

Sharing Christ's Compassion for Ukraine

"Weep with them that weep".

(Romans 12:15)

May 23, 2015

Dear Prayer Partners,

How do I describe five clinic days of sorrow and pain mixed with hope and relief? Pastor Lonya German, nurse practitioner Holly Friesen, nurse Lena Koval and I boarded the train to Kharkov Saturday night May 9, not knowing what to expect from this week of medical clinics for war refugees in eastern Ukraine. We started Sunday morning at Pastor Alexander ("Sasha") Donchenko's church in the Rogan area of Kharkov. After the service, desperate people surrounded me, seeking medical care. Sasha met with a group of refugees to whom the church is offering humanitarian aid, housing and other services. That evening we drove 4 bumpy hours to our first destination in the zone recently ravaged by war. Pastor Zhenya had made appointments for 40 patients, thinking there would be only one doctor, and many more were begging for help. Anya, a nursing student from Sasha's church, joined us for her first experience in medical missions. She registered patients, checked their blood pressure, and measured finger-stick hemoglobin and blood sugar. Holly and I did medical consultations, Lonya met with patients individually for their spiritual needs, and Lena dispensed free medicines and health education information. Over the week, we became a well-oiled machine!

Monday night, we drove to **another town that houses thousands of refugees**. We saw 85 Tuesday, but could have seen at least that many more. The dynamic pastor there led his church to buy and remodel an old theater, creating a ministry center that shines with the love of Christ. A refugee center in town sees 100 a day, trying to cope with the overwhelming needs for food, clothes, housing, documents, health care, etc. That night we drove back to Kharkov. Wednesday we saw patients in a village whose church has an orphanage with a working farm, a home for elderly, abandoned houses refurbished for refugees. 10-12 people live in each small 3-4 room house, but they have a roof overhead with no artillery fire. Friday and Saturday we cared for refugee patients in churches in the city. **Holly and I saw 230 patients**. Kharkov estimates 300,000 refugees there!

It was an exhausting week, physically and emotionally. One lady wept as she recounted seeing her husband and her sister killed by a missile hitting their house. A 12-year-old boy is still having nightmares after spending several weeks living in a basement with artillery bursting overhead. A 4-year-old quit talking, while another child is now stuttering badly. So many children and teens with sad pain-filled eyes, so young to know such despair and hopelessness, loss of home and all their possessions. Many are surviving on just oatmeal and bread, but glad to have something to eat. Some families are living in tents, others in unfinished buildings with several families sharing one large room, others crowded into relatives' small apartments. Government and international resources do not begin to touch the suffering. Nearly all of them fled with just one small bag, others with just the clothes on their backs. Some buses evacuating refugees were strafed. Tears were often in my eyes, as I listened and gave advice for their illnesses. What we were doing seemed so little in this sea of need, but we could love them one by one. Each patient saw Jesus' compassion, many heard the Gospel, others got medicine and a Biblical prescription for stress and anxiety. ***Pastor Lonya said that SEVEN prayed with him to receive Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord! Praise God!***

Is the hope that Jesus gives enough for this suffering? YES! One elderly lady came into my exam room with a smile and a blood pressure of 220/120. She said her head hurts sometimes. While I was explaining what medicines I would give her, she started singing! She was separated from her family, her home destroyed, getting a pension of \$50 per month, insufficient for medicine. But she knew Jesus! That all-surpassing peace was keeping her from despair and giving her joy. May many come to know Him personally, as this dear saint does. ***Pray for us as we plan to return to eastern Ukraine June 21-27 for another week of clinics for refugees.***

Holding fast to The Rock, Miriam Wheeler, MD