

## *Sharing Christ's Compassion for Ukraine*

*"Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding."*

(Daniel 2:20-21)

July 27, 2015

Dear Prayer Partners,

What a packed summer of ministry! Praise God for the doors He opens, the strength He gives, and the control He exercises over nations. Ukraine remains in crisis, war and uncertainty, but our Lord is sovereign! Continue to pray for peace in Ukraine and for the many events to come listed below.

### Calendar Highlights:

- May 30: Closing Service for participants in post-abortion Bible study, "Forgiven and Set Free". Two women accepted Christ as Savior during the course! We led our first group in a village.
- June 1-4: All-Ukraine Baptist Association Leaders' Conference. I taught women's seminars on stress and anxiety.
- June 3: Ukraine Crisis Fund Roundtable
- June 20-28: Clinics for refugees in Ukrainian-held territory of "Donbas" region of eastern Ukraine.
- July 4: Meeting/seminar for "Forgiven and Set Free" group leaders
- July 13-20: Central Asia Union of Christian Medics Congress. 140 Christian health care professionals attended! I presented my ministry in Ukraine to the whole body and did two workshops on pro-life ministry.
- July 23 & 30: Clinics for invalid-refugees in sanitariums near Odessa
- August 8-15: All-Ukraine Association of Christian Medics Conference. I will do a presentation on church-based village clinic ministry to the whole group, lead 3 workshops, and mentor students one day in a local village clinic.
- August 17-24: Aleks and Vera, Ukrainian emigrant medical students in San Diego, will be serving in our Odessa village clinics. Pray for me as I teach them not only good medicine, but also effective ministry.
- August 31—Sept. 4: ABWE-Ukraine Team Retreat
- September 7-21: Dr. Tim Murphy will cover the Odessa area clinics. **Pray for Tim and his family.**
- September 15-21??... *possible* return trip to Donbas for more refugee clinics. **PRAY** for God's leading.
- September ??... I depart Ukraine for furlough in the US.

The UCF Roundtable stirred our hearts June 3 as our advisory council (of which I am chair) and several other ABWE missionaries met with 10 pastors from the Donbas region and 2 pastors from Kharkov oblast involved in refugee ministry. There are 300,000 war refugees in the Kharkov oblast. These 12 pastors represented six different Baptist associations. Five were from the rebel-occupied zone, from which it is very difficult to travel. They have to be careful about sharing personal information and photos, because the rebels often target Protestant churches. God is using this crisis to draw people to Himself! These pastors are heroes of the faith for persevering in a war-torn area to serve their own church family plus many hurting souls who need food, shelter, and comfort. I wish I could share every story with you! One young pastor had to evacuate his family one year ago from a demolished town to an undamaged village of 3,000 people. His church already has 15 members and is averaging 50 in attendance each Sunday! After our clinic, two more refugees prayed for salvation. He is feeding and housing many refugees, and makes frequent trips into the occupied zone to take humanitarian aid. Hearing their stories and cries for help motivated Pastor Lonya to go with our medical team a second time to serve refugees in that region. We are already thinking about the winter, when so many people will be in need of heating fuel and warm clothes. **Would you be willing to donate to the ABWE Ukraine Crisis Fund to enable us to continue serving tens of thousands suffering from the ravages of war?** You can mail a check or give online at <http://www.abwe.org/give/projects/ukraine-crisis-fund#.VbZEyvmqqko>.

Nurse practitioner Holly Friesen, Pastor Lonya, two of our regular clinic assistants and I traveled to the "buffer zone" in June. This is the area occupied by the Ukrainian army in the northern part of the Donetsk and Lugansk

oblasts, adjacent to the rebel-occupied territory. As we traveled, we saw the rubble of buildings, apartments and private homes damaged by shelling, bridges destroyed, signs riddled by bullet holes, factories sitting silent. Due to some skirmishes in a nearby town, we had to cancel one of our clinics. But the same day we received 3 invitations to other places, and many more followed! How do you choose 5 towns out of the hundreds in need? We cared for 273 patients in five churches. Lonya shared the Gospel with many, and ten prayed to receive Jesus as Savior! It is heart wrenching to gaze into their wounded eyes and listen to their stories of terror and loss. Months later, they still cower at loud noises and airplanes zooming overhead. Many watched loved ones perish from bombs and artillery; all lost homes and possessions. They are trying to adapt to a new place, while coping with grief and fear. Giving them enough free medicine for a month seems so little compared to their great need. I think our listening to their stories means even more. It was good to see some return patients on this second trip, and to hear how the Lord has been working in their hearts as a result of the clinic outreach.

“Hope for People” Church (HFP) started a Sunday afternoon outreach to refugees living at the Kuyalnik sanitarium just outside of Odessa. Most of them were already invalids before the war started, crippled by trauma, meningitis, cerebral palsy, even polio. For many months, they received significant help from the Ukrainian government and international charities. Now much of that assistance has dried up. Pastor Misha at HFP asked me to do a clinic for these invalids. Last Thursday, he and other drivers transported 30 refugees from the sanitarium to the church for clinic. This was one of my hardest days, as I listened to their stories of illness and despair, their already fragile condition aggravated by traumatic evacuation from battle zones. Some were desperate, others grieved, many seeking hope, all grateful for a small gift of medical consultation and free medicines. Pastor Anatoliy is now working as an evangelist out of HFP, while continuing his village ministry in Limaniy. He preached Thursday and shared the gospel with many. Pray for wisdom, as I consider how to continue a clinic ministry to this group.

This coming Thursday, July 30, Pastor Lonya and I will be taking our medical team to Sergeevka, a resort community further down the Black Sea coast, about 2 hours from Odessa. Last year the summer camps and sanitariums were swarmed with about 5000 refugees, receiving assistance from many organizations. As above, much of that aid has ended, and only about 1500 refugees remain. At one sanitarium, 150 invalids live with conditions similar to those described above. Sergei, a relative of one of our UCF council members, is a deacon at a church in Belgorad-Dnistrovskiy (B-D) and leads a Bible study for these invalids in Sergeevka each Sunday. Many are seeking God in their grief. Some have threatened suicide. Lonya and I visited them a couple of weeks ago and met with Anna, a Christian doctor in B-D. She agreed to go with us, so pray for this new partnership, for understanding between our very different medical systems, for Christ’s compassion to be shown by our whole team, and for strength for the task. Sergei has already called Lonya twice to ask us to spend two days there! I only have one day, so pray for God’s leading to meet the most urgent needs.

Pray for good health and physical stamina for me for the next two very busy months. Pray as I prepare and teach the seminars in Russian for the Christian medical conference. Praise the Lord for one month free of vertigo! Pray for wisdom for my decision whether to add a trip to Donbas in September. Lonya and I met with Dr. Sasha Kreshenko yesterday. He is a godly young Ukrainian man, doing a residency in Germany, but still very much burdened for the needs in Ukraine. He is eager for me to mentor young doctors and medical students in Odessa. He set up the day during the conference in August, where they are inviting people from three different villages to one site, and many of us will be going to see patients there. He is expecting about 150 patients. We will have an evangelistic service that evening. Pray the Lord will use this outreach and this conference to motivate Ukrainian health care professionals to use their medical skills to glorify God! You can understand now why it is so hard for me to leave for furlough, in the midst of crisis and opportunity.

Thank you for holding me up in prayer to the One Who is able to do exceedingly more than we ask or think!

*Holding fast to The Rock,*

*Miriam Wheeler, MD*