

Sharing Christ's Compassion for Ukraine

*It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.
The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation.*
(Psalm 118:9 & 14)

October 24, 2015

Dear Prayer Partners,

It is hard to sit in comfort in this beautiful missionary apartment in Princeton WV, while my friends in Ukraine wonder what will happen next to their home country. **Elections will be held Sunday, October 25**, with uncertain choices. Will a new government come to power in the midst of economic chaos, devastation of war, and refugee crisis? Thankfully, as believers, we trust in the Creator of the Universe rather than human leaders! The Lord is my strength and salvation! Political uncertainty cannot alter that fact. The last few days a new ceasefire seems to be holding in Donbass, the war-torn area of eastern Ukraine. However, the refugees continue to struggle for survival. **Please continue to pray for Ukraine while I am in the US!**

I flew into Harrisburg PA September 27, and picked up the singles' rental car at our ABWE home office. Driving down to WV made the fact of my beginning furlough seem real. My sending church Johnston Chapel was given a duplex to use for missionaries. What an amazing blessing to have a home base for my entire furlough. I have been getting settled, adjusting to life in America, attending a conference for continuing medical education, and visiting my family in Greenville SC. I am also preparing to visit supporting churches to share about the great things God has been doing in Ukraine. ***Please pray for divine wisdom and priorities in what to share with my supporters to motivate them to deeper prayer for Ukraine and for more missionaries for our ABWE team.***

I could write a book on what happened July—September in Ukraine! I will try to give you just highlights. In August I traveled to western Ukraine to speak at the **conference of Christian health care professionals** of Ukraine and Belarus. God gave me a delightful weekend in the city of Lviv to prepare for this conference. There were no train tickets available to Kovel so I had to fly to Lviv and spend a couple of days before the conference started! What a blessing of the Lord. I was still finishing up my PowerPoint presentations. ☺ I taught workshops on the sanctity of life, Biblical principles for dealing with stress, and hypertension. I gave each workshop twice back to back so they could keep the groups small, about 20-25 in each. Most amazing was that they asked me to share my model for evangelistic clinic ministry with the entire conference! Jesus' example in **Matthew 9 came alive** for these young people, as we explored how Christian doctors could meet the medical and spiritual needs of destitute villages in partnership with local pastors. The next day I was surprised by yet another invitation to speak to the entire group, this time to describe the refugee clinics in Donbass. It was exciting to watch God working in their hearts, stirring them to reach out to their own people. I served with some of them in a clinic at a local church to which they invited patients from several surrounding towns. We saw over 200! They prefer large multispecialty teams going to towns with established churches. So my model of one doctor serving in small villages stretches them beyond their comfort zones! But many said they would like to see my clinics in action. I look forward to mentoring some of them in Odessa when I return next year. While I'm gone, Dr. Tim Murphy is doing a Bible study with the Odessa group. **Pray that God will kindle passion for evangelism along with compassion for the suffering.**

Following this conference, **medical students from San Diego, Aleks and Vera**, joined me for a week of clinics in Odessa. They are both Ukrainian emigrants who met and married in CA. It was wonderful to have American visitors in the clinics who did not need translators. ☺ Thrilling to me is that they want to serve the Lord as career missionaries in the future, possibly in Ukraine! That would be awesome! Pray for them in the long years ahead of medical education, that they would keep their personal relationship with God top priority, and they would focus on His will for their lives.

A highlight in September was **passing the baton of leadership of our post-abortion ministry** to my Ukrainian friend Ira Lupanova. Ira is an experienced pastor's wife and natural leader. Our "Forgiven and Set Free" group leaders met at my home for planning and fellowship, and farewell. They were so sad to see me go for such a long period, but I am confident in God's plan for this ministry continuing in Ukrainian hands. An important goal of a good missionary is to prepare national partners to take over ministry. Praise the Lord!

Our **Ukraine Crisis Fund** advisory council also met in September. It took several hours to go through all the requests and prayerfully determine which projects we could fund. I invited two pastors from Donbass who are now living in Odessa to meet with us personally to share their burdens. One explained that there is no insulin available for diabetics in Donetsk! That is impossible to fathom. We gave him money to buy insulin and to make a trip there to deliver it. The **biggest fear** in the occupied zone and amongst the refugees, as well as in the general population, is **insufficient fuel for heating this winter**. Russia has threatened to turn off the natural gas supply to Ukraine. Donbass is the location of all of Ukraine's coal mines, so coal production and distribution has been severely limited. Most of our UCF disbursements were for heating fuel. I will continue to direct the UCF while on furlough, which will be challenging to do via Skype! But God is able, and He has given us an excellent advisory council. **Pray for the pastors and churches who are serving the needy in the occupied zone and the refugees in other areas**. They carry a heavy burden--financial, spiritual and emotional.

Pastor Lonya and I took a medical team to Donbass in September. This time two Ukrainian doctors (internist and ophthalmologist) and a Christian counselor accompanied us. This was challenging as the Ukrainian medical system is quite different from the American! But God blessed us as we served over 250 patients in 4 towns. **Lonya and Oleg prayed with several to receive Christ as Savior**. Again we heard so many heartbreaking stories of loss and displacement. One lady told me how she lived in a basement for 3 weeks during artillery bombardment. The men would take turns at night running out to look for food and water. When she finally emerged from the basement and looked around, she didn't know where she was! With all the destruction, she didn't recognize any buildings in her town. She and others left with just the clothes on their backs to flee to a place of safety. A man in another town was walking to the hospital to visit his wife when bombs started falling around him. He was severely injured, and for days lay in the same hospital but his wife did not know where he was. Part of the hospital was damaged, and many patients had to be evacuated. Tears filled his eyes, when I challenged him to consider why God spared his life! He prayed with Lonya that day. **Please pray this week, October 26-30, as Pastor Lonya and Holly takes another medical team to Donbass. Pray that despairing refugees will find comfort and peace in Jesus.**

You can see why it was so hard for me to leave Ukraine! But I do look forward to sharing with many of you in person what God is doing there. In November I will be speaking in supporting churches in NC, TN, WV and SC, and attending conferences in KY and PA. I also will participate in our ABWE-Ukraine team meetings via Skype. **Pray for safety and blessing in all my travels. Pray that God will raise up more career missionaries for Ukraine! Pray for Dr. Tim Murphy as he continues to cover the village clinics in November and December. We still need primary care physicians to cover clinics in January—June 2016. Pray for Holly as she directs the Women's Center and cares for the clinic logistics.**

*Holding fast to The Rock,
Miriam Wheeler, MD*

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Donations via mail to ABWE or on abwe.org to my medical ministry, account # 0110153

Ukraine Crisis Fund, account # 0717401