

Dear friends,

December 2018

As you read this letter, we are in the season of Advent, as you are.... A time of expectant waiting and anticipation of the celebration of Jesus's birth. Our family uses the 'Jesse tree' as a means of focusing our hearts – taking moments each day to reflect on God's plan of Salvation from before the foundation of the world, through the major stories of the Old Testament, coming to Jesus' birth. His story is our story of Hope and Redemption.



“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. I am the good Shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for His sheep.” John 10:10,11

*\*Picture of Abigail during a heavy snow this past week*



**Ukraine Update:** Tensions between Ukraine and Russia continue to build, even though no further shots have been fired in the sea of Azov standoff. While we have martial law in some regions, there is peace in Kyiv and most of the country, excluding, of course, the war zone in eastern Ukraine. Sunday, December 15th was a historic day for Ukraine, as the Ukrainian Orthodox Church officially gained their independence after 300+ years under the rule of the Moscow Patriarch. This has further upset our “neighbor” who this past week accused Ukrainian Orthodox leaders of religious persecution. This split results in Moscow losing control of Orthodox churches and strategic, historical religious sites. Ukraine is perpetually in a state of waiting, not wanting to be the aggressor, and now we wait again for the next response.

**Kyiv Theological Seminary Update:** Thank you for praying for Kyiv Theological Seminary (KTS). The last few weeks we've been discouraged by the decisions of upper leadership. There are no questions related to doctrinal issues, and we praise God for their solid stand on truth and God's Word. But, these decisions relate to vision, leadership and an unhealthy dependence on western funding; resulting in questions among the faculty and an increased work load for the Program Directors. While conversations and meetings continue to unfold, we know that we have a great body of students to serve and remain faithful to the task before us – building the Church through discipleship, mentoring and teaching of students, so that they can be equipped to do the work of the Lord in their villages and cities around Ukraine and beyond, as God calls and uses the country of Ukraine to reach the world.

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**The Good Stuff:** This fall Andy has taken two trips to visit KTS Pastoral Leadership students. Visiting together with these men, meeting their families and local church leadership is a joy and a highlight. The latest trip was to Shostka, just outside of Sumy on the northeastern edge of Ukraine. There we have four students in various years of study. One of those students is Pavel and his wife Zhanna who are Ukrainian immigrants to the US, but a few years ago felt God's call to return to Ukraine. Pavel is a 2<sup>nd</sup> year student working at revitalizing the dying church in his home town of Shostka.



- *Pavel and Zhanna;*
- *Visiting with all four students in Shostka*



This fall Andy also taught Church History 1 and an Intro to Homiletics course. The Homiletics class is a favorite to teach. Coming from all around Ukraine these students are regularly preaching and teaching in their churches, but with minimal training and little exposure to expositional sermons. The goal of the course is to develop the skills to prepare and present expositional messages. The ideas were challenging and new to them - but they finished the class well and were looking forward to using the new preaching skills in their home churches. Solid Biblical preaching is important not only for the building of the local church, but for outward growth as Ukraine moves forward to become a missional sending country.

Next update, we'll tell you about 4<sup>th</sup> year student Oleg who recently returned from Uganda, training pastors in Africa. Thank you for investing in men like Pavel and Oleg as they use the skills they've been entrusted with, to further the church and His kingdom.

Christmas

**Christmas Outreach:** This Thursday, the 20<sup>th</sup>, Holly will be hosting a Christmas outreach in our apartment, where ladies from our church are inviting non-believing relatives and friends. She will be giving a baking demonstration (cinnamon quick bread) and sharing a devotion on Jesus being the "Bread of Life". Pray that the devotional won't simply be words, but words used of God and powerfully filled by the Holy Spirit to impact these women.

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## Upcoming Ministry & Prayer Needs:

1. Pray for Kyiv Theological Seminary Leadership that they will exercise wisdom, seek a unified vision and God's will in all things, bringing Glory to Him.
2. Pray for Pavel and Zhanna as they minister in Shostka.
3. Pray for Holly as she prepares for the Christmas outreach on December 20<sup>th</sup>.
4. Abigail has been accepted to several colleges in the US for Fall 2019. Now she is in the process of applying for various scholarships. Ask the Lord to show her which school and that she would receive good scholarships, enabling her to attend.
5. Pray for Abigail as she is already starting the grieving process of leaving Ukraine, her home since she was four months old. Ask God to give us wisdom as we guide her through this transition process.
6. Ask the Lord to grow Andrew and Noah in depth of character and love for His Word, as well as diligence and self-discipline in their school studies.
7. Pray for Andy as he administrates a Church Ministries class Jan. 28<sup>th</sup> – Feb 1<sup>st</sup>, and then teaches Church History 2 on February 4-8<sup>th</sup>. Pray for daily interaction with students, who are in session each week of the semester.
8. Pray for our physical rest and refreshment; we realize how tired we are.

## Snapshots of life:



- Fourth year students over for dinner during their session.
- Abigail and Andrew attended their school's winter formal dinner.
- Getting the turkey breasts ready for Thanksgiving – almost 15 lbs. worth of meat. Purchased “fresh” right in our local outdoor market, can you imagine the size of that bird?

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