

Update 1 – written April 22, 2011

Thank you so much for your prayers! My trip back to my other home went very smoothly and my suitcase arrived to boot! My itinerary wasn't the easiest but it got the job done and after a few more naps, I'll be feeling a lot better.

Along with Poland, Ukraine will be hosting the EURO 2012 Soccer Championship. Besides revamping 2 stadiums and building 2 more, Ukraine wisely decided to upgrade the Kiev airport. Our flight was brought in through a brand new terminal that has been nicely done. In my first trip here (1996) I remember the starkly tiled hall that boasted a single light bulb which gave a murky glow to the suitcases thrown in a pile below it. Beautifully that has all changed and I pulled my bag off the conveyer belt and headed through customs. I forgot that the suitcase needed to go through the x-ray machine first and the officer called me over. I handed him my customs paper and slid the bag through. He motioned for me to step over to the desk and he began talking to the lady there....

“Tell her she doesn't have to fill this paper out now. Ask her if she has any art work....”

I interrupted and, in Russian, said, “I understand you.”

As if they had had a long day with one too many frustrating foreigners, they both looked at me shocked. Now, relieved to have an easy situation in front of them, they both smiled. “Wonderful! “

Then it was my turn to be surprised as the one officer gently put his arm on my shoulder and explained how several rules had changed. I have never had a more pleasant experience through customs.

During my 6 hour wait for my flight from Kiev to Simferopol (capital of Crimea), I explored the other terminals and then since the weather was lovely, I pushed my cart around outside as I called friends on my cell phone. Very fun! The calls were like hugs and I felt warmly welcomed home.

Pastor Misha's son Vonya was waiting to pick me up at 10pm and the final hour and a half leg of the trip was filled with hearing about who was up to what these days. Thanks to Pastor Misha's wife, the hot water tank was on and there was a bite to eat waiting for me. After I washed off 2 days travel, I dropped into bed about 1am.

As my first day back, my goals were few but important – get something in the frig and get my internet up and running. It was fun to see the smiles of the people I buy from at the market as I picked up a few essentials. When I stopped in for the internet, they asked if I couldn't come back in an hour as they had no electricity. Hmm...what to do with this bump in the road? I didn't want to go all the way home (across town) and come back again so instead I paid a surprise visit to my friend Tanya and my wait turned into a fun time of catching up.

To go from speaking no Russian for 7 months to needing it 100% overnight, I usually stumble around for awhile until I get back in the groove of things. But the past 2 days I have several brilliant moments when I'm amazed at what comes out of my mouth. “Where did that word come from and how did I know how to say it correctly?” But a big head isn't going to happen any time soon because following my flash of glory I make a mistake as big as Wyoming. Oh well...we'll keep workin' away at this :)

When I called Pastor Misha to confirm my arrival time in Simferpol prior to leaving Oregon, he kinda paused before saying, "Kristina you have a surprise waiting for you here." His tone told me this wasn't going to be good. "Your neighbors in the apartment above you flooded you." I laughed- I mean what else can you do? This was now the fourth time this has happened to me – 3 by the prior owner and the now by the new owners.

It isn't as bad as I had imagined. Yes the bathroom ceiling will have to be redone but the damage is limited to just the bathroom. Another blessing is that Sasha and Luda didn't do it on purpose and it sounds like they will help with the costs of repairs. The situation was simply a very old pipe and when it rusted out they didn't notice because it had been incased in tile. For now we do nothing as the cement needs to completely dry. As the weeks ahead are very busy for me I'll have to deal with this project sometime down the road.

The extra month in the states was a pure blessing and I was truly grateful for the gift. However, it did compress time on this side and it is a bit overwhelming to think about right now. I have nearly 50 boxes of medical and Vacation Bible School supplies waiting for me in the garage. Because of customs, this stuff is all mixed together so one of the first things I need to do is get them separated. The medical stuff needs to then get out to the clinic where it will be further sorted into it's appropriate places. As it is a huge project, the VBS stuff will need to wait a few weeks. Before I can tackle it I need to return from my first trip.

In 6 days, I'll leave and travel about 10 hrs north east to Kharcove. This large city is located near the Russian border and is where the 3rd Annual Christian Conference for medical students will be held. I spoke to many of you about this during my furlough. This is a relatively new door God has opened for me – getting the Gospel message out to those who are students - nursing, pharmaceutical, dental and doctors. Apparently 300 students have already registered and that is the maximum the conference grounds can hold. Praise God! I'll share more about this 3 day conference when I get back.

Since I will be in their 'neck of the woods', I thought I would stop in and visit the other 2 church clinics while I'm there. I really don't know how all of this is going to work out – how I'll get to the conference, to the other clinics which are south of the conference by several hours and home again – guess I'll let you know when I get back.

Cory Lemke arrived last night. He and his family have been missionaries here for 15 years. They completed what God had called them to do and returned to the states about a year ago. Wonderfully Cory has been able to continue communications with the national leadership team of the Training Center. He returned last September and again for 3 weeks now to help with teaching and in mentoring the local pastors here. The Training Center for church planters is fully under local leadership now but God has blessed them with the luxury of Cory's being able to vision cast, brain storm and trouble shoot with them for a while longer. Also, in another week 2 men will arrive from Kansas and they will help with the teaching seminar planned for the church planters. Larry and Kenton have both been here many times and we are all looking forward to having them again.

Well I need to get going. I have several errands to do and then perhaps this afternoon I can get to the garage and start working on those boxes. A nap in there somewhere would be a good idea. (That 10 hour time difference gets ya for awhile.) So I'm off but before I go I want to wish you all a Happy Easter! He has risen! He has risen indeed!

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