

Update 16, written September 17, 2012

With Vacation Bible Schools over and Feodosia into the final hot & hectic 3 weeks of tourist season, I enjoyed accomplishing a bunch of projects for the intense weeks ahead in the quiet air conditioned sanctuary of my home. Except for the computer/internet fiasco, my summer was a nice one. I'm getting better about leaving margin in my schedule and trying to be obedient to God's priorities.

This too will pass...

There were yucky summer moments like being smashed inside the local bus with a ridiculous number of people but you can grit through it because it doesn't last more than an hour. The heat made some days hard but you try to keep in mind that -20 weather is around the corner. Also, seeing patients at the clinic alone was physically exhausting but at the same time one of the most satisfying things I did.

But, there were lots of memorable moments like when a 6 year old deaf girl plopped down on the seat next to me on the bus. An extrovert despite her situation, we 'chatted' the whole rest of the road. One Sunday in Premorski I met Kelly. As it turns out, Kelly is a Peace Corp worker teaching English here at an elementary school. She has lived in our area already some 7 months and has been walking by the church all this time wondering how to get in (she doesn't speak Russian well yet). God bless the translator who lives in the area, attends our church and invited her. Kelly seems like a real neat gal, we've stayed in touch and I hope to have her over soon. While we've had 3 months with no rain all that sunshine made for an overflowing market full of sweet fruit and vegetables! I enjoyed a lot of yummy summer dishes and my freezer is packed!

When I was younger I thought the phrase 'This too will pass' was rather depressing. I don't anymore. Instead, I find myself often saying it because it reminds me that the hard times can be handled because they won't last forever and to not hurry through but rather stop & soak up the good times while they are present.

Texas! It was fun to welcome a team of 8 folks about midnight of Sept. 5th! They are not really 'my' team but God has given me the privilege of being the bridge person for their outreaches already now for several years. Oak Street Baptist Church in Graham, TX has been working with a local church and its daughter church plants for the past 10 years. This local church and its church plants are about 2 hours away from where I live.

I have a great deal of respect for the group leader - Loyall. He always brings a neat bunch of folks who serve with their whole heart! Their goals this year were building up/edifying the church members through a mini conference and sharing the Gospel message through pre-planned appointments with friends/family/neighbors that the church members had set up. And, they were also willing to get dirty! They picked up trash in the center of 2 villages (which

spoke VOLUMES! to the community) and threw themselves into harvesting, weeding and rototilling the huge garden of the widow of the former pastor and her family.

Going into the week I wasn't sure what I would be doing but was very pleased when I given the role of supporting the 'front line'. This looked different every day – sometimes I helped as a translator, other times I cleaned, several days I got to be 'cooks helper', during the conference I was in charge of lunch and a couple times I was needed as a nurse. I got pretty tired but everyone worked hard – besides it was small change compared to what I received. I basked in their jokes, laughter, hugs and smiles. I soaked in hearing English and perhaps my favorite hour was when we sang one praise song after another into the evening. I know I am not the only one who will be recalling the sweet memories of that week for a long time to come. Thank you Loyall, Wade, Bill, Teresa, Linda, Ashley, Wendee and Shirley! Thank you Oak Street Baptist for sending them! And, thank you Lord for the teaching, encouraging and loving You give us through Your people!!

ICU - About 3 hours after I returned home, I left again for what would turn into a 27 hour saga in the Intensive Care Unit of our local hospital. An American man had been found passed out at our Christian Conference Center/hotel. As it turns out he had been suffering for the past 2 days from what was diagnosed as a bleeding stomach ulcer. He had passed out due to loss of blood. Pastor Nicholi asked if I would go and see this man in the hospital and, of course, I said yes.

It didn't take long to see that the man's translator was very tired, I had more Russian medical terminology than he did and that the nurses were needing someone with the patient all the time. It was a long but not difficult experience. I chose not to sleep but rather, for his safety, sit at his bedside. As the hour hand moved through the night I had lots of time to think on how every single experience I had had thus far with Ukraine medical care had prepared me well for this. How so like God. What seem like random events at the time are really always 'lessons in motion' equipping us for something else.

While there were a zillion differences between our ICU and theirs, I have to say that the medical treatment he received was largely in line with what he would have received in the states. Although he understood the risks, by Thursday his condition was stable and he left the hospital that night so as to fly out early Friday morning. I came home, showered and slept a sweet 13 hours!

Count down....There are only 12 days left before my first guests arrive, 15 before my second guests arrive and 16 days before it starts!!! A dream that started 5 years ago; a desire planted in my heart 3 years ago and prayer and planning that started 11 months ago....it is all about to take place and I am SO excited!!! In short, my teammate, Annette Dryden, and I are in the final days of preparation to hold a retreat for 100 women who are active in ministry.

5 years ago when I saw the Efas Center in its final stages of construction I said to myself, "Someday I want to hold a conference there." 3 years ago I had the possibility to attend a retreat for single women in Israel. It was easily the best retreat I had ever experienced. I left Israel with the desire in my heart to do the same for my colleagues in Ukraine. I didn't share that desire with anyone until October of last year when Annette came to spend the day with me. When I spoke of the dryness and hunger I saw in the ladies in ministry she knew exactly what I was talking about because she had seen the same. Then I told her of the desire of my heart. Her eyes shined and we committed it to prayer. We asked for 3 green lights and by early Dec. God had given us all 3!

In December we began inviting speakers, during January and February we began to develop the program. When I flew to the states in March for my visa, I had the opportunity to share with ladies from several churches about the conferences. I was touched by their enthusiasm as they committed to knitting 110 prayer shawls, making book markers, gathering hotel soap/shampoos and....well I'll wait to share the details later :) Across the country in Ohio, a leader of a women's conference asked the ladies who would be attending to bring pens, chap stick, stuff for prizes and, well again, I'll wait to share the details later!

In June my folks shipped all the fun stuff that had been given and I received it in August. In the meantime the program came together, decorations, music, crafts and menu were thought through and the speakers sent in their talk outlines to be translated. Invitations started going out in early September.

I've planned a youth conference for 100, 2 medical conferences for 180 each but this is my first retreat. It has been really fun for several reasons. First, of all Annette! Second, it is taking place 'in my back yard.' And third, I truly don't think any of these ladies has ever been to a retreat before. They have the word 'retreat' in Russian but it has only war meanings but no inferences to what we are about to do. They do have the word 'conference'. But a typical Russian church conference is lectures starting at 9, lunch at 2 and lectures then continuing until 5pm. We are NOT going to do that!

Our goal is to invest spiritually, physically and emotionally in each of these women who are active in ministry during the course of the 3 day retreat. Spiritually they will get their buckets full with lots and lots of singing time, teaching from a local pastor and talks from our 4 American guests. Physically they will have a gentle schedule and opportunities to receive a medical consultation, massage and even take a nap if they'd like!

Emotionally we are going to surround them with music, flowers, gifts, pretty decorations, laughter and love! Here is an excerpt from the invitation....

Be still and know that I am God. Psalm 46,10

You are invited to a special and unusual conference for women who are in ministry. Every day we pour ourselves out for others as we serve. In doing so, we can become dry, empty and feel like we have nothing left to give. Please prayerfully consider this opportunity that God has provided for you come away for a little while to be refilled spiritually and refreshed physically.

In this three day conference there will be -

- \* lots of praising God through song

- \* "Do not lose heart in the service of Christ" - Pastor Dima Kotiv from Sudak will be sharing "How to overcome failure in the Christian ministry, how to overcome the grief associated with the service of people, how to overcome personal weakness, and to remain faithful servant of Jesus Christ."

- \* "Barnabas: Son of Encouragement" - Pastor David Robinson (USA) will present a first-person monologue from Barnabas' point of view based upon the Book of Acts, offering practical instruction for living a life of encouraging others in Christ.

- \* "Knowing the Love of God" - Trina Robinson (USA) - David's wife, mother of three sons and public health nurse will share about how only by resting in the knowledge of God's love for us can we truly begin to love others.

- \* "Tending and Befriending" - Trina Robinson will speak to how God has made us in such a way that when we are confronted with stress, we take care of ourselves by taking care of each other.

- \* "Hope in the Valley" – A talk by Janice Lemke (USA), a missionary to Ukraine for 15 years, about how God uses the difficult times of life to make us more like Jesus and to equip us for further ministry.

- \* "Asking Questions for Ministry" - Janice Lemke will explain and show how the skill of asking questions can improve your ministry and other relationships.

- \* "Why I went and what I learned from following God in Kenya, Nepal, Haiti, Papa New Guinea, Tanzania, Uganda and Ukraine." - Dr. Howard Johnson (USA) will share about his short term medical missionary trips and "Those saints I met there, learned from and how they taught me compassion and healing." Dr. Johnson is a retired from active surgical practice but remains interested in teaching and serving God throughout the world.

The first retreat is 3 – 6 October and the second on 10 -13 October. Please pray for...

\*God's will to be done before, during and after the conferences in the hearts of the leadership team and each

lady attending.

\* That God would see to each detail of the retreat – that all be done His way.

\* Our speakers travel safety and health.

\*The leadership team: Annette, our 5 speakers, translators and myself – for wisdom and obedience.

And, support team: cooks, registration, physician, massage, and babysitter – for extra strength.

\* We expect 50 women to attend each conference – please pray that we would have maximum attendance and

for their travel safety, prepared hearts and their families at home.

These doings have not gone unnoticed by Satan. It pleases me that he is nervous but I know better than to get cocky. Please cover us in prayer as this Kingdom business moves into the front lines. I am absolutely confident that this retreat is of God, being done in the way He wants and in His timing so I'm very excited for it and look forward to sharing all about it with you later this month! Thanks! June