

Update 8 - written May 31, 2016

Thank you for your prayers for Easter!! There was standing room only and the whole section reserved for the special needs families was full...at least that's what I heard. I didn't go to the Easter service. Really would have loved to have been a part of it all but for the sake of even one mom being able to sit through the service and hear the Gospel, I chose not to.

Many of the kids did sit with their parents but we knew that some wouldn't make it through the first 15 min. let alone the whole 3-hour service. Therefore I told Tanya that I would be ready to help with the kids. If I am going to encourage others to serve then I need to walk my talk. If I am going to urge sacrificial giving then I need to lead by example.

But, don't think me heroic. I was SO nervous! I didn't know who would be there (what kind of handicaps); how many would come; could I understand them or they me and, would I have any help? I was in way over my head *but* I knew this was what God wanted me to do and He had provided a slew of craft supplies!

As the service began, one then another and another...as if out of nowhere 4 ladies showed up asking if they could help? Grateful barely touches how I felt! One lady did one on one. Another colored with a group of little ones. Another helped the older kids. And, another helped with all kids going in and out...so we didn't loose anyone. I kept the crafts going. Explaining, distracting, encouraging, helping, cleaning and praising – it was a 3 hour blur. So Easter for me was crayons, markers, Buzz Lightyear stickers, glue, zoo animals and scratch art...just the way it was supposed to be.

Thank you for your prayers for my dad!! Three weeks ago, the doctor pulled off a liter of fluid from around his lungs. With the relief from that pressure, dad could breath deeper and the pain greatly decreased. Now he needs less pain medication and is able to do physical therapy more aggressively. When I talked to him last, he was on his way out the door to plant pumpkins....that right there told me he is doing well! I am grateful to God that Dad is improving and thank you for your prayers.

Thank you for all the quotes, proverbs and topic ideas you sent! Really appreciate you taking the time to do that. Thanks! With summer here, this season has come to an end. But there will be an Evangelistic outreach through English Camp at the church this summer and the national team is already planning for next year. I have accepted the invitation to return and lead the advanced group of students starting again this fall.

"You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you odd."

Flannery O'Connor

Conferences - This month was bookended with conferences. The first was the Christian Medical Conference held in Western Ukraine. About 90 came, largely students and our theme was 'Problems and Perspectives - Modern Medicine in light of the Bible' I have had the privilege of being a part of these conferences for many years now. Through our ministry, God has provided funding to help in part with the cost. When I am on the field, I am also asked to give workshops. Prevention of pressure ulcers and Caring for a colostomy are the two classes I do. While I have done these many times, all of my stuff got left in Crimea. So it took some time to pull materials together again but it was gratifying to have both classes well attended.

Being a Christian in the medical field in Ukraine is not easy. Just like in the states, you stand to lose your job if you do not agree to preform in the way they want. The stories the students shared with me had to do with pressure to conform to corruption and participating in abortion procedures. I tried to encourage them to stand strong and that simply in their daily choices they were a witness for Christ, but my words seemed but a whisper in the storm. One young man I introduced myself to was a surgeon, newly into practice. Grasping what he confronted everyday, I asked about his support system. To his knowledge there is 1 other Christian surgeon in his city of 1 million people. I'd buckle under that aloneness....Oh Lord, please give him strength.

The second conference I just returned from. It was a Christian Missionary Fellowship church planting conference. I certainly appreciated the opportunity to go as I got to sit in with almost 70 CMF missionaries and learn about the Disciple Making Movement and it's components. More than I realized, what I learned will shape how I go about ministry. Highlights of these 4 days were being able to sing in English, seeing my Ukraine team, meeting new families as well as seeing so many other missionaries that I have met over the years. Our fields and schedules meshed here and I enjoyed grabbing a meal here & a few minutes to chat there - in the fun attempt to meet or catch up.

1st Aid - In mid- May I gave a 5-hour class. I was invited to a local seminary (about 2 ½ hours from where I live) to teach graduating students who will be leading outreaches for children about First Aid.

Teaching that long in Russian isn't something I've done before. Wonderfully God provided me with a fantastic translator for the written material and another translator helped me over the rough spots as I spoke. The kids were patient & attentive. For their exam they each drew a slip of paper with a problem on it and had to demonstrate what to do. Sprains, allergies, burns, wounds, tick removal, choking, broken bones, rinsing the eye, knocked out teeth, heat stroke. I was pleased with how well they had grasped the information. Of course, Skittles for the correct answer helped :)

Weather – Our May has been wet. Perhaps there were 6 days out of the month that we did not have sunshine in the morning and thunder & lightening with heavy showers in the afternoon. Being the new kid, I asked if this was usual? “No!” But, it makes for well-watered gardens.

Speaking of gardens, the conversation of summer tomatoes came up a few weeks ago and that led to asking Sveta to pick up 2 or 3 tomato plants for Jamie and myself. Well it turns out that they are not sold individually but rather in a bag of 10 *plus* 2 (just incase). Sveta got Jamie regular and cherry size for me. Oh my, what to do with 24 tomato plants?? Well our weather has been perfect for them and they all took, so come September you are all invited over for BLT’s!!

When God doesn’t care a whit - As a member of Christian Medical and Dental Association (CMDA), I have the privilege of receiving their weekly devotions. This one met me right on the road I am walking now.

Flying Trucks

“But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong”

(1 Corinthians 1:27, NIV 2011).

Jim Hines is an obstetrician and chief of staff of a practice group in Michigan. Years ago he served God as a healthcare missionary in the Central African Republic. He tells the story of a single missionary woman who was afraid to sleep in her house because there was a large tree nearby that she was afraid would fall on her in the night. She sent word to the missionaries to come and cut down her tree, but no one with such skills was available. Dr. Hines, the obstetrician with a 12-inch chain saw, heard God speak and traveled to the village to confront a 90-foot tree. Somehow he was able to convince many of the village men to help him with their small axes. Gradually the trunk was severed. When the tree began to sway, Jim realized that it might actually fall on the house they were seeking to protect. So, being a wise physician, he had someone climb 30 feet into the tree with a rope and then connected the rope to his truck. They hacked the trunk a bit further; the tree began to sway more. Jim asked his children to move away from the house, just in case. At just the right time, Jim began to accelerate his four-wheel-drive truck in the direction opposite the house. He had all things under control, just like any physician would, when the tree began to fall, lifting his truck off the ground as it fell toward the house he had come to save. Thank God it missed most of the house, though it did clip the edge of the garage where his children had been standing. The missionary woman is now sleeping fine.

Has God ever called you to work for Him outside your comfort zone?

Sometimes we hold back on God when we feel we don't have the skills, knowledge or experience to complete His task with excellence—like we are afraid that the outcome of our efforts may cause God to shake His head in disappointment. None of us wish to screw up God's plan, especially if we might hurt others in the process.

But there are times when God calls and doesn't care a whit that we are missing the skills to proceed. There are times when, for God's reason, He wishes us to follow Him where we are not qualified to go, where we are likely to fail if the outcome is left to our ability. Such times are no time for our fear of failure to hold us back. It is certainly fine to stare at God incredulously on such occasions and ask, "Are you sure?" But when He nods His head, it is time to follow, especially when it is highly unlikely we can accomplish it on our own.

Jim knew nothing about cutting down trees, but God landed the tree. Sometimes God wants to be the only one who can make the tree miss the house, for His glory.

"There are times when, for God's reason, He wishes us to follow Him where we are not qualified to go, where we are likely to fail if the outcomes is left to our ability." Oh boy...this is right where I am! I understand that I have been asked to 'cut the tree down' but I have never done what I am about to do. Yes, I've asked Him, 'Are you sure?' And, through a series of circumstances, God nodded.

This summer, we are preparing to do an outreach to families of special needs children. So with no experience, just a God given desire, we are following Him into planning a five-day camp. Our goals are:

#1 evangelism {most of the father's have no personal relationship with God}

#2 spiritual growth {many of the mom's do have a personal relationship with God but haven't stepped beyond salvation}

and #3 a fun Christian camping experience for the whole family.

Less obvious goals include: strengthening marriages, intentional building of relationships among the special needs families and with other families within the church.

Our theme is 'Life in Abundance – You're Invited!' And it will take place August 8 – 12th. We plan to have about 90 people total – 10 or so in leadership/program and the rest being families.

Tanya K and I are in the process of developing the program so I will share more details as it comes together. At first glance it sounds fun (& I hope it is!), but in reality it is out of my comfort zone, a tremendous amount of work and a big responsibility. So please pray for us –

- For wisdom & obedience on our part.
- That God would prepare the hearts of those He wants to reach and that this be more than an event but rather a 'game changer' in the spiritual lives of everyone.
- That God's perfect will be done in each person before, during and after the camp.

Together we will watch God 'land this tree'!!

Effort with excellence - The upcoming months have quite a line up. I am talking about outreach opportunities that are in the making in two countries. Through the ministry God has given us, plans are coming together for....

20 Vacation Bible Schools, 2 teen outreaches and 1 special needs camp in Crimea.

1 Vacation Bible School, 1 teen outreach and 1 special needs family camp in Ukraine.

"We are told to feed the poor, heal the sick, bear witness for our Lord, serve faithfully in our churches and so do with excellence. But the only power that accomplishes for the kingdom comes from God. Our job is to seek His presence, seek His will, obey what we can discern and trust Him with the outcomes."

'Whispers' by Al Weir M.D.

I don't know how these events are all going to turn out. But I'll leave the outcomes in God's hands because that's His business. However, I do know that I have a role. In the seen and unseen work I have with each event, I am responsible for effort with excellence.

I don't know how much longer we have; I only know that the door is still open today. If you want to be a part of it all - I invite you. The time is now to pray and give.

Online:

<http://www.cmfi.org/wherewework/missionary/jjohnson>

Or, make check out to CMF On the memo line write: June Johnson and send it to this address:

Blessings, June

1. Easter morning flowers
2. Easter morning with the kids
3. Colostomy care workshop
4. Christian Medical Conference
5. First Aid class
6. Tanya K sharing with the seminary students about her ministry with special needs families





