

Sharing Christ's Compassion for Ukraine

*And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love...
Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*

1 Timothy 1:14-15

December 30, 2016

Dear Prayer Partners:

“Christmas in Ukraine”. Do you remember when Ukraine celebrates Christmas? **January 7**. So it is not too late to give you greetings at this wonderful time of remembering the birth of Jesus! What a great sacrifice our Lord made for us as **He voluntarily left the glories of Heaven to come to Earth as a human baby**. He did this to communicate to us the love of God and gain understand of our testing and suffering by experience. Then He paid the ultimate price, offering His perfect life as a sacrifice to satisfy God’s punishment for our sins. What grace and what love! *Doesn’t that thrill your heart and urge you to share that gift with someone who doesn’t know Jesus as Savior and Lord?*

How did I spend December 25? It was a **normal Sunday** here in Odessa, as very few churches celebrate on that day. We only have one ABWE missionary family in Odessa now and they were all sick with the flu, so we did not have an American celebration as we usually do. Holly went with me to church in Krasnosyolka and we had lunch with Lonya and Luba and family. We did sing one carol in English! In **Vasilivka** the previous Thursday, I had seen **Katya, a 12-year-old girl who was very sick with bronchitis**, bordering on pneumonia. I gave her an injection of antibiotics then tablets to continue taking. Her grandmother had difficulty taking in all my instructions. Maria, our hostess for the clinic there, told me that both Katya’s mom and grandmother drink, so she was worried about the care Katya would get at home. Therefore, I determined to go back to Vasilivka Sunday afternoon to check on Katya. Lonya was planning to preach in Shamanovka that afternoon, so he decided to take me, and Luba and Holly went along. Praise the Lord, that Katya was much improved, smiling, breathing easily and very grateful! Her mom was sober and I got to meet her for the first time. **I asked Katya if she knew the story of Jesus’ birth, and she shook her head “No”!** Luba and I told her that wonderful event, with both Katya and her mom listening intently.

Then we traveled to **Shamanovka**, where Nina, a lady from clinic, was visiting with our small group of believers for the first time. Great fellowship there. Next stop was visiting a patient in **Kubanka** with very complex problems. Valya is a radiant believer, but her sister Marisa has not yet made that great faith decision. Marisa has been going to services regularly in Kubanka, and this was another opportunity to show her God’s love. It was exciting to hear that a number of new people from clinic have been visiting the Kubanka service the past few weeks. **Please pray for wisdom for me in dealing with Valya’s medical issues and for the salvation of Katya, her mom and grandmother, Nina and Marisa.** *I cannot think of a better way to spend Christmas!*



By the way, if you remember the situation in Shamanovka last month when the wood stove smoked up the whole house, you will be happy to know they fixed the stove, and we got to hold clinic there this month. Much warmer!

December 15, I returned to Chisinau, Moldova, and **received my new visa**. The worker at the Embassy of Ukraine at first rejected my application, saying it was too soon to apply for another visa. But as I explained the situation to her, God softened her heart, and she gave me the visa that afternoon. She did not give me a discount on the price as the Immigration Office had suggested, but I was just happy to get the visa! After the holidays in January, I will apply for my **one-year residency permit**. *Praise the Lord!*

Tuesday was a very busy clinic day in **Sahanskoye**. I left my place at 7am and got home at 10pm! The Krasnosyolka church van was having some problems, so we were grateful for God's protection that got us home. Our team took care of **70 patients**, of whom I saw 46 personally. One lady who is a member of the church was told she had cancer of the uterus, but the regional **hospital refused to do surgery because she did not have enough money**. It is hard to hear these stories over and over again, but I am thankful for the difference our clinics make in many lives. Many patients expressed their gratitude that day for our care and free medicines and Lonya's Bible teaching. The Sunday School there is blossoming again with 35-40 kids regularly, as a group from Odessa has been coming most Saturdays to lead it. **Please pray for a patient who is very depressed**. This man has attended our clinic for many years with many medical problems, but is difficult to treat, refuses to take meds regularly, and has no interest in God's help. When I asked him what medicines he needed Tuesday, he said "Give me some pills that will put me to sleep so that I will not wake up the next day". I was shocked, as he has never mentioned suicidal thoughts before. *Pray that God will get his attention*.

Many of you heard about **the tragedies that rocked our churches in Odessa** at the end of November/early December. An **evangelist** at the church Holly attends unexpectedly died in his early 40's. A 50-year-old man who came to Christ after a very hard life became a vital **helper** at his church "Hope for People" and was faithful at our clinics every month to set up for us and help in any way he could. He died unexpectedly the same week. Most horrible was **an apartment fire the took the lives of Anya and all five of her children!** Anya was the accountant for our "Choose Life" organization and for the ABWE Church Ministries Institute. This horrendous shock grabbed the hearts of the entire city. Hundreds attended the outdoor funeral in freezing cold and heard the Gospel. **Anya's husband Victor survived; please pray for him** as he heals physically from his injuries and emotionally/spiritually from the tragic loss of his entire family. This past Sunday he gave an amazing testimony at their church showing his great faith and stating "*God makes no mistakes*". **Pray that these losses will motivate church members sitting in pews to get involved in ministry, sharing the Good News**.

Our church in Krasnosyolka will be doing several evangelistic outreaches around Christmas: day camp for children Jan 3-6 with a closing program for parents, service in New Kubanka Jan 7, and in Kubanka Jan 8, as well as services in Krasnosyolka Jan 7-8. Lonya and Kolya are buying groceries today to distribute to elderly and shut-ins in our villages as a New Year's gift. **Pray for wisdom and energy for all involved, especially for Pastor Lonya as he leads these ministries. Please pray for the joy of Christ's birth to resonate in people's hearts and draw them to the Savior.**

A wonderful blessing was the **first salvation decision of a client of our Odessa pregnancy care center!** She has had a very hard life, has done abortions before, but with the PCC help, she decided to keep this pregnancy. Holly has been going through "The Story of Hope" with her for several months. At the end, she prayed to receive Christ as Savior! Let me know if you would like to receive our "Choose Life" newsletters, so you can hear the whole story.

Our **ABWE-Ukraine team** will be meeting January 12-15 for **strategy planning** and goal setting for 2017. Please pray for wisdom, unity, and creativity as we seek God's guidance for what He wants us to accomplish. **Our team has shrunk** from 20+ adults when I arrived 18 years ago, to just six! Thousands of villages have absolutely no Gospel witness nor medical care. **Less than 1.5% of the population are evangelical believers**. The war continues in the East, strangling our economy and causing a **humanitarian crisis** and refugee crisis. There is a huge shortage of pastors and churches.

**Could God be calling YOU to join us to meet these challenges in Ukraine?
Will you pray to the Lord of the harvest to call laborers into this field?**

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your prayers, your faithful monthly financial support, and your other generous gifts that make the medical ministry possible. May our Almighty God bless your sacrifices for the sake of building His kingdom in Ukraine.

***Merry Christmas and
Happy New Year!***

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

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