

Update 11, August 4, 2016

Week 2!

It feels like already a long time ago but lots of impressions remain....

* Smaller group with easier diagnosis (not such needy kids).

* Hot! It was in the low 90's nearly every day.

* Tired – I was getting only about 5 hours of sleep a night and many others were getting even less.

* Sickness – several of us (leadership & helpers] came down with colds. 11 of us got a gut bug of which 6 needed antibiotics. I got a light case of both – which helped me understand their symptoms. I was grateful to God that I had the medicine we needed, understood how it was being transmitted (so we could stop it) and everyone bounced back without complications.

* A little calmer – even though I was busy with more sick people and wasn't feeling so great myself, somehow I was better able to connect with a couple moms. So many hard stories...I didn't feel like they were complaining so much as simply feeling safe to share.

* Over both camps – the 1st & 2nd week - 16 new moms and their children were able to come! This was exciting for us. Camp is something these moms and kids look forward to all year. However, the facilities can only take 20 moms and 20 kids each week. With this being the 5th year of doing this, there is not enough room for all the returners let alone new folks. Thus, the idea for Family Camp - more about that below.

* Tanya K & I invited Era (my close friend and colleague from Berdansk) to help us at camp. [Era is the key person for the medical ministry at their church.] She came with a huge desire to bless the moms. Over the course of both weeks, she gave every mom an hour massage. That in it's self was wonderful. But even more important was the many heart to heart God talks that took place during that time. Era blessed us in a big way.

* My mind kept returning to a conversation that I had had with Tanya K. last winter. I had just arrived about 2 months earlier and was asking lots of questions. What was camp like? What was the history? What were the difficulties? After she finished answering that 3rd question I asked, "Good grief that sounds hard – is it all worth it?" With the 1st week behind us and well into the 2nd, I now better understood her beaming smile when she answered; "Oh yes, Kristina, it is worth it! It is at camp that walls of fear come down, relationships are established and some big steps are made in introducing them to Christ." I had seen what she meant with my own eyes.... yes, an overwhelming yes.... it was all worth it!

A wedding!

My brother's daughter, Linsey, was married to Saul Belisle in Cannon Beach, Oregon on Saturday July 23rd. What a gift it was to be able to be able take part in this special event. The wedding was meaningful and the reception fun. Thanks to the bride & groom, I got to see many friends & relatives and spend time with my family. Thank you Lord – it meant a lot!

With it being a 14-day trip, I expected it to be kind of stressful. But except for the trip back (more about that below), my time in Oregon was restful & bucket filling.

When you don't match your seat number

I consider myself a veteran traveler so this is an embarrassing story to share. When I bought my ticket to return to Ukraine, it seems like I was more focused on getting a good price than I was thinking through the details. In short, I bought 2 separate tickets on 3 different airlines and left myself insufficient time for baggage claim and checking in at the counter between all 3 flights. This mistake should not have happened but it did and the mess up was completely my fault.

The fact of what I had done hit me about 12 hours before I was to leave. I'll spare you the blow by blow. Suffice to say Monday morning at the Portland airport was *very* stressful and there was more to come.

Mercy is not getting what you do deserve.

Because I could not reach my second flight in time, I deserved to lose my second ticket. But, I did not.

Grace is getting what you do not deserve.

Grace was the Portland ticket agent going above & beyond the call of duty and rebooking me on another airline.

Grace was making my first flight with just minutes to spare and having my suitcase arrive in San Francisco with me

Grace was the San Francisco ticket agent noticing that our flight delay (due to bad weather in New York) would prevent me from catching my flight on to Kiev AND who rebooked me for the next day.

Grace was easily finding an affordable hotel and getting a good night sleep.

Grace was getting 'bumped' up into business class on the flight from San Francisco to New York.

Grace was the airline arranging to have help waiting for me at the JFK airport - to help me locate my bag that had on ahead of me the day before and to get me to where I needed to check in on time.

Grace was an easy seatmate on the 8 ½ hour flight from NY to Kiev

Grace was having my suitcase arrive with me in Kiev – despite it all.

On Tuesday morning sitting in my crumpled sweaty clothes of yesterday...not looking very business class at all.... I knew that I didn't match my seat number. I understood that I didn't deserve any of the blessings that God had given me. I realized that I didn't match my seat number 3F nor my seat in heaven either. I had chosen badly yet God used my mistake to show me a picture of His mercy and grace. Thank you Lord!

What's ahead!

It is Thursday morning as I send this update. I am returning to a tight schedule and would appreciate your prayers for an easy reentry as well as quick recovery from jet lag because Family Camp starts on August 8! (it ends Saturday the 13th)

I have today to unpack, reconnect and we have our final pre-camp leadership meeting this evening. Friday I will host 3 friends, who are coming to help with camp, – 2 from Crimea and Era from Berdaskn. Saturday we pack. Sunday after church my friends & I

and a couple of others on the leadership team will head out early to camp.

On Monday at 12pm we need to be ready to welcome about 20 families – approx. 90 people. Our camp theme is – “Life in Abundance!” from John 10:10 “....I have come that they may have life, and life in abundance.”

We have 3 main goals for this event and I am asking that you hold us in prayer so that nothing less than God’s perfect will be done.

Goal #1 – Spiritual growth. While for a few this Christian camp will be their first exposure to the Gospel, the majority of the folks already have a personal relationship with God – some deep & long and others brand new. All of the special needs families are ones that have been to the July camps for 3 or more years. They have heard the Gospel message and are spiritually ready for more. By inviting them to Family Camp, we were able to free up space in the July (evangelistic) camps...allowing us to invite the 16 new families.

When Tanya invited these ‘veteran’ families to Family Camp she explained the reason but not everyone was happy. They know the July camps, they love the July camps and so many of their friends are there. Many were not pleased that they were not allowed to attend the July camps and it was tough on Tanya as she took all of the heat. Kind of like what God does with us sometimes....He knows the blessing ahead but all we can see is what was taken away.

It is largely this reason that I am a bit nervous. I want them to have a great time at Family Camp. This is also my first time co-directing a camp and of course I want it to go well. My prayer is that God would work through all of His children at camp to encourage them and grow them more into His likeness. And, that each Christian would reach out to and speak God’s redemptive message to those around them.

Goal #2 – Relationship building. About half the camp will be members of the church and half will be families with special needs children. Tanya K (co-directing the camp with me & leader of the special needs ministry) and I want the two groups of people to get to know each other...to become unafraid of each other. Each group has blessings to give and receive from the other...they just don’t know it yet. We are looking forward to watching the bridge of friendship being built.

Goal #3 – a fun Christian camping experience. It is a family camp purposely so that the family can spend time together. The mornings will have teaching and the afternoons will have sports, games, fishing and crafts. The evenings will be all camp games and worship & skits around the campfire.

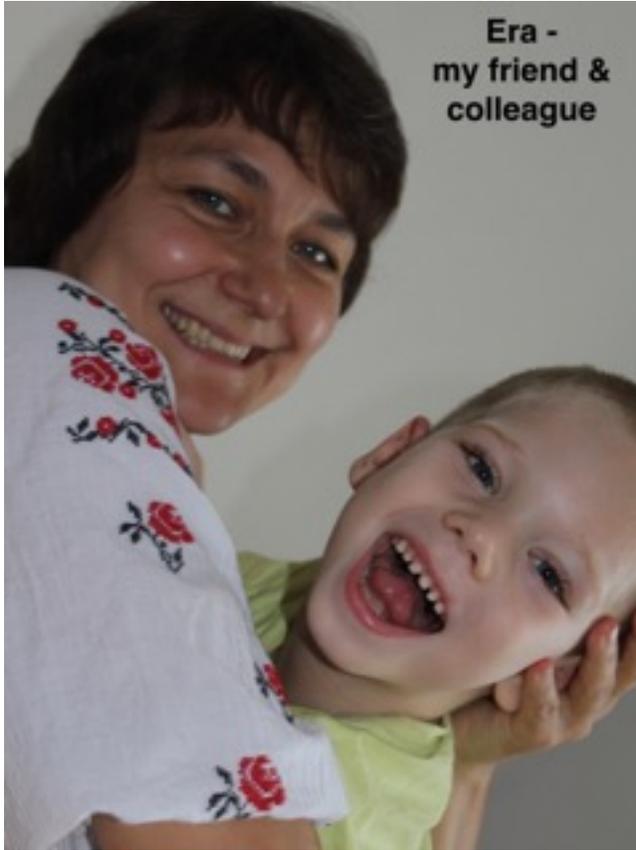
I am deeply thankful to God for His provision of a fantastic leadership team; a neat place to hold the camp and the provision of sufficient funds.

As you are led, please pray for us ...

- * that God would continue to prepare each person's heart and have His way in each person's life before, during and after Family Camp.
- * wisdom, obedience and servant/leadership for everyone who is helping.
- * health & safety

Thank you! June





**Era -
my friend &
colleague**



**Pastor Boris - lead pastor -
and his wife Sveta**





**My niece Linsey
& her husband
Saul**

