

Update 18 written May 6, 2017

Wow it felt good to sleep into this morning!! April was an intense month so to be able to linger in bed until 8:30 felt lovely.

Road trip: Back in February, when I saw that I wasn't going to be able to go to Crimea because of the laws, I readjusted and planned a trip south. In the past I've tried to visit the two church clinics that I work with at least twice a year. But with being in the states for 3 months last fall after Dad died, it had been a year since I've visited. Seeing the chance to do a '2 in 1' trip, I invited the Special Needs ministry team to join me

On April 3rd, Tanya K. and her husband Sergi, Sergi M. and myself headed south by train. While we had looked at it online & on Google earth and talked with the director several times by skype, we all wanted to be able to see where we were going and get a lot of logistical questions answered.

Despite the cold April wind, bare trees and terrific amount of repairs being done everywhere, we could still envision what things would look like for our camp in June and we were excited. The Azov Lighthouse is a Christian Camp that can hold up to 1,000 people. When we talked to the director back In January, we grabbed the last open block of 5 days. As it is we will share the camp with a women's conference for 400. Wonderfully the territory is so large that we won't be in each other's way. Although with our 70 some kids...they may notice us :) After spending the day looking around and asking all our questions, the 3 of them headed back to Kiev and I went on to Berdansk (another hour and a half east).

My colleague, and close friend, Era had warned me that our schedule was full. I think it has been at least 10 years that I begin training Era in wound and ostomy care. Besides gaining a lot of experience since then, she has in turn trained her colleague (who's name is also Era) in ostomy care. God is working powerfully through these two women, in southeast corner of Ukraine, to show and share His redeeming love.

Already knowing the basics, they had arranged for me to consult with them on their complex wound and ostomy patients. Once a quarter they also have a get together with the ostomy patients and this time they invited those who had not yet met me. About 40 came and I shared my testimony and a young man from the church spoke on the sacrificial love of Jesus. Afterwards, for several hours Era, Era and I did individual consults for those who wanted it.

6 days later, I got on a bus and traveled 3 hours northwest to Zaparoshja to spend time at the other clinic. My first evening was special, as I had arranged to meet little Katya. I hadn't seen this little bundle of brown curls and a big smile for a year and a half. Unlike our first visit, this was social – we just wanted to see each other and catch up.

I mentioned Katya in my updates a year and a half ago because she was the first person I had met in Ukraine with my same diagnosis – VATER syndrome. Abandoned by her mother, like a forgotten potted plant shoved into a dark corner of the pediatric ward, she 'missed' the first 2 years of her life as she lay sick in her crib. During a Christmas outreach to the children's hospital, Lena noticed the 18 month old limp package of misery in diapers and they have been together ever since. Now 4 years old, and 8 surgeries later, I was thrilled to see her flourishing and even attending preschool. There are still issues

to deal with and more surgeries ahead for Katya. But at least for this past year, she has been able to stay out of the hospital and has had a chance just to grow, learn and play. Thank you Lord!

One new lady I met, made me stop, sit back and marvel at God's ways. Apparently Ukraine has a new law that if the ambulance is called for a homeless person, they have to respond, take them to the hospital and treat them. It turns out that there is even a special department for this. So had she not been in the straights she was, she could not have afforded the complex surgery and Nadia would have died from a ruptured diverticulitis.

Because she couldn't afford colostomy bags, she had cut out a hole in a plastic lid, stuffed a produce bag through it and held the whole thing on with a belt she had rigged. No one would employ her because of smell and uncontained stool. Somehow she heard that meals were being served for free in the park so she went. There she heard about a God that loves her and there she met Zoya (church clinic administrator). Zoya brought Nadia to me and I was amazed. Amazed at how well she had done with the very little she had; amazed at her attitude & hope and amazed how God had gone before and provided supplies that were perfect for her. God had done it again! (taken a bad situation and turned it into good) and God was doing it again! (in how He was showing Nadia His love and provision for her). Even a series of bad decisions, absolute poverty and a ruptured bowel is not too difficult for God. Through and despite all of that He is able to reach into a life and bring a daughter to Himself.

Four days - 5 patients and a whole lot of paper work - later I returned to Kiev by train. Our Easter was a cold one but it felt good to be home, even if only for 4 days.

Lytsk - It was a quick and full 3 days as Valya (AGAPE's nurse) and I went from patient to patient. With this being my 3rd trip it was fun to finally feel familiarity with the staff and many of the patients.

Driving from house to house visiting the home bound patients, I've been able to see a little of the area. But an hour before catching my 10pm train home, Anya (AGAPE's administrator) took me on a brief tour of the old city. We joked that in the daylight, seeing the 14th century castle it would be like a whole different tour.

Autistic outreach – As a member of Christian Medical and Dental Association (CMDA) I receive their email newsletters. Back in late January or early February, I was reading through their most recent newsletter and saw 'Ukraine 2017'. Curious I clicked the line for more information. That is when I read that a team of Christian physicians was coming to Kiev and Lytsk to do a conference on autism. Oh man! I felt like I had just struck gold! Our moms have been asking for help.

Not knowing how better to do it, I used the online 'sign up to go with us' form to communicate with CMDA. Long story short, they not only responded but also accepted my invitation to do an outreach at our church! When I told Tanya K. (special needs ministry leader) what God had done for us, she was thrilled!

Dr. Budden is a pediatrician from Portland, OR who has gone on to specialize in the area of autism, Karen is a special needs school teacher from Vancouver, WA and Oxanna is Ukrainian mom from Minnesota with a autistic son. Despite traveling all night by train from Lytsk, this team of 3 served with their whole heart and putt in a 9-hour day to see 16 of our autistic kids & their parents.

After our outreach, they went on to give a 2-day conference in Kiev to a crowd of 400 people. What I know about autism, fits into a 1-hour lecture 30 years ago at nursing school. Besides attending, people asked that I translate for them so they could ask the speakers their specific questions - so I learned a lot over the weekend.

Throw kindness around like confetti

5 short stories:

Little train boy: As I slipped into my assigned seat on the train to Lytsk my internal radar was on high alert. He was in a stupor sleep. Her face was kind but her movements and slur told me she had been drinking too. Next to her, sweet tired eyes looked out from under his tussled hair, as he comforted himself by tugging on his bangs.

Apologetically, she was trying to explain their situation but because it was in Ukrainian, I didn't understand much at all. The situation did not feel dangerous but it was potentially bad and I 'closed up' for safety's sake. I smiled at the boy and nodded when spoken to but busied myself with sewing.

He slept on. She took occasional drinks from her purse and the little guy kept busy as 1 ½ year olds do. While he and she spit nails at each other every time he woke up, both were tender with their son. As time ticked away, I wondered if anyone anywhere at anytime had ever prayed for this little guy? Somehow I doubted it.

Eventually, the little guy fell asleep and the couple asked me to watch their son. They both left and a minute later the conductor popped in. "Would you like to move?" As she went to find a different seat for me, I collected my things. When the couple returned, I mumbled something about my leaving so they could rest better and slipped out.

The conductor gave me my own cabin and only then did I realize how tense I was. I never understood his name, but when I reopened my sewing bag there was a piece of hair from his doll. On my desk now is a strand of orange yarn, I kept it to remind me to keep praying for the little train boy.

Vassia: The young man that I was so concerned about will be going home soon. A few updates ago, I wrote about this 27 year old, new believer who had become paralyzed from the waist down after a swimming accident 4 years ago. When I went to the AGAPE center for the first time in February, the center's administrator had made sure he was there during my visit. He had had both pressure sores since the accident – was there anything I could do?

I suspected bone infection and tests confirmed it. A few days later he had surgery and I returned the next month shortly after he was discharged from the hospital. It was too early to be sitting on the surgery site but we got him started on upper body exercises.

Now on this trip, Vassia was back up in his chair and doing great! Besides the healing of his body, God used this time to strengthen Vassia's faith. One more time, I see how God has taken a tragedy and used it to save someone from him self. The staff has invested deeply in him. The proud angry boy who was, is now well on his way to becoming a man of God.

First Easter: As the service was closing, it hit me like a ton of bricks. I excitedly turned to Sveta and whispered – “This is your first Easter isn’t it!?!” Her radiant face and glistening eyes brightened into a big smile as she nodded.

I was only a small part of Sveta’s coming to Christ. But, it was a night neither of us will ever forget – and how hard times do - the going through it together glued us together in a special way. I wrapped her in a hug.

Sergi: I did not want to go. Did not. I knew that isn’t the right attitude but I heard: prison, refugee, open head injury after a fight, weeks in the hospital, pressure ulcers, skeleton. For God and Lena he was a person but to me it was an impossible problem so not a good use of my time. How on earth could I help? I decided in my mind that I couldn’t and tried not to think about him.

But Lena, (a sister at Grace Church who is involved in their outreach to the sick and elderly) kept pushing me for an answer. ‘When can you go see him? She seemed deaf to all my reasons why I wouldn’t be able to help this guy, so to finally prove it to her I agreed to go.

On one hand I was right, there really was very little I could do for Sergi. But, I was right for the wrong reason because God Himself had gone ahead and Sergi’s situation had dramatically changed. The young man’s father had been notified, he was now on a pressure ulcer relief mattress, wound care was being done, a Christian lady was now staying at his bedside day and night caring for his needs.

The situations didn’t demand a wound care protocol, debridement, daily dressing changes, a turning schedule, a dietary or physical rehab consult or follow up visits from me. All that was needed from me was \$15.38. My huge internal protest melted in embarrassment when I understood how badly I had failed in obedience and compassion.

After we bought the supplies Sergi needed, Lena was on wings of joy – so happy for Sergi, thankful to God for His provisions and how our Lord of second, third and fourth chances was moving in his life. I had a lot to think over during my walk home.

Feodor – in between Lytsk and the Autism outreach, I did my last English Club lesson for this year. Now English Club moves into a summer break before the big summer English camp that will happen at the end of July. Even though this type of ministry is brand new for me and requires about 6 hours of preparation for each 3-hour lesson, I actually have really enjoyed it. Thinking creativity in a whole new arena has been fun and I have group of neat students.

In each lesson, I somehow touch on God, the Bible and spiritual topics and in doing so you get a feel by their reaction where each person is in this sphere. Very quickly Feodor caught my attention. I didn’t demand details but over time pieced together that something bad had happened that had hurt him deeply but he was seeking God again.

He came with his son 10 year old regularly to English Club, then also joined us in my Purpose Driven Life study after church, then started coming to church, then came with his family to the church picnic and the movie night last Friday where we showed ‘War Room.’ His hunger gives him courage and I’m really proud how the church folks have welcomed him. I realize that I have been only 1 little footpad in

steps Feodor has taken but what an honor it is! Feodor and his family are in my prayers....but that God chose to use English Club to reach His son....still kinda blows me away.

Tell your mountain about your God

Days ahead:

Lytsk: May 22 – 29 I will return to the AGAPE Center. A few more days have been added to this trip because the medical staff is asking for training in the care of tracheostomy & gastrostomy tubes as well as a colostomy care workshop. These next 3 weeks I need to get training materials translated as well as brush up on some of it myself. Their requests are stretching me....I haven't done trach care since nursing school! But there are other requests I just can't help with. Along with them, I am praying for a Christian Occupational Therapist and Speech Therapist to come teach their staff.

Family Camp: June 14 – 21st are the dates set for this year's Family Camp. The special needs ministry team and I have been working since January to prepare for it. Last year I felt very alone as I cast the vision, structured the format and led their first family camp. This year I have felt closely supported by the special needs team as well as the pastoral staff. Last year the camp was in August. This year is it in June. Last year 92 people came. This year over 140 are signed up. Last year the camp was 1 hour away. This year the camp is at the other end of the country.

I would ask that you join me in prayer.

In regards to Lytsk for -

- * God to help the translator to give us accurate written teaching materials (she has a lot to prepare in a short time)
- * my language while doing these workshops (that they could understand the important points)
- * wisdom and obedience in regards to my ongoing work with them (While they are inviting me to move there and work with them full time, I do not think this is God's will for me.)

In regards to Family Camp -

- * While we have over 140 people signed up, I believe God wants 200 people to attend. I am praying for 200. Of, this 200, I am praying that 50 be men. And, of this 200, I am praying that 10 people invite God into their heart and lives.

The special needs team told me 'that is impossible' and I agreed. It is impossible. This mountain, this problem, is impossible without God's intervention. So for the past 2 months I have been telling this 'mountain' about my God. I call it my 200/50/10 prayer.

- * Please pray for travel safety for those coming to help us - from Crimea and James & Trudi Sang from Tigard Christian Church in Portland, Oregon.

* Please pray for peace for Ukraine; wisdom & obedience for the leadership team; prepared hearts for all the participants; health and safety; and good weather.

I am already thanking God for His provision of funds, unity among the leadership staff, provision of supplies (crafts, games, sports, T-shirts), a great place to hold the camp and the fantastic people who are involved!

Blessings, June

1. Azov Sea Family Camp - Sergi M. gave the water a thumbs up on April 4th! Out to the blue, the water is no deeper than your thighs. Perfect for kids!



2. Sveta's first Easter! 2. Little Katya





3. May 1st - Yuri's birthday (Chris & Mary Malone)



4. Lucky & Sveta - On Valentine's Day I found her outside our gate. I think she was about 3 months old at the time and her foot was frozen to the ground.

For Sveta it was love at first sight!

