

Update 5- written July 10, 2011

Gospra - It was a bit of an uncomfortable start. I arrived in the late afternoon of the 3rd day of camp as everyone was just getting back from the sea. The person who had invited me (Alla) had gone home sick. I didn't know anyone and they didn't know me. Awkward - but there wasn't anything else to do but pick myself up by cuff & collar and dive in. Unknowingly, little Dima (age 8 - Down's) provided the bridge. "Sit here." I sat as instructed.

Dima then went on to the stage and began singing & telling stories for his audience of one. I couldn't catch all his words but thankfully he cued me when to clap. In time, Dima also recruited his grandma and a staff member to watch him perform. We introduced ourselves and...for me....the Christian Camp for the mentally and physically challenged began.

There were 70 kids (ages infant to 25), 50 adults (mom/dad or both, grandma or caregiver) and a team of 30 (program leaders, helpers, medical staff & cooks). Disabilities included: Down syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, spinal injury, deaf, autism, extensive burn and spinal bifida. I estimate that 10% already had a personal relationship with Christ and 80% not yet. The theme of the camp was 'Don't go Jonah's way' (meaning – God is calling you. Don't run away).

The mornings started with funny camp exercises, breakfast and then everyone broke up into their small Bible Study groups. Mid-morning everyone came together for songs, games, puppets and a short Bible message. Then there was small group time again which was followed by lunch. After lunch different things took place. Twice we went to the sea, once we visited the beautiful grounds of a palace and one afternoon some went to the local zoo and others rested at camp. After dinner, everyone gathered for skits, songs and a short message and each night a Christian movie was shown. If you want to see photos from our week you can check them out at this site.

<http://www.iamwithyouforever.org/rus/gallery/view/78>

I was busier than I expected....enemas, headaches, checking blood pressures, removing stitches, scraped knees, colds, pressure ulcers.....and couple moms just needed a listening ear. Personally, I experienced two rather opposite feelings all week; one of absolute comfort and the other of absolute dependence.

It felt so delicious to be on an even playing field in Ukraine – meaning we were all equal. The way we talked, & looked – we all accepted each other 'as is.' No glances back, no smirks, no teasing, no scolding, no trying to dress so as to hide some disfigurement. I felt gloriously accepted and comfortable. On the other hand, as I mentioned in my previous update, there were a lot of unknowns. So, for me this trip was one huge (and a lot of little) step of faith.

I had a bus ticket to Yalta. But how was I going to travel the last 30 min. to Gospra? I had been asked to see a new diabetic wound patient in Yalta. What did I need to bring for her? With whom would I sleep with at camp? Would I be able to take care of my own health needs? What

would be required of me? Did I have the supplies I needed? Would I have the physical strength to keep up and serve? How was I going to get back to Yalta to catch my bus to Feodosia?

Mine was to trust & go. His was to guide & govern. I had the supplies I needed with me for the diabetic wound in Yalta and after seeing her, a brother drove me directly to the camp. I had my own room and was able to take care of my own health needs very easily. With God's help, I was able to do what was needed as camp nurse. I had lots of supplies with me and what we needed more of I purchased at a local pharmacy. I had uncommon endurance and patience. Finally, another brother drove me back to Yalta and I got to check on my diabetic patient again before he took me to the bus station. Mine was to have confidence in God. His was to do His will as we went. My God is faithful.

Boxes— “19 boxes came in today.” I was on the bus on my way home from camp on Monday when my cell phone rang and the call was an answer to prayer. Officially, the Premorski Church Clinic is closed for the summer. During July and August, the church makes the building available to vacationing believers. Wounds, however, don't recognize seasons and I had 8 patients who still needed close following. So I've chosen to continue clinic myself for this group. Wednesday I had a full day of patients scheduled but I knew I didn't have the volume of dressings I would need for them. God knew it too.

Besides the miracle of the boxes arriving the day they did, God went a step further. Pastor Nicholi had them sitting in the garage by 11 Tuesday morning. Nicholi had no way to know how badly I needed those supplies and that I only had Tuesday to sort them before clinic the next day but God knew. Thank you Lord!

So, still tired from camp but grateful for the blessing, I spent the better part of the day in the garage. Probably only a wound & ostomy nurse in a foreign country is going to get goofy excited about TED hose, Jobst stockings, hydrocolloid, hydro-gel, silver and foam dressings, ace wraps, tape, gauze, gloves, Neosporin, band aids, saline and ostomy supplies. Most of it new (some things not even expired) and lots of it! When I told my mom that this load had arrived she said, “That only took 2 months.” Usually it takes 3. Thank you! Thank you Lord!!! And, to everyone who gathered and gave...thank you. May the Lord bless you in abundance for how you have blessed us.

Katya – The daughter of my colleague, Tanya, (age 23) died this past week. Tanya is a retired surgical nurse who trusted God with her heart and life about 12 years ago. She has been serving as a wound/ostomy care nurse at the Premorski Church clinic for 10 years. Tanya brought her daughter Katya (then age 11) with her to church. Katya attended Sunday School and Vacation Bible School but at about age 13 peer pressure got her and she began smoking. Smoking led to hard drugs. It was at about age 19 when she hit bottom and cried out for help.

At her request, she went to a Christian Rehab Center in Kiev. It was there that she gave her heart and life fully over to Christ and everything changed. At her funeral the director of the

Rehab Center said, “Katya had gift of evangelism and no fear. She wanted everyone to know about the true salvation that can be had through Christ. She went up to the bums on the street, to the prisons and to those who had been diagnosis with AIDS to share the gospel. Katya would pray into the late hours of the night and wake up again at dawn to pray before the start of the day.”

About a year and a half ago, Katya came home to visit her family and a brother (baptized member of the church) noticed her. They married this past January. Prior to the wedding, both knew that something was wrong with Katya’s health and perhaps it was serious. Within a few weeks after the wedding, Katya was diagnosed with cancer.

For parents to have to bury their child, for such a bright beacon to be extinguished, for one who served so strongly to be taken....questions of “Why?” and “What for?” come up. I don’t know the answer...today. I do know though that God isn’t afraid of our questions. I do know that God is all good. I do know that God is all wise And therefore, God can be trusted. And trust, is truly trust when you don’t fully understand.

4th of July– My teammates David and Annette Dryden & their children David (age 6) and Lily (almost 3) arrived back in Ukraine a month ago. However, between our schedules and the fact we live an hour apart, I hadn’t yet seen Annette and the kids. This past weekend, David needed to make a trip to Kiev to pick up a college student (Ben – who will be working with them for a month) so Annette invited me up for the 4th. Of course, July 4th isn’t a holiday here but that didn’t stop us :) Besides cake, we had hot dogs, real American hot dog buns, pop and chips. Little David crushed dried leaves, threw them up in the air and yelled, “Fireworks!”

Since it had been a year since I last saw them, it was fun to play with the kids again. It doesn’t happen often so for me it is a true gift to have them proudly wave all the bugs and worms they have collected in front of my face, put on a dance show or simply have a little one crawl up on your lap! Fun :) After the kids went to bed, Annette and I had a chance to catch up. In our time together, I realized how important this was. I had come to be a blessing and ended up being blessed. We hope to get together again next month.

Coming up – it may be awhile before I write again as the weeks ahead are full. 10 sticks of summer sausage & 5 lbs of cheese are in the refrigerator; 5 boxes of cookies are in the hall; the bubbles are mixed up, & knives; apron and cutting board are next to the door, all ready for my 6:45 departure in the morning. So, I will close now because the ironing still isn’t done, my medic bag needs to be restocked and I need to get to bed on time.

July 11 – 15: I will help out as camp nurse and cook at the VBS in the village of Batalnia.

July 19th: I have a clinic day in Premorski

July 20 – 23: I will travel to Zaporoshja to deliver supplies and see patients.

July 25 -29: I will help out as camp nurse at the VBS in the village of Cimisotka.

Blessings, June