

Update 23, written June 5, 2013

Joy is the serious business of Heaven.

C.S. Lewis

Prague: Some 5 months prior, I had purposely purchased my airline ticket for April 27th. Should it be that my temporary residence permit extension not be granted, I would have to leave Ukraine no matter what as my current permit would expire that day. However, if I received the extension I would have 5 days to enjoy Prague before the conference. As you know from the last update, I did receive my extension on my residence permit (allowing me to stay in Ukraine for another year) and thus was blessed with a mini vacation in the Czech Republic.

One of the things I like about my 'work' is that I get to meet some of the neatest people. Last October, when I was at the Christian Conference for International Medical Students, I got acquainted with Pastor Marshall Brown. As it turned out he was from Oregon and for the past 20 years, he and his wife, Cathryn, and their 3 kids have served as missionaries in the Czech Republic. Since I knew I would be going there soon but knew nothing about the country, I started firing questions at him and ended up being graciously invited to stay in their home.

My first impressions of Prague were very favorable – clean, beautiful, friendly. But once I arrived at the home of the Brown's I was suddenly torn. Here I was in this country full of cool stuff to see and explore....but I was staying in a quiet little town at most comfortable home that had a big yard overlooking a lovely river and they had shelves & shelves of fantastic books and nearly all of them were in English!!! (I know it is a run on sentence but how else do you explain overflowing blessings???)

Thanks to Cathryn I had a personal guide and over 2 days we explored Prague. I walked as much as my legs could take because around every corner was something else interesting but still much was left unseen. Perhaps someday I'll get to go back. The other 2 days I rested my body while my soul snuggled up and soaked in the books, walks along the river and the hours of visiting with Marshall and Cathryn.

After such an enjoyable prelude, I was ready to travel on to the reason I had bought the plane ticket in the first place. Another hour's train ride brought me to the 'Cross Centered Care' Conference. Perhaps others would mention the cool temperatures and damp air. I, on the other hand, felt like I had been dropped into Oregon and was loving it!! The vivid greens of the grass and bushes, huge quiet lake, field flowers, tall fir trees, gentle hills & wandering paths that were safe and ours to explore. From the first moment, it was as if I fell into a hug and stayed in those warm arms for the next week.

There were 30 of us from England, South Africa, Malaysia, Romania, Poland, Singapore, Germany, Philippines, Portugal, Singapore, Spain and Czech Republic. The youngest was a 23 year old gal serving in South Africa and the oldest were a couple in

their mid-70's who were just leaving Spain after 30 years of ministry. While we from all over the world, doing so many different types of ministry - so many basics were the same...that in _ sentences you were understood; the glance you gave while explaining a situation was completely and correctly understood. In America, you would say that we were all on the 'same page.' In Ukraine, you would say that we were all on the 'same plate.' In other words, we got each other and that took things to a whole deeper level.

I really cannot totally explain the conference yet because I'm still unpacking from it myself. Even though a month has already gone by heart is still mulling through and turning over what happened. But for my uncle who made the trip possible and for the friend who gave me some spending money....I want to at least share some adjectives from the experience. A tender gift from God. Prettiness. Attention/care. Love in all the details. Singing in English! New friends. Laughter. Marvelous food. Solid teaching. Being humbled further, met there in that hard place and told I was treasured. Feeling chosen. Truths remembered. A double blessing - for the gift being received right now and the gift that will result from what had been. Thank you so much Lord!

Christian Medical Conference for Students: From Prague, I flew into Kiev at 11pm and arrived at the conference site at 1am. It was a shame to have missed the first day of the conference but due to the flight schedules, that is the way it had to be.

I had to smile when the taxi pulled up to the place because even in the black of night I recognized where I was. Oh so ever many years ago, Janice and I had attended a women's conference here and there are several BIG memories attached to that event. First, it was the first time she and I had attended a conference for American women in Ukraine, second it was the first time we had ever seen let alone gotten to hear Elizabeth Elliot speak and third we froze. While it was still summer in Crimea, we didn't know that Kiev had already moved briskly into fall. (We couldn't follow the weather via internet back in those days.) In short, Janice and I put on *all* our clothes to keep warm at night.

But, back to my story....Wonderfully my workshop supplies that I had sent up ahead of time had arrived and were in my room. The next morning I had the pleasure of meeting several of the international speakers who had come from England, Denmark and America. 300 students gathered in the main hall where a local pastor shared a message calling them into a deeper relationship with Christ. Friday and Saturday afternoons were open for the students to attend those workshops that were most interesting to them. I admit I was kinda bummed at how few came to mine. But, I realize colostomies and pressure ulcers aren't high on everyone's list of interests. Oh well, I poured all of my attention into the few that came and they liked that.

With the conference over on Sunday morning, I took a taxi from the conference to my home-away-from-home in this part of Ukraine. Brovery is a suburb outside of Kiev and while this very large house used to be a Christian 'hotel', over a year ago a couple from Oklahoma bought it. You've heard about Chris and Mary Malone in previous updates because I really enjoy them as people and totally respect their ministry to special needs

orphans.

This was the first time I've been able to join them for their Sunday morning service. They hold church right in their own place. With their 9 children (the 5 youngest with Down's Syndrome) – there is always a joyful noise about. The Malone's were also hosting an American couple and their daughter who had just wrapped up an outreach to orphans and a Dad who was just days away from taking their newly adopted 16 year old girl with cerebral palsy and a 15 year old boy with spina bifida back to join up with the rest of the family in the states. There is always a lot going on in this happy house and I enjoy it. Am I a special needs orphan or just a stray pup they take in? Hard to tell :) but they feed me, talk nice to me and let me curl upside for the night...so this 'wandering one' keeps showing up at their doorstep.

To give myself some breathing room, I had planned to not leave until Tuesday morning which turned out to be great fun because it allowed me to play tour guide for the family who had been on an outreach. Like I told them, I'm not your best choice for guides if you want historical info. - BUT I'm cheap, know where the bathrooms are, where good places to eat can be found, how to get from here to there and have some fun on the way. We had a good day.

I was not born to be free – I was born to adore and obey.

C.S. Lewis

VBS boxes: I arrived back to Feodosia needing to quickly turn my attention to getting all the craft supplies sorted. Pastor Nicholi has blessed me for the past several years with the use of a large, well light, clean conference room at the Efas Center/hotel. I had about 45 boxes to sort through and 3 days to get it all divided into a bunch of Vacation Bible Schools – or camps as we call them here. That translates into a do-able but intense job. However, God blessed me with 6 helpers and the entire job was completed very well and in only 1 _ days - incredible!! On Friday evening, in a tired but blissful daze, I realized that God had provided supplies for 31 camps and 3 Sunday Schools! Thank you Lord!

We've drifted away from being fishers of men to being keepers of the aquarium.

Paul Harvey

Kenton, Cory & the girls: The main reason I had only 3 days was because guests were expected and a conference was going to be held. Cory Lemke and his daughters, Janelle and Alicia were welcomed back as old friends...because they are. The Lemke's were missionaries here for 15 years. While Cory has been able to return several times, and Janice, his wife, has been back twice, this was the first time the girls had been back after the family completed their ministry in Crimea 3 years ago. Try to imagine how many people were happy to see them and then multiply that by 23, divide by 1 and add 54 :) [answer: there were a LOT!]

Kenton is from Kansas and a long time friend of Cory's. We have been blessed to have him come many times. Kenton is one of those people who is super smart, has a dozen titles to his name and rightfully so. But for me, the fact that he loves God, loves people, is real and soooooo funny puts him right UP there in my book.

The guys came to facilitate a conference on missions and 30 pastors/church planter/lay men of the church attended. I could tell by the talk among the guys and the general atmosphere that the conference went very well. It was also neat to hear Cory say, "In the evenings after our sessions, it was great to hear the guys talking in depth about God's heart, His call, and how they might be involved in that on a broader scale than just their Jerusalem (Acts 1:8)."

For the chance to talk with the pastors and church planters about their camp plans and get their boxes to them, I volunteered to help in the kitchen during the conference. I tell ya, that work isn't for wimps. Wow those gals work hard - but it was also super fun.

Last minute stuff: After they left, I knew I had less than 2 weeks before the next big event so I focused on getting things wrapped up here. I held my last 3 clinics in Premorski. When I return, through the summer, I will continue to hold small clinics for the 4 people who still have complex wounds. With ostomy supplies again on hand, I also held a special clinic for these folks.

After a few phone calls I understood that I did need to travel up to Zaparoshja. While there were a bunch of small reasons to go, the big main reason was to continue to investing/teaching Tanya (the nurse who has been able to return to ministry) in how to help those patients with ostomies. I took the 9 hour train ride up Thursday, we held clinic all day Friday and I returned home Saturday. Together we saw 13 patients and Tanya did really well. It is fun to see the joy in her eyes as she explains things and the interest she has in learning all the 'tricks to the trade.'

Oregon: In the morning I will begin making my way to America. God has blessed me with the gift of a quick trip to Oregon. It is a 'see family-visit the dentist-and attend the national wound and ostomy conference' type of trip. The first few days I will be in the Seaside, OR area to see my nephew graduate from high school and enjoy time with family. The second third of the trip I will be at my folks place in Lebanon – just in time for Father's Day :) The last week I will be in the Seattle area attending the conference and get to have a brief time with my sister and her family. As my time will be short, I plan to stay focused on this agenda rather than trying to include much else. Despite the anticipated ugly fog of jet lag, I'm very much looking forward to this gift of time with family and the continuing ed. opportunity within my nursing specialty.

On June 30th I'll return to Ukraine for the remainder of my term until my furlough next spring.

Blessings,

June