

Sharing Christ's Compassion for Ukraine

Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7

February 15, 2017

Dear Prayer Partners:

Philippians 4:6-7 is one of my favorite passages to share in clinic, as many of my patients are facing very stressful circumstances, whether they are refugees from the war zone or dealing with the economic crisis engendered by war. The Greek words translated "Be careful for nothing" mean "*Do not be anxious*". This past Saturday, **two Christian Ukrainian dentists joined us in ministry in Sahanskoye**, making many patients very happy by extracting their painful teeth. Even though there is a dentist at a small hospital an hour away, our village patients have no money for treatment or transportation. I was surprised at how many **refugees from Donbas have found their way to this village**, starting with one relative who invited other friends. Our church has helped them get settled, showing Jesus' love concretely. Several are attending Sunday services, listening to God's Word hungrily as they seek peace and comfort. My patients were thrilled to hear about God's all-surpassing peace through salvation. **Pray for them to take this great faith step!**

Praise the Lord with me for receiving my one-year residency permit Jan 27. I can legally live in Ukraine for another year! This year marks 19 years of serving God here.

"You are the answer to our prayers!" Yesterday Pastor Lonya and I met with **two pastors in the Nikolaev oblast** who had asked me 2-3 years ago to start clinics in their villages. Now we are ready to open a new village clinic and God put this place on my heart. Lonya and I explained our vision for evangelistic outpatient clinics in places untouched by the Gospel and without any medical care. These pastors share this vision and have been praying for us to start clinics there ever since we met! It was humbling to see God orchestrating our plans and meeting to His glory. **Please pray for this new endeavor to be launched in early April.**

It was a joy to host an old friend 1/28—2/5, as Libby Turner flew in for the **Ukraine Crisis Fund council meeting and roundtable in Kremenchug**. Libby is an experienced FEMA disaster relief director, who came at my invitation to evaluate the work of the Crisis Fund. She gave us some excellent ideas and reassured me that we are on track in our goals and strategy. About 15 of the pastors who receive gifts from the UCF came to the roundtable and shared their burdens with one another. I wish you could have experienced the intensity of these men lifting their voices in song and prayer! **Fighting in Donbas, eastern Ukraine, has intensified in the past few weeks, causing destruction, precipitating fear and another exodus of refugees.** The pro-Russian rebels have stepped up their **persecution of believers**, closing hospitals, prisons and orphanages to evangelistic outreaches by our churches. They are still able to take some humanitarian aid in to these places, but cannot enclose Christian literature. Christmas celebrations Jan 6-8 were muted, but touched many lives. One pastor from Odessa, who visited several villages in the occupied zone, was detained at the border for hours, enduring interrogation, thorough searching of his car, confiscation of Bibles and his cell phone. One officer said, "I would like to shoot every Baptist"! This pastor was finally allowed to continue his journey, but he learned just a couple of days ago, that a **pastor who lives in the occupied zone is missing. Please pray** for these brave believers as they endure oppression reminiscent of the Soviet Union!

Libby, her translator Luba, Pastor Lonya, and I traveled to **Druzhkovka**, northern Donbas, with Pastor Fyodor for three days of ministry. We had an enlightening meeting with Ludmilla, a visionary young woman who

turned a defunct charity into a thriving humanitarian organization. Druzhkovka, a city of 75,000, had a peak of 23,000 refugees registered! Now about 5,000 still live there, but more are coming. Libby and Luba met with two women who just escaped Avdeevka with their children, and were still living in fear and searching for basic necessities. Libby and Luba shared the peace that only Jesus can give. Lonya and I met with a refugee who had been living in Druzhkovka for a year, and **recently accepted Christ** as her Savior after attending our clinics at Fyodor's church! She recounted the horror of living through bombardments, watching other houses being destroyed and wondering when hers would be hit. Her daughter died a year before the war began, leaving this lady to care for her 14-year-old grandson. He is still suffering from **nightmares, fear of darkness, withdrawal, insecurity**. Pray for him to find hope in the Lord and courage to get involved in the church's youth group. As Lonya and I were looking at a map on his tablet to trace her evacuation route, she asked with a trembling voice, **"Can you see if my house is still standing?"** I shared with her Philippians 4:6-7, and she grabbed a pen to mark it in her Bible, hungry for peace and hope. *These hurting people have so many questions we cannot answer!* **Please pray for wisdom for local pastors to soothe these anxious souls.**

Our ABWE missionary team is organizing a **seminar March 13-15** to train pastors and mature believers how to deal with the emotional issues that refugees are facing—varying severities of **PTSD** (post-traumatic stress disorder). **Colonel Bill Barko**, retired Army PTSD specialist, will be teaching us some helpful techniques that will open the door for sharing the Gospel. **Pray for his teaching to be practical and effective**, to help our churches reach out to people on their doorsteps, suffering from the shock of battle. Then our Odessa medical team will be doing **clinics for refugees** in several churches in the Ukrainian territory of the Donetsk oblast.

More visitors and events are upcoming spring/summer which I will tell you about in the next prayer letter! Thank you for upholding me and my medical team in your prayers. **With so many demands on my time and attention, I desperately need God's wisdom and strength. He is able!**

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