

Jan. 11, 2010

What are some of the things we do in the winter here in Ukraine? Well....



...come along with us as we set up the tables, lay out the books and prepare to greet the villagers as December 25 dawns in Derezhne, Ukraine. The time is 8:30 a.m.

That's Lena and her mother Julia (nearest the tree) welcoming the first visitors. Many are returning books they've had on loan since our last visit. They ask, "Where have you been? We've been waiting for you!" (By the way Christmas day according to the Orthodox calendar is celebrated on January 7th.)



At 10:15 a.m. we start loading the books back into the van. Then we drive about 15 km through the woods until we reach the town of Tsuman.

10:40 a.m. Arriving in Tsuman we see several people already waiting with books in hand. (Lena had called them the night before to let them know when we'd be there.)

Before we can even get all of the books out on the tables people are reaching for them. Lena quickly gets out their library cards and asks, "Name? Books returned? Books checking out? Oh, I'm sorry, but you can't take 5 books at once...only two books per person please or we won't have enough for everyone." "Please", the young woman exclaims, "the other three are for my neighbors".



10:45 a.m. Our tables are surrounded by people. Some books that have been brought back don't even get a chance to be placed on the table before another person takes it out of the hands of those returning it!

A young man walks up who looks familiar to me. It's Tolig! He's a 15 year old orphan I know from one of the orphanages in Klevan. He's spending the holidays with his grandmother in Tsuman. He asks what we are doing with all of these books and when will we visit the orphanage again. We talk openly about Jesus Christ, Christmas, and what it means to live for Him. He checks out two books and we send him on his way with a free 2010 Christian calendar. He waves a cheerful goodbye reminding me to "be sure and visit us in Klevan soon".

11:30 a.m. We've pretty much run out of books! We pack up our tables and begin the drive back to Rivne rejoicing in how God is connecting us with so many through this ministry. Thank you for praying!



On St. Andrews day we drove to Tuchen to once again visit a home for the elderly. Julie and Sveta sang some songs and then I shared about the person and passion of Andrew, Christ's disciple. "Surely, he must have believed that Jesus was The Christ to have traveled as much as he did and to have died for his faith." Legend has it that the Apostle Andrew came as far as Kyiv on his travels to spread the news of Jesus Christ.

Then we gave a small but powerful little gift to the residents. That's Galya holding and listening to it. It is known as a "Proclaimer". This very handy audio player contains the complete New Testament in Ukrainian. Since most of those living in this home for the elderly have difficulty reading, this machine is a real blessing. Our prayer is that these ladies (and men standing near but not in the picture) will daily listen to the Word and discover Christ's love for them.



Now, this is my lovely wife. Her name is Brenda. Of course you know her. But did you know that she is now in Wenatchee, Washington? As most of you know, Brenda's been suffering for quite some time from constant back, neck, and shoulder pain. However, this past fall the pain grew worse, almost to the point of being unbearable. She sought medical treatment here but it was of no avail. So, in early December Brenda flew back to the U.S. to have an MRI, new x-rays, and a consultation with her doctor. Test results indicate that two places on her spine are causing problems. On January 13 she has a long-awaited appointment with a neuro-surgeon. After that meeting we will know more regarding what will be done. We truly appreciate your prayers for her during this time. It is likely that she may need an operation. In that event I would be flying back to be with her during the operation and her recovery.

As we begin this New Year we are remember the words of hymn writer Frances Ridley Havergal, "As thy days thy strength shall be, this should be enough for thee. He who knows thy frame will spare burdens more than though canst bear."

"The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you: The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace." Numbers 6:24-26
In Jesus name,

Greg and Brenda