

## 2012 APRIL – NEWSLETTER FROM CRIMEA-UKRAINE

Carl & Phyllis Gearheart

Dear Family and Friends,

One of the homeless men that has been staying with us for the last few months is a rough, old Tatar. Eskander claims to be a Muslim, but he has been very respectful to our preaching and singing. After an operation on his back he asked permission to stay with us and recuperate. His recuperation has been long and slow.

Then about the beginning of April Eskander began to tell me one evening about how he unexpectedly met his son whom he had not seen or communicated with for nearly 15 years. His son lives in Simferopol, and he offered his father a place to live in his own home. Eskander will be able to get money from the government because of his disability, as soon as he has filed all of the necessary papers, so he does not expect to be a burden to his son's family. He was very happy to tell me this good news, and he expressed his deeply sincere gratitude for all that we had done to help in his time of need. We certainly hope that things will work out well for him in the future.

We had an unexpected visit from a young girl, Nastia, with whom we were acquainted through our former ministry in Vnukovo. I wish we could say that all was well, but as it turned out, Nastia was very angry and frustrated with a situation in her home. She was actually running away from home, but without a plan or an idea as to where she wanted to go. She said that she was afraid of her father, insisting that he was crazy.

Phyllis called me and also Julie when this girl came to visit us. Julie had the phone number of her parents. She quickly established communication with the parents, so that there would not be needless worry. Meanwhile the girl was trying to call her friends from our apartment. However, her friends were busy and could not help her at least until evening. Nastia became aware that we were in communication with her parents, and she decided not to stay with us. She called her older sister in Chernomorsk, and her sister invited her to come and stay for awhile. Nastia at last began to calm down.

I took Nastia to the bus station in Yevpatoria and bought her a ticket to Chernomorsk. We had an hour and a half to wait before her bus departed, so I suggested that we walk down to the supermarket a few blocks away. I treated her to some ice cream, but she was still not very talkative. She had to know that I was mainly interested in making sure that she really did get on the bus.

We returned to the bus station after awhile, and I stayed with her until I saw her get on the bus. She waited until the last possible second before getting on the bus. It is impossible to know what she thought of me and Phyllis and Julie taking control of her situation, but we hope that she will come to the conclusion that we love her, and we were only trying to be as helpful as possible. We hope that she will understand that we could not actually take her side against her parents.

Although it was an unpleasant situation for us to deal with, one thing about it was a cause for rejoicing. The fact that Nastia decided to come to us, when she did not know where else to go, says that she felt like she could trust us to help her. She knew that we would not preach sermons or berate her for her behavior. She knew that we would not be too busy to listen to her problems and help her to find wisdom to do what was best for her. Above all, she knew that we would help her to calm down and find peace in her situation. All the children in Vnukovo, with whom we have been friends all these years, have learned to depend upon us to bring peace, joy and love into any trying situation.

Phyllis and I had to cross the border of Ukraine again for registration purposes. We debated for awhile as to how we could do this best and not neglect any of our present

duties. Finally we decided to make the trip separately, so that one of us would be home, while the other was away from home. I traveled to Poland first, and the following week Phyllis made the trip.

Since I was staying with my old friend, Igor Basai, he got me invitations to preach twice on Sunday, April 22, once in Zamosc and once in Bielgoraj. There was a great presence of the Lord in that service in Zamosc. It was thrilling to watch children sitting on the front row, singing and worshipping along with the adults. It brought back memories of my childhood. The pastor also had three young people assisting him with music. They played and sang well together. After the service Igor and I were invited to dinner with some missionaries from England. At the dinner was also a young Ukrainian family; both the man and his wife spoke very good English. I had a very nice time of fellowship with these new friends.

The congregation in Bielgoraj is a very new one, which has appeared seemingly out of nowhere. Now there are 20 or thirty people. They have a very short list of songs, while they are working to learn more. Yes, they are hoping in time to find a pastor. For now they are getting some moral support from the church in Zamosc. Some of them attend both the morning service in Zamosc and the afternoon service in Bielgoraj. Igor was my interpreter for this service, and I shared several testimonies with them of how Jesus had revealed himself to me.

Meanwhile, Phyllis had to conduct services and prepare food for our homeless men. Phyllis told me that things went okay, but the men were asking about when I would come home. When I did come home, it was my turn to do everything by myself. Well, I could say that everything was okay, but I like it much better when my wife is there to help me.

I had an interesting meeting with the pastor of the Living Water Pentecostal Church. Without repeating the conversation exactly, I want to share a striking observation or two. Apparently, other pastors do not understand our ministry to the homeless men of Yevpatoria. In this culture it is expected that men in this condition should be directed to the nearest rehabilitation center. Since we work with people like this, other churches prefer to consider us more as a rehabilitation center than a church. Then they look at what we are doing and shake their heads, since it is obvious that we are doing it all wrong.

As the Pentecostal pastor shared his observations, viewpoints and conclusions with me, I knew that he was seeing what the typical Ukrainian believer was seeing, not a church, but a misguided attempt at running a rehabilitation center. I had to explain very carefully and clearly that we have no interest in rehabilitation. While I do not oppose others doing it, I certainly am not qualified for this kind of work. This is therefore not what we are trying to do. What we are trying to do is to love people as they are and receive them on the level of fellowship that they are capable of. We are trying to teach them to live in peace and harmony with each other. We share not only the Word of God with these men, but our lifestyles as well.

We have hopes that this misunderstanding will one day be cleared up, and other churches will learn from our example the value of developing and preserving relationships in order to keep unity in the churches and maintain stability in the hearts and lives of believers. With your prayers and support we will eventually achieve this goal.

In Christ,  
Carl & Phyllis & Julie & Anne

Abundant Grace Ministry, Inc. – 903-894-9356  
313 S Todd St – Bullard TX 75757  
[Gmissions@juno.com](mailto:Gmissions@juno.com) – or – [sokrov@yahoo.com](mailto:sokrov@yahoo.com)  
[www.abundantgraceministryinc.com](http://www.abundantgraceministryinc.com)