

June Johnson Update 26 from the Ukraine

“Success is all about getting;
Significance is about giving back.”

Ken Blanchard

Even last winter I saw that 2013 would be a record breaking year for travel. My friends have stopped saying ‘Hi’ when they call, instead the first thing out is ‘Where are you?’ Not counting the 1 day-ers, since February, I've traveled 9 times within country –each trip ranging from 3 to 12 days; and have made 3 international trips – each trip ranging from 9 days to the 20 days I was in Oregon this summer. Every ticket has left its marks of road wear and also been filled with a basket of blessings.

With my suitcase in a continual state of re-packing, one thing that has taken a toll is my communication with you. I’m glad no one holds their breath between updates! On one hand I recognize that a month and a half between updates isn’t the way I’d like it to be. On the other hand I recognize this is simply a season and it too shall pass. (But, not before at least one more trip later this month!!)

“Your career is what you’re paid to do;
Your calling is what you’re made to do.”

Howard Hendricks

Harcove I returned Monday from almost a 2 week trip. A friend and I caught the train here in Feodosia. Unbeknownst to me, a new rule had gone into effect, creating a personal fiasco -turns out now you must show your passport to board. I tried showing the copy of my passport – no go. I tried the copy of my Ukrainian ‘passport’ – no go. I tried reasoning with her that my passport was in English and it wasn't going to make sense to her anyway – no go. She was just getting madder. So my friend boarded and I threw all of our 9 bags on after her. I reassured her that I would catch up with the train at some future stop and phoned my driver to come back. Some fancy footwork had me ready and waiting at the next station – *with* my passport - and Tanya and I settled in for our 12 hour trip north.

Tanya’s brother and his wife live in Harcove and I saw this as a chance for both of us to spend some time with them. Sergi and Tamara are the kind of people that everyone wants in their lives – warm, welcoming, fun, solid in their faith; plain folk who are ordinary on outside and have volumes of wisdom on the inside.

After a day and a half I said good bye, leaving Tanya to linger longer, and continued on to my conference.

I had been invited to take part in the 4th Christian Conference for International Medical

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Professionals. The theme was 'The Reality of God in Medicine' and speakers from 6 countries [Ukraine, America, England, Denmark, Norway and Czech Republic] joined about 150 students from 5 continents. [country names not mentioned for their safety] Through the ministry He has given me, God had provided funds to partially help with the funding of the event. I was also asked to give a workshop on the care of ostomies.

The choice of workshops was wide and interesting such as – International Child Development Program; Ultrasound use in Diagnosing Tropical disease; Clinical Rounds with the Great Physician; Women's health issues; Shock-Diagnosis and Treatment; Practical Application of Microbiology in the Hospital; What is Palliative care? Physician self care.... etc.. I popped in to listen when I could, but like the students, wished for more time.

Besides talking about medicine, there was a strong spiritual aspect to the conference as well. For those who do not yet have a personal relationship with Christ, the clear message of Christ's sacrificial love for them was presented. For those who already have invited God to be Lord of their lives, faith strengthening stories were shared.

I enjoy this conference for a variety of reasons – its cultural mix, happy south of the equator spirit and the students seem eager to learn. The speakers bless me as well. Nobody comes because they have nothing else to do. Rather all are fully involved in their own work and ministry yet see this as a God given opportunity to invest in these young lives from all over the world, including many closed countries. Their spiritual and clinical investment will bring Kingdom dividends.

"Lord, I can't do anything about yesterday, and tomorrow may not come.

Let me be your man today."

Vester Hughes

Church clinics After the conference I traveled south to the largest church clinic [name not mentioned for safety] that I work with. God had blessed us by bunching up the humanitarian aid boxes and having them come as a large group just a few weeks before my arrival. This was wonderful as it gave the local nurses who run the ostomy aspect of the ministry a chance to sort and prepare for my 3 days with them.

Personally this was an important visit for me because I knew I needed to give all out effort in investing into Tanya (the main nurse who helps these patients). What I didn't expect is how hard it would be to sit on my hands! I love what I do and to not be able to 'get in there' was hard. But by the second day, it was easy to tell Tanya how proud I was of her! Because she has already learned so much, wants to learn more and mistakes don't take her down - she is going to do well. This aspect of their ministry is now the strongest that it has ever been and that pleases me very much. Thank you Lord for both nurses and the desire You placed in their hearts to reach out and minister to this ever growing group of people.

After this outreach, since I was only 2 hours away, I continued south to visit my teammates Jonathan and Heather Powell, their girls and to see friends. It was a quick 2 _ day visit but worth it. Not only for me, but for everyone, it takes a lot of effort to make personal visits yet nothing can take their place. Not emails, Face book, Skype, phone calls or cards...none of these can do what actually being together does. These hours were simply precious gifts.

"Finishing well is a continuous process of becoming a better vessel for God's purposes."

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Jay Bennett

Texas Talking about precious gifts....this gift, with its funny accent, came again this year to Mehal-iv-ka. What can I say about this team from Graham, Texas that I haven't already said in the past 10 years? I, along with the rest of their extended Ukrainian family, welcomed them back in mid- September. The team of 4 was made up of all returners and they melted into the fabric of life here as if they were home...because they were.

I get much more than I give each year. I give some help in planning their outreach and gathering a team of translators. But, I GET spiritual food, worship in English, laughter, hugs and thoughtful gifts. I GET to be with my Mehalvika friends and a chance to love on them and get loved on right back. Like the past few years, during the outreach my role has been back stage support...personally one of my favorite roles. This year however, it came with a promotion. Besides being kitchen help, I got to be one of the cooks! Very fun :)

About half of the outreach time was spent in investing into the life of the local church. They did this by leading mini conferences that were saturated with encouragement and a call to a still closer walk with Christ. The other half of their time they went to pre-arranged meetings. Meaning a church member who had friend or neighbor who wanted to know more about God, arranged a time when they, their friend, and someone from the Texas team could meet over tea. It was a relaxed but purposeful meeting to get questions out on the table.

Even from a distance, I saw it – how the national team and the Texas team were being guided and governed by the Holy Spirit. At lunch they would come home and say, “So and so invited Christ into their heart and life.” At dinner, there were reports of 1, 2 or 3 more. More asked God into their lives during this outreach than in the several previous years combined. In addition, while the outreach had been planned before the team arrived, God did something with the time. Everything that had been planned was done *plus* several additional invitations were accepted *plus* an outreach to the village teenagers *and* they even blessed the widow of the former pastor & her extended family by harvesting what remained in the huge garden and cleaning it up before winter set in. Yes, they worked hard. Yes, they gave up some sleep and the little free time they had. But everything was done without stress, rush or panic but rather enthusiasm and joy.

Thank you Lord! and Thank you Texas!

Days ahead: This week has offered time to decelerate, get rested up from the road and caught up around the house & with desk work. Tuesdays is clinic and afterwards I will be presenting a refresher course to our staff on pressure ulcers – prevention and treatment. The remainder of the week I need to put my full attention on preparing for my own ostomy patients and seeing them over the course of Friday and Saturday.

Bad news goes about in clogs, good news in stockinged feet.

Welsh proverb

The second half of November ushers in the end of my busy season. Since I most likely won't write another update until December, I'd like to wish you all a very Happy Thanksgiving. Difficulties,

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disappointments meet us at every corner to discourage but don't change God's punctuation. Don't put a period where God places only a comma. Hang on to the Truth, trust Him and keep a thankful heart.

Blessings, June