

Update 10 –written January 17, 2012

When I first saw her she was a very dirty white scrap of a kitten. A few good baths and a bunch of good meals, have erased her ‘tossed out in the street’ look. Now every time I go to check on Maria’s wound, I peek to see if Snowflake is in her place...and she always is. White fluff looks up at me from her red pillow by the radiator; the very picture of contentment. As my fingers find her favorite scratch spot, I always make some sarcastic comment about her difficult schedule. But, Snowflake ignores my rude comments; she knows I’m just jealous.

There has been a suitcase in my bedroom in the state of being packed or unpacked for the past 5 months. But, I couldn’t put it away just yet. In mid-December, for the first time ever I took the overnight train to Kiev by myself. Not my first choice way of traveling because of safety reasons but that is how it had to be this time. God saw to all the details and my up & back trip for documents was safe, smooth and successful.

I guess a level of paranoia has set in because whenever I return home my inner radar always ‘scans’ the house... or perhaps a more positive way to say this would be...Experience has taught me to look things over when I get home and something looked very strange with the living room carpet when I returned from Kiev. I stepped on it, it splashed and adrenaline kicked in.

Turns out the radiator pipe had leaked again while I was gone and I had my own personal swamp. Thanks to my friend, Lena, the carpet got rolled up and we wrestled it into a huge tub. She and I mopped up the remaining water but a few hours later the pipe starting leaking again.

The guys came as quickly as they could. Despite the fountain of water coming out, both Timothy and Andy just stopped and stared a moment. I’d like to think of it as a respectful pause as they admired the extent of my imagination but, in reality, it was probably more like “What the heck?” I tried to explain the obvious. “Guys, my whole career is based on containing stuff that is leaking out of people.” I mean I am a nurse for goodness sakes, what did they expect? I did what any good nurse would do and bandaged the wound. Despite the remark of ‘Never saw anything like that before.’ I wasn’t put off. My towel, tape, tinfoil, wax paper and bucket collection system was working : ) In the end, there is a bit of furniture damage but thankfully my neighbors below me were not affected. Last week I made the guys chocolate chip cookies to celebrate 23 dry days! I’d like to just say this... I don’t need fiction because my reality is intense enough.

News Flash! – For the first time ever, I found fresh broccoli and Philadelphia Cream Cheese at my market! Shhhh, don't tell the Home Office or they will take Ukraine off the 'difficult countries to live in' list!

24th & 25th: The morning of the 24th, Feodosia woke up to some 3 inches of snow. Of course here, the 24th is a regular work day but for us it was a great way to kick off our American Christmas! My teammates (David & Annette plus David (6) and Lila (3)) had invited me to join them to celebrate. Christmas came with 6 inches of snow, carols, decorating cookies, yummy food and two kids in full forward mode - how do you not have a great time?!

If I had to choose one highlight though, it would be the Christmas play. I was the audience as the Dryden family illustrated (as never before illustrated!) the Christmas story. You need to understand that this was the very first time this had been done and Mary was hesitant to get into role until she understood that she got to wear Mom's pretty long scarf. In the classic bathrobe and locally culturally appropriate Tatar cap, Joseph was a loving and attentive father. But Angel Gabriel/Inn Keeper/ Shepherd in green sunglasses and bandana with his sweet shepherdess wife in a blue bandana totally cracked me up!

The oldest? Annette and I were at a Christmas service when the question was posed before a packed sanctuary, "How many people here asked God to be Lord of their lives before 1992?" [1992 is when Ukraine became an independent nation and her people were given freedom of religion.] Annette and I were the only ones to raise our hands. My heart did a double take. Of all these people, we were the oldest in our Christian walk? A lot of things (behavior) suddenly made sense. But on a personal level it kinda shook me. Me - the oldest? There is responsibility attached to that! I felt a Titus 2 mantle settle on my shoulders. With God's help, I want to be choosing the higher road more consistently.

New Years: The biggest holiday of the year here found me at home and perfectly content. I want to say thank you to everyone who sent me a card! Besides all the email Christmas letters and email Christmas cards, I received some 40 Christmas cards by post and slowly opened them over the course of the holidays. The notes, letters & photos were great and I truly appreciate you taking the time.

The fireworks here, even 7 year olds can buy, would be considered illegal in Oregon. The cats and pigeons must suffer hypertension this time of year but after a few personal cardiac ischemic episodes, you get used to the bangs, cracks and whistles and take it in seasonal stride. The city show woke me up at mid-night and then again at 1am but I just snuggled back to sleep. Boring? Perhaps, but I was ready for a slow quiet day especially since I knew what was coming up.

Christmas- Jan. 7th: The 'American Christmas' snow soon melted and the rest of December and early January was low 40's warm making it safe to travel – a huge plus. While we have been blessed by the Shoe Box ministry here in Crimea for many years, this year, like no year before, God opened doors for Christmas evangelism using the Samaritan's Purse Christmas Shoe Boxes. Between the 6th and the 10th, between one and three events were happening each day (that is just in our area – I later heard similar was going in Yalta & Sevastopol). We've never been able to hold an outreach at the Feodosia Hospital – this year we did. Outreaches also happened in several local pre-schools, elementary schools, for the poor, orphaned & handicapped children and in several villages. There was standing room only at the Church of Grace (Sergi Voloshin) and the Feodosia, Premorski & Cimisolka Baptist Churches – Praise God! If you took part in the Shoe Box ministry, on behalf of 'the other side' I want to say thank you!

Besides the Shoe Boxes, the Feodosia youth had prepared two dramas and did showings in several places; unbeknownst to me, Sudak had completed Narnia 2 (second half of the story) and did several showings and the Cimisolka Church youth (& young at heart) put on their very first Christmas play. I was so proud of all of those folks who went all out to serve and to share.

*"God is not obligated to bless the plans we create. There is only one thing God has promised to bless, and that is his plan." David Platt*

Prayer requests- I have some specific stuff going on right now that I'd to invite you into...some folks and situations to pray for as you are led.

**Maxim:** 25 years old and 3 years ago he broke his neck diving into the sea. Paralyzed now from the shoulders down, he has fair use of his hands but I met him because of his pressure ulcers. It was Wednesday in June during the first Christian Camp for mentally and physically challenged when Max's mom invited me to their room. Typical story - pressure ulcers from the hospital (after his accident) that had never healed. I changed their wound care protocol and by the time camp ended we saw improvement. However, I suspected bone infection in 2 of the wounds and asked them to get some follow up tests done. But there was another problem, even if the wounds went on the heal they'd open right back up again because he didn't have sufficient pressure reduction. Max needed a good cushion for his wheelchair. Before we said good bye I promised to pray and try to get him a cushion.

A few weeks later I sent off a letter and photo to a top line company for pressure relief and explained the situation and basically asked if they could they give us the best they had for free? In the mean time I sent more wound care supplies to them by train and over the months occasional phone calls and emails kept us in touch. ROHO, God bless 'um, responded. They allowed me to choose exactly what cushion I wanted for Max. They sent it to my mom who included it in the next humanitarian aid box shipment. Then in mid- November I got a tearful

phone call from Maria (Max's mom). My suspicion was correct Max did have osteomyelitis and the long brewing infection had imploded inward and gone down his leg. The doctors were doing surgery. The cushion arrived in mid-December. Max was released after a 3 month hospitalization last week.

On the 26th I will take the train and make the 13 hour trip to deliver the cushion to Max. I could just send it as a parcel but more than this cushion, Max needs Jesus. My attempts to introduce him to Christ have been met with an indifferent wall. Max only keeps in contact with me because I have a cushion that he really wants. God provided this \$450 cushion and this might be the last time I see him. I will travel to Harcove with a good friend. We will be staying with Tanya's brother and sister in-law. Her brother, Sergi, is one of the kindest & wisest evangelists I know. He has been praying for Max and will go with me to deliver the cushion on the 27th. Come with us in prayer.

**Yura:** 18 years old and last August he broke his neck diving into the sea. He is paralyzed now from the shoulders down, with only limited use of his hands Yura lives a 10 min. walk from me and when I met him 6 weeks ago, he had 8 pressure ulcers. The look on his face told me he just existed (because there was no hope); his dad is angry (I don't know the reason) and his mom exhausted. All three situations understandable seeing what they have been through in the past 4 months.

Praise God we are down to only 3 wounds now. Yura & his mom have been super good about doing what I ask of them. I already shared with them my desire to have them be at the next Christian Camp for the handicapped in September. Even though they don't understand what this all means, they are very interested in going. Yura, however, doesn't have a wheelchair or a cushion. Even though, according to the local health system, he is entitled to a chair the wait list is 2 years long.

Like Maxim, Yura was making a series of bad choices before the accident – choices that even led to the accident. My God is a Redeemer though and He can and wants to convert this situation into something of value. The guys don't get it yet but God wants to free them from captivity because He has already paid the ransom price. Besides a chair and cushion for Yura, would you pray with me that he and his folks would ask God to be Lord of their lives? Thanks.

**Wound & Ostomy exam:** I was trying to think of where I could find nice quiet uninterruptable place to study? Since that 1 room apartment in Greenland isn't likely to happen anytime soon, I'm guess I'm gonna have to make the best of what I have here. Every 5 years I need to sit for an exam to maintain my wound & ostomy care certification and yes '12 is that year. Ministry doesn't get any quieter then at this time of year but I am struggling. I pray for daily wisdom in priorities and time management. Also, after so much time on the field I am used to practicing 'bush medicine' meaning using what you have. This serves me well here but for the test I need to learn current practices. In addition, my brain needs to switch out of laymen terms in Russian (because that is what I'm teaching in all the time) and into American medical terminology. My time and my brain - that is what I need prayers for!

**My Visa:** To be able to live/stay in Ukraine longer than 90 days foreigners need to have a visa. This stamp is in your passport and is in effect 'official' permission given by the country to be here. Getting this visa has always meant negotiating a series of steps but I am sure other countries have it harder. At least that is what I thought until last September. Ukraine issued a new visa law which suddenly raised the bar and moved the situation into an intensely frustrating obstacle course. September I heard about the law. October and November I was very busy so it wasn't until mid-December that I finally started trying to figure things out. By then many Americans had begun going through the process and the stories I was hearing were painful. I started researching online from every angle I could think of and that's when the first of my own tears of frustration came. This list of requirements would require a horrific amount of my own and other's time and no small amount of money. The situation became a dark formidable mountain that's jagged heights just waited for you to make a mistake.

When the waves of realization of all that had to be done started crashing over me God came close in a morning time with Him and I was reminded to focus not on the mountain but rather on the One who moves mountains; to keep my eyes off the problem but rather on the problem solver. A different morning, after I had hit another wall, I felt reprimanded by 'If I AM for you, who can be against you?' I can't say that it's all been peachy since, but I keep coming back to this truth, find great comfort in it and am able to continue forward. I'll spare you the step by step of the past month – in short a lot has been done but I have very little in hand. This project will continue to absorb a significant amount of time for the next several months. But, I am not alone. When I presented the situation to the key people who needed to know, their response spoke volumes. God has surrounded me with people who think I am worth fighting for. I can't all the way describe how deeply that touches me.

June

*"What I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do."*

God - Isaiah 46: 9-11