm 145: 3&5)

December 6, 2014

Dear Prayer Partners:

My heart is bubbling over with praise like David’s in Psalm 145! That psalm is full of the wonder of God’s greatness, His compassion, and His work on our behalf. Read that psalm to **continue the attitude of gratitude from Thanksgiving Day to the joy of celebrating Jesus’ coming to earth to give us salvation and eternal life!** Rejoice in God’s greatness as you read about His “wondrous works” in this part of the world in the past few weeks. I am so grateful for your prayers and financial support that have made all this possible! Since I have not written in a couple of months and this letter will be longer than usual, I will give you the headlines first.

Women Sprout Wings to Soar in Freedom out of the Morass of Abortion in RAC
Leadership Training for Post-Abortion Ministry in RAC
Discussions about Pro-life Ministry in Bulgaria and Hungary
Ukraine Crisis Fund Touches Hundreds of Lives in War Zone and Beyond
Received Visa in Budapest to Reapply for Residency Permit for Ukraine
Village Clinics Bursting at the Seams!

What a privilege to return to the same restricted access country (RAC) November 3-17, where Carolyn Rice and I had served in May. Unfortunately, Carolyn was not able to make this 2nd trip, so I was scrambling the last few weeks to prepare all the material to teach by myself. God showed His greatness even in this process of helping me get everything done, even working on the plane! I would like for my friend, the pediatrician who originally invited me to her city, to share her impressions of the post-abortion Bible study, “Forgiven and Set Free” (FSF).

What I like about FSF is that it is founded on deep immersion into God’s Word by the participants themselves. Their healing depends fully on God alone; the group leader is only God’s instrument, and all the glory goes to Him alone. It was amazing to watch how God healed the participants, restored their sense of femininity and motherhood, and gave them freedom from the years of guilt, grief, depression, and self-judgment. It was as if wings sprouted on these sisters to lift them above the morass they had wallowed in, so that they could believe and accept the fullness of God’s forgiveness, realizing they are beloved daughters of the Father. My spirit was thrilled to see the Holy Spirit act in love to lead them through excruciatingly painful memories and then bathe their hearts in soothing balm. These women were like prisoners who had been set free from chains! I beg you to continue to pray for these sisters, that God would continue this work of healing in all spheres of their lives. Pray this this new direction of ministry to women would spread throughout this region.

She led her first group of women through FSF in parallel with my group in the intensive 5-day format. We cried out to God together for wisdom how to help these 9 women admit their needs and deep hurts, seek the Lord in their personal study, and lead them to the Fountain of God’s Healing Mercies. It can be a battle to let go of pride and admit personal need, but what joy in the victory! I wish you could have seen their radiant faces the last day as they marveled in the fullness of God’s forgiveness, their place as daughters of the King of Kings, giggling like teenagers from relief of years of heavy burdens! It took all 5 days for one woman to uncover 25 years of layers of shame and bitterness—rape, verbal and physical abuse by her husband and his mother and sister who lived with them, death of a 40-day-old baby, culminating in her fleeing that abuse and having an abortion. God saved her years later, but she never revealed these secrets to her church because of her shame. She did not realize the truth about abortion being murder until after her salvation, and that deepened her shame and guilt, rather than helping her experience Jesus’ forgiveness. What a miracle to watch those chains fall away, her shame melt in the joy of Jesus’ understanding acceptance. Her guilt carried away, she looked us in the eyes for the first time and broke out in a face-cracking smile that would not stop! **The Word of God works!**

Eleven women from 4 different cities in two countries attended the training seminar for how to lead FSF small groups. We explored all the Biblical principles underlying the course “Forgiven and Set Free”, the qualities of leadership, and the practical aspects of leading a support group. Pray for my pediatrician friend who is directing their new post-abortion ministry. It is a delight to mentor these women. She was an observer in the FSF group last May and three of the participants attended the leadership training and assisted in the leadership of groups this time. A pastor’s wife from another country was an observer and is eager to take the ministry there. She wants me to come teach there too, so pray for God’s guidance whether to go this even more restrictive country.

Penny Winget and I met with the director of a new pro-life ministry in Sofia, Bulgaria, in October. Penny and David are praying for wisdom for which ministries to use in their new church plant in Velika Turnova. It seems almost nothing is happening in Bulgaria in either sphere of preventing abortion or helping women with post-abortion emotional trauma. In Budapest, there is a small pregnancy center, but no post-abortion ministry. My ABWE colleagues there were stirred by what God is doing in women’s lives. May God raise up such a life-giving ministry throughout Central & Eastern Europe. Our Women’s Center in Odessa is now open 28 hours a week, several counselors have finished their training, and clients are beginning to trickle in. One woman had tried to take some pills to cause an abortion, but they did not work. Our counselors are helping her to see the value of her unborn child’s life and so far she has kept her child. **Pray for her salvation and the preservation of her baby’s life.** Four small groups are completing the Bible study, “Forgiven and Set Free”, and our closing service will be Dec. 13. We are planning an Appreciation Day for the Center volunteers and the FSF group leaders Dec. 20. **Pray that our volunteers will remain faithful, and women will come to Christ.**

The war continues in eastern Ukraine, producing suffering, hunger, cold, homelessness, floods of refugees fleeing the war zone. Thank you to many who have given to the Crisis Fund! What difference are you making? Listen to several pastors’ words: *“We prepare lunch every day for the poor, the invalids, and the elderly. We buy and distribute bread to the hungry. We visit them at home, and pray that they will see God’s love in us. With our electric saw ‘Friendship’, we cut wood for those who have no heat. All glory to Jesus Christ!”*

“Many elderly are left behind without pensions, family, government help. We buy food and medicines for them”. “We traveled to villages near the war zone, within the sound or artillery fire, to take warm clothes, groceries and medicine”. “Many places have no electricity, running water; banks are closed. It is dangerous to even go out to buy groceries”. “We help the hearing-impaired. Many deaf have died unnecessarily in the fighting because they could not hear the warnings of incoming bombs and artillery”.

Dear brothers and sisters, the example of your sacrificial giving has lit the hearts of our faithful and induces them to sacrifice, all the more so with the arrival of winter and the worsening of conditions, so that more people are in need of help. Our ministry is to witness of Christ in word and deed.

Could I ask you to dig deep to help these continuing needs, to light the hearts of the faithful?

Numbers of patients at our village clinics are rising! Last year we averaged 300 patients per month. The last two months we averaged 408! The economic crisis and the influx of refugees are bringing more patients to the doors of our churches and prayer houses. **Pray that many will find faith and hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.** In Krasnosyolka Thursday, Anastasia returned to see me, and told me how much she enjoyed Pastor Lonya’s message at the beginning of clinic. I invited her to church, as I have in the past. She said she was afraid to come because she didn’t know anything. I encouraged her that we all started at the beginning, and that we would be delighted to help her understand God’s plan of salvation. Raisa has been attending services regularly for several weeks and asked me with tear-filled eyes, “Why didn’t I start sooner?”

Thankful for your prayers, love, and support. Desperate for God’s wisdom and strength.

Grateful for salvation and hope! Holding fast to The Rock,

Miriam

Send checks to ABWE, PO Box 8585, Harrisburg PA 17105-8585.

Ukraine Crisis Fund, account # 0717401. Ukraine Medical Ministry Account # 0110153.

Pro-Life in Ukraine, account # 0757353.

