

Thank you for your prayers, cards, emails and hugs - Thank you! ! For your love (even through my crumbling emotions) and patience (even through my silence) - thank you! Thank for the grace and space you've given. I apologize to the many of you who have yet to receive a reply from your email. I still have hopes of responding but am about 3 months behind. I am sorry.

The storm -

From August 29 until Sept 21st - life, emotions and decisions were moving terribly fast. Dad died. I flew home. A few days later my mom's sister died. His service and a week later hers. It felt like a swirling undertow in how it caught and churned my whole mind, heart and body. Yet in the blur of it all, I saw God's gifts.

God gave me the gift of friends and teammates who 'walked' through that first night with me. The gift of being able to be here...and so quickly. The gift in our family being able to be together - especially that first week. The gift of a supportive field team and mission agency. The gift in how our church family stepped in to support us. The gift our family received by all who came to Dad's service. And, the expressions of love that came pouring in through cards, phone calls, flowers, food, practical help and prayer.

Yes, I am sad. Yes, I miss him very much. The hurt comes in waves...expected but crashing over most often in unexpected moments. A photo of us in his desk, the smell of his after shave, his work shirt hanging on the peg or coming across his handwritten note scribbled to remind him about something. A question for him pops up before I remember I can't ask it. Or, seeing the uncomfortableness of someone else about what to do or say and being sad for both of us. But in this situation also, I am going to choose to trust God. God is worthy of my trust in all things. In my life, I want to continue to love and honor my father for who he was - enthusiastic, smart, generous and loving.

In the wake -

In the aftermath of that first month, I knew a few things for sure. First, I was mentally, emotionally and physically very tired. Second, Dad's death did not stop ministry. While Dad's death was hard, I wanted to return to Ukraine.. Third, my mom really needed help right now. With this in mind, I asked for and was granted a 'mini' furlough.

A plan -

On December 12th I will return to Ukraine. This schedule gets me back in time to settle in, take part of the Christmas outreaches and be ready to be fully involved with winter ministry. I am grateful. My next furlough will be in about 2 1/2 - 3 years. In the mean while, my time in Oregon allows me to help Mom with the many things she faces. It also gives me time to process the end of one season (life with Dad) and to begin another. I have also chosen to study for 2 nursing certification exams and sit for both tests on November 21st - rather than returning to do this in Feb.' 17 as I had planned. So our days our full as we prepare the farm for winter and begin the process of downsizing. I am also studying, preparing for my return and spending time with family.

There is no way I can repay you for how you have 'stood in the gap' for my family and me during this time. However, I want to tell you how deeply grateful I am for each of you. It is my desire that I will be there for someone else someday as you have been there for me.

Thank you, June