

Nov. 21, 2015

"God's love does not seek value; it creates it.

It is not because we have value that we are loved;
it is because we are loved that we have value."

William Sloan Coffin

I got a whole night's sleep last night - wow that felt good!! That 10 hour time difference between Oregon and Ukraine is a switch not quickly made. But now 8 days into it my internal clock is beginning to agree more closely with the local time.

THANK YOU!! I want to thank everyone for your prayers - especially as I traveled these past couple weeks.

On Nov. 2 I flew out of Portland, OR to Indianapolis, Indiana where the home office for Christian Missionary Fellowship (CMF) is located. I was grateful to have my 'boss' at the home office there to meet me and wrestle with my 2 heavy bags.

Nov. 3 - 6th I attended a training at the home office with about 20 others - both veteran missionaries and new recruits. The training was on a method of evangelism called Community Health Evangelism. I will explain more about that later. For now it is enough to say that I'm glad I got to attend this as I already see a bunch of tools it has to offer me in my new area of ministry.

Nov. 7th I attended the Global Health Missions Conference that was going on about 2 1/2 hours away in Louisville, KY.

Nov 8 - 10th found me back in Indianapolis attending our CMF biannual board meeting.

Nov. 11th was a sweet day - a play day with a friend and former teammate (Annette Dryden) who is also a dear friend. God bless their husbands who gave us the gift of this precious (and very fun!) time together.

The morning of the 12th I checked my email as I packed my bags and saw that my flight across the Atlantic was canceled. No further explanation was given. Something told me that this was going to be a matter better dealt with at the airport than online. At the United counter the agent told me that my flight had been canceled because the Lufthansa workers had gone on strike. This was a first time experience for me - canceled flight due to a strike - but she worked hard to reroute me in the best way possible. With my tickets in hand, I was pleased to have navigated through that 'bump' in the road.

My flights and connections were smooth and my luggage and I arrived safely in Kiev. I was about to exit the baggage claim area when an officer stopped me and asked how much money I was carrying? I told her, was pulled aside and had to count it out in front of them. Not the first time for me but still hardly comfortable. Then I was informed that I had broken the law because I had too much. Last time I had checked the exchange rate it had been one way...but now 11 days later the exchange rate had changed...putting me over. The two officers debated between themselves - to fine me or not. As it was, they let me off with a warning.

Several hours later I would understand that God guided me through still a third unexpected. I had flown into Paris at 8:30 am and flown out at 10:30 am. That evening was when so many were killed and France's borders closed. That night when the ladies at the Bible Study told me about

what had happened, I reeled inside. How can all these feelings fit inside my heart? Thankful to be here & safe; sad for so many that died; anxious about breaking the law; happy to be greeted by friends & meet new friends and physical exhaustion. The hands of my heart just lifted up a prayer of thanksgiving...and acknowledged that our world suffers horribly because of sin. May it be that, wherever I am, I be found answering evil with love, hurt with forgiveness and apathy with sacrificial giving.

A WEEK & A DAY: As I greeted the Bible Study group that meets on Friday nights where I live, I realized that I had already been here a full week. Good grief - could it be? No wonder I was tired - so so much has happened. It could be that some of you think that because I am a missionary that I have 'trust' down pat. Nope! Just like you that is still a work in progress! I brought 2 suitcases of stuff to Ukraine with me and still another suitcase worth of questions.

Where am I going to live? I wonder if there is a map of this city? How can I figure out the bus routes? Where can I store my boxes of humanitarian aid? Where do I shop? How do I get there? What is city culture like? How does the unrest in the country affect this area and this community? How am I going to get all my stuff together? Am I going to have trouble understanding the people (more Ukrainian is spoken here) What is available? How is ministry going to work out? I know I need to wait/learn/observe these first few months - how am I to balance the invitations & needs with wait & learn? I know I am going to need help - all different kinds of help - who will help me? etc. etc. etc.!!!

The more I mulled over my questions, the more I missed my friends in Crimea....in losing them I had lost a strong safety net of help, understanding & love. But, better to be grateful for what you had then morn forever over what is no more. This week begins a new term, new territory and new national teammates. And even in just this first week, God has provided so many answers.

* To stay in Ukraine longer than three months a special permit is required. The progress towards my getting that permit surged forward this week. God has provided an amazing man to help me. Too soon to take a deep breath and kick back but so far things look good.

* As far as a place to live, at least for the next several months God has provided me a wonderful home. I will be sharing a home with another American missionary. She (Jamie) has graciously welcomed me into this large house. The American family that live here are currently in the states so basically we are house sitting. Being here offers me a lot - like safety, help and time to learn about the large city I live in now.

* My dear friends in Crimea basically packed up my apartment and sent it north in 3 car loads. Yesterday I was able to retrieve it all and sort through it. I am grateful to have my winter clothes as they call for our first dusting of snow over Thanksgiving.

* As for my language - I am amazed as how fast my Russian came back. No - it is far from perfect. Yet I find my self asking -"How did I understand that?" "How is it that I knew that word?" But there have been plenty of awkward moments too - like when the grandma at the bus stop starts chattering to me in Ukrainian...and I only understand about 1 in 10 words. Or, the new words that I didn't learn in Feodosia - like 'delivery' and 'credit card.'

* Perhaps one of the things I am most grateful for is the blessing I never saw coming through the couple next door. In the neighboring house is a Ukrainian couple I've known for over 10 years. In missionary lingo we call them - critical partners. Meaning they are people without whom life & ministry would be extremely hard. In the past 8 days my relationship with Yuri & Sveta has

deepened beyond good friends to critical partners. And, for that I am grateful to God.

THE DAYS AHEAD - Tomorrow I will be the first time I attend the church where I will be doing much of my ministry. I've already heard that they will be having a celebration and expect lots of guests. That pleases me. Maybe I can fade into the background a little bit. Can you tell I'm a little nervous?? And, excited too. By Tuesday I hope to be transitioned from 'camping out of the suitcase' to having my things sorted and put away. That will be nice. Wednesday will find me gathering with my team. 2 families and myself make up the CMF Ukraine team and it will be good to see everyone again. For us it is a chance to celebrate Thanksgiving, catch up on business and just be able to spend time together. I'm looking forward to it.

"It takes me a long while to realize that God has no respect for anything I bring Him.

All He wants from me is unconditional surrender."

Oswald Chambers

As the Lord leads, you could pray -

* For Ukraine. This weekend marks the 2nd anniversary of what we call here - Mi-dawn. This is the name of what you could call Independence square in Kiev where the uprising started and demonstrations & fighting continued through the following March.

* that the paperwork process for my permit to live here be completed without difficulty.

* that I know my next steps. Meaning, the wisdom to know how to balance the invitations & needs with learning. It would be ideal just to be a student of the situation for the next 6 months; basically spending my time asking a slew of questions and developing relationships. But I know it won't be a neat & tidy as that. For example, I know that as soon as I see a wound or stoma I cannot not help. So my prayer is for God to guide my steps not need to rule my feet. June