

Update 25 – written December 14, 2107

**Game Day:** During the time when I still lived in Crimea, I was attending a missionary conference and I poured out my frustration of feeling like a milk cow every time I went to church. ‘It feels like everyone comes and takes and takes and takes. How great it would be to be able to come, sit and receive.’

Another gal in the group nodded and said, “I used to feel that way until I understood that Sunday is Game Day. When I was in high school the varsity players would always dress up on a game day. Nice shirt, slacks and a jacket were a sign that they were primed for the event. That’s how Sunday’s should be for us. Dressing up, showing up, giving our best and leaving it all out on the field - that is how Sundays should be. Rather coming to receive we should be coming to serve.” Already 4 years ago, that Godly mind set changed my heart and Sundays have been ‘Game Days’ ever since.

For several years now, Tanya K (leader of the special needs ministry) has been frustrated with how the moms/families don’t move forward spiritually. For too many, the cycle spins between seeing them for Christmas & Easter outreach events and during camp in summer. Of the so very many moms in our immediate area (Brovary), only a handful chooses to attend Bible Study or church. Tanya’s heart is that every mom would invite Christ into their heart, grow in their relationship with Him and become part of the Body of Christ/the church.

What to do?

While the idea had been presented some time ago, Tanya fought against it. She felt like having a separate service would keep the special needs group at arms length rather than making them feel included at Grace Church. But, late last summer the Holy Spirit pressed her and she took a leap of faith. Within a few weeks critical pieces fell into place and a reformatted version of the usual Sunday evening service at Grace Church was launched and we haven’t looked back

In a nutshell, the Sunday evenings look like this.... We all gather in the hall on the first floor (which is wheelchair accessible) and spend the first 15

minutes singing and praying. Then, there is a short children's message. After that, the kids are free to go to 1 of 4 activity groups – learning English, learning computers, crafts or Montessori (for the littlest ones). While the kids are busy, the service continues on for the adults with a message, dialogue time, singing and prayer. The average attendance is 55 with the majority of the group made of up folks who were not attending church anywhere else.

It has been great to see the response of the Grace Church congregation as well as how they are helping with the various aspects of the service. Chris & Mary Malone have embraced this outreach and both serve in key areas. Also, the house church that Jamie is a part of saw this as something they could help with. So several people from this small group are involved each Sunday in the music & sound system and transportation aspects. God has woven the gifting's of this team of 20 people together to create a welcoming place for the others He is calling.

Is it hard? Yes. Striving to do a high quality outreach and include a whole range of children (typical to profound autism) is hard – even exhausting. Is it worth it? Definitely! I am not the only one who returns home wrung out yet happy. God's hand is clearly on this new outreach. So, as of late September, more than ever Sundays are Game Days – ‘...dressing up, showing up, giving our best and leaving it all out on the field.’

‘Knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit;  
wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.’ Miles Kington

**A trip south:** The week of Thanksgiving found me traveling to visit the two church clinics that I work with. The train pulled into Zaporoshja at 5am and, bless her heart, my colleague was there to meet me. After a bit of breakfast we got caught up on business. Then at noon I got on a bus and traveled another 3 hours to Berdansk.

Unfortunately I came down with a bad head cold that day. The next morning I felt rough. No way did I have it in me to do what was scheduled. But too much was riding on the day to change plans. The Berdanysk Church clinic team had organized an outreach to their ostomy patients during my visit so I shared my testimony and then met with several afterwards for individual

consults. Once more God had answered my “I don’t” prayer.  
I don’t have the strength.  
I don’t have the wisdom.  
I don’t have the patience.  
I don’t have the love.  
I don’t...but You do.

The Berdanysk Church clinic currently supports 70 ostomy patients – meaning they not only supply them with the equipment they need for free but also provide ongoing patient education and spiritual support. That is impressive to me. Of the 70, 68 attended.

I even asked the patients, “Why you? Of all Ukraine, why is it that so many receive help here?” God loves to love others to Himself through His people...the church. And, He is doing a mighty work through a tiny team of 4 women. Yet Era, Era, Luba and Lena know that God gets all the credit.

In His amazing ways, the supplies (ostomy, wound dressings, braces, ace wraps, compression hose, lotions/creams, diapers, gloves, over the counter meds, catheters/urology etc.) are given for free by people & nurses in the northwest and Friends of Ostomates Worldwide. Then they are repacked and shipped from Oregon to Kiev. From here I sort and ship the supplies to both of the church clinics, Lutsk rehab center, a Christian orphanage in Kiev and multiple individuals. Even, I don’t understand fully how God does all this but we are all very grateful!

Thanksgiving was spent with my teammates – the Powell family and Leah. Leah had just arrived on field 8 days earlier and it was a pleasure to meet her. We spent our day watching a past Macy’s Thanksgiving Day parade on CD, talking, enjoying a classic meal and playing board games. I thoroughly enjoyed myself.

Friday I found me back on the bus returning to Zaparoshja. Between the time that the bus arrived and my train departed, more business got taken care of and 2 more patients were seen. Kinda nuts-o but we got ‘er done.

‘God has already appointed his Messiah and it is not me.’

My trip was short so as to fulfill my responsibilities that I am committed to here. Every other Saturday I have English Club. Each Sunday I lead the Purpose Driven Life study after church. For the 5 o’clock service, I help with the prep & clean up as well as helping the crafts teacher. Lately, I’ve also been seeing a couple patients before or after these events. This stuff plus 3 trips in the past 2 months plus life’s usual...well somewhere along the way things got off kilter and I’ve been struggling. I smiled when I first heard that quote but the stress I’ve felt in the past 2 months makes me wonder if I’m not trying to fill that role?

As you are led, please pray for me. I want to know God’s perspective on this and understand what things I need to correct. Somewhere buried in this situation is pride – oh that I would allow Him to dig it out.

**2 years:** This month marks 2 years that I’ve been in Kiev. SO much has happened in the past 24 months. Had someone told me 4 years ago I would be here doing this...I would have looked at them side ways in unbelief. Yet, by the grace of God, here I am and blessed with –  
amazing colleagues – both nationals and Americans  
being a part of a God led ministry  
a lovely place to live  
good health

**Days ahead:**

23<sup>rd</sup> A local charity group will be bringing gifts for 50 of our special needs kids. While this group is not Christian, we want to use the event as a platform to share the Christmas message. Our 5 o’clock church service team will be leading this outreach.

24<sup>th</sup> The Sunday School at Grace Church will have their Christmas program and the 5 o’clock service will have a Christmas program.

25<sup>th</sup> For the first time in Ukraine, the 25<sup>th</sup> is an official holiday. I will be at Grace Church to celebrate Christmas.

27<sup>th</sup> A Christian group from Germany will come to do an outreach with our Special Needs Families. They have come for several years now and have

solid program. I expect about 150 to attend.

1<sup>st</sup> New Year's Day service at Grace Church

7<sup>th</sup> Christmas – We will celebrate Christmas on it's traditional day with both a morning and the 5 o'clock service.

With all events ahead, I won't write again until late January. So I would like to wish each of you a most blessed Christmas. May you find in this season a lovely quiet in your heart because you know the true love and peace that comes as knowing God as your Savior and King.

## **Merry Christmas!!!**

June

Our small groups for the kids during the evening service...crafts, computers, English & Montessori

Two photos of the outreach in Berdansk to the ostomy patients.

A winter rose.















