

Like cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country...

Proverbs 25:25



While traveling last month, we got word of the birth of our third and fourth grandbabies: Raven and Jasper Baker... we got to talk to them on Skype from our apartment in Ukraine (and introduce them to a dozen or so of their family in the Lord).

Congratulations to Zeke and Bekah (and big brother Bastian)!

Also in the forefront of our minds is the imminent departure of our youngest daughter Marina for studies at Eastern Mennonite University. It's so important to mark these important moments of transition in family well, and to give thanks to God for all He has done, and all that He promises to do as we go forward in His power.



Marina and Lena, her former "nanny" who led her to faith at age 10 and invested years helping her grow in the Lord.

We realized that this might be the last ministry trip the three of us make together – and were praying that God would use it greatly in our lives. He certainly did!

At the beginning of our ReachGlobal Family Conference in Slovenia we were challenged to consider what it means to be part of a "Gospel movement," the commitment to multiplication and transformation. Our mission staff was challenged by the new president of the EFCA, "If you were removed from the place you serve *today*, what would be left?"

We had just arrived from a week in Ukraine, where we saw the answer to that question in flesh and blood and real community. As you may recall, we abruptly departed from our settled lives in Kyiv almost 7 years ago... and returned last month to witness a generation of disciples investing their lives into others – in the midst of life at its "best and worst." We were greatly encouraged to see the process of discipleship – ["more followers of Jesus looking more like Jesus"](#) – being lived out through generations.

We spent time with our dear friend Masha, one of the first students we met in Ukraine, a resident of our apartment in Kyiv. She, along with many who grew up during the time of Chernobyl, has been battling thyroid cancer. She told of spending two weeks in isolation during radiation therapy, her only companion being the study Bible we had given her 15 years ago. She related how suffering (and, especially experiencing God's presence in the midst of it) brings life to "dead receptors" of his love and presence. How it reveals even more clearly our own sinfulness and God's goodness. She also shared how a childhood friend (part of our student ministry in the 90s) had, after years of wandering, come to faith in Jesus and was asking Masha how to reach out to her family. And helping Masha in her own time of need.

We are so tied up in our own comfort, protecting it, pursuing it, that it can become an idol. And it is the attachment to that idol that deadens these "receptors" within us." Masha M.

We got together with our dear friends Andrei and Lena, who have resided in a room of an infectious disease research clinic for over six months. We spent hours upon hours being encouraged by these amazing saints (who call us "Poppotchka and Mommotchka" still) and their unbridled joy in their service of the Lord. From their hospital bed they are influencing and challenging scores of people: sharing the good news and challenging people to come to grips with its demands and implications, building disciples, saving lives and defending the dignity of those marginalized by society.



Liz with Andrei and Lena at their "home" in the clinic. They are very thankful to those of you who have contributed to the collection of pillboxes. They are being used to touch hearts and save lives.

Andrei and Lena have begun to meet regularly with a group of other believers – from five different ‘denominations’ – to pray for Ukraine. And to spread the Gospel among patients. For a solid month, he couldn’t stand, go to the toilet, sleep for more than an hour. But God was always near. The less he could do on his own, the more he felt God nurturing him with his word and presence. When Andrey has the strength, he reads Scripture aloud. And prays for us and our family. We were blessed as his unbroken spirit spoke through a broken body insights into our own struggles – things we wrestle with here at The Mill Pond – which could only have come from our loving Father. We prayed at length together, breathing deeply of the Spirit that unites, heals and saves.



Here is the preferred setting for doing practical theology in Ukraine: around the table with lots of tea.

“There are spirits of all kinds all around us. And all of them need to be fed... except for the Holy Spirit of God – He feeds YOU.”
Andrey B.



“Worship with only a homogenous group is not “worship in spirit and in truth.” God is awakening his church through worship, through the most unexpected, “unneeded” people.” - Igor S.

We also spent time with the Stakhovskiy family, (pictured on the right with Marina) with whom we labored in the vineyard a decade ago.

[\(Here’s an article about them and our church plant from Christianity Today from back in 2008.\)](#)

Our friend Igor told us of ministries of prayer and spiritual revival taking place in the village of Grigorivka, where we left our “khata” in tears almost seven years ago, crushed to think we might never return, and how our dreams to see God glorified there seemed to be a dead end. “You guys are basically pioneers. You opened up the territory for us – without you we never could have even begun on the road that God now has us on.” And what a road they are on. Igor shared of mission trips to Azerbaijan and Armenia where he has gone, guitar in hand, “singing the Word,” and seeing God open hearts and families



Some things never change... A typical evening in our Kyiv apartment. How wonderful to see these young Ukrainian leaders raising up the next generation in this critical time!

We heard stories of how, in their home town of Mariupol, God has done – and continues to do – amazing things. Multiple occasions where the answers to today’s prayers are literally seen in the headlines of tomorrow’s newspapers. (We’ll be sharing more about this on our [blog](#) soon!)

Igor is going forth, leading others with him, into the mission field, into spiritual battle, “armed” solely with the “weapons” of prayer, praise and worship. He does so because it is the only way he knows to live out of the reality of total dependence on God.

Only the Holy Spirit can save our people from the spirits of death and destruction which have attacked Ukraine. Andrey B.



The pedestal in Kyiv’s central square where the statue of Lenin once stood. What will take the place of the idols of the past in the hearts of the next generation?

As we gathered with almost 100 families devoted to multiplying transformational churches in Europe, we were blessed to worship together with the team from [Grace EFC](#), who also took part. What joy to watch God use their gifts to stir up freedom and empowerment in the Spirit, and to see their horizons expand as they interacted with many people building the Kingdom in a great diversity of settings. Jim, together with the Catalyst Team, was gratified to see God open doors for service: City Teams are responding with a fresh vision to reach out to the **Roma** around them. Opportunities are arising for support networks for families affected by **disabilities** in Ukraine to multiply to other places. We feel uniquely positioned to serve as leaders as God breathes new life into the Bride, breaking chains and knocking down walls. We left the conference with hearts and minds abuzz, having breathed deeply not only the Adriatic Sea air, but the Spirit of liberating power.



Tom, Oksana, and Jim: The SERVEurope Catalyst Team



How great to be together with so many people from our neck of the woods in Central Virginia, coming together to pray and work for the spread of God's glory in Europe!

We ask for your prayer and support as we weigh a unique opportunity. Jim has been invited to participate in a historic gathering being convened by Chinese mission leaders in Europe next month. You may recall his travels across Romania last fall with representatives of the Chinese church, visiting Roma villages and observing gospel initiatives. In response, a worldwide call has gone out to Chinese churches. There are 10-12 million Roma living at the margins of Europe, most without access to the Bible in their own language. Missionaries called from China will need leaders with insight and expertise in evangelism, church planting, and social ministry, particularly relating to the unique challenges posed by life-on-life ministry among the Roma. They know they can't do it alone, so we've been asked to help. We have dreamed of seeing the global Church awakened and reaching out to the margins, of seeing the Church in Europe made whole by breaking down barriers.

We can't do this alone either. Please consider a special gift at this time to enable us to say "Yes," to this opportunity!



The worship team from Grace EFC, being a blessing at our Europe Staff Conference last month.



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Here's a [link to a film](#) (in English), made for the Chinese church, documenting this unique movement of God, connecting his people in China (where the church has faced persecution for decades) with the most despised people group in Europe. Please check it out... we think you will be amazed!

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By His grace,

Jim and Liz Baker