



*"...serve one another in love." Galatians 5:13*

## **December 2005 Newsletter**

Hello family and friends,

I wish for each of you a happy holiday and a blessed Christmas season. I would like to share with you my perception of Christmas as I spend the second half of my life here in Ukraine. Every day is Christmas to me. I'm not speaking of the seasonal joy that fills the heart, and then goes away. I speak of the living Christmas. God became man and lived among us. In Matthew 25:35-40, Jesus said, "...to the extent that you did it (fed Me, clothed Me, etc.) to one of these brothers of Mine, *even the least of them*, you did it to Me." Christmas is the reason that I am here. He created me, He called me to Ukraine, and He provides for me and His little children. He lives.

Here are some examples of how Christmas lives throughout my year. My children are *the least of them*. We feed them. Through the Emmaus food program we feed the children. Here is how Christmas has touched the lives of two of these children. Karina, whom you know, has been in the hospital and rehabilitation center for more than a year. In spite of her paralysis, the time since her accident has been the best time of her life. Ira, whose sister and brothers were sent to an orphanage, was left with her alcoholic parents to fend for herself. Her godfather rescued her and now gives her a new home.

In the Free Clinic, Christmas lives for the parents of the children whom we serve. Vova's mother heard him speak his first word at age ten. Vika's parents and grandmother are overjoyed that Vika is walking more independently. Recently, Ludmila, the director of House of Hearts, recognized MUCH at her annual Day of Celebration for the Disabled. Five years ago, she created this non-profit for children with disabilities. The Free Clinic has been her answer to prayer. Every time that she sees me, this beautiful smile fills her face. She said that she prays for my health every morning and night. Christmas visits her throughout the year.

At the orphanage in Marganets, Christmas lives in many ways. Children who once only knew hand-me-downs and leftovers have been receiving new clothes, shoes, and winter items. Last year they received new beds. This year they are receiving new mattresses pillows and bedding. Last year at this time, Yana was found by her father. After 16 years of being an orphan, she now has a family. Nastya, the first child to express thanks to me, was adopted by her aunt and uncle. This special child now belongs somewhere. She is a part of a family.

These are just some of the examples of Christmas in my life here in Ukraine. From where does the love in my heart come? Why have so many people reached out to my children with such deep compassion? How did it happen that everything has fallen into place so effortlessly since my arrival in Ukraine? I certainly had no master plan when I came. Why do I find such peace living in this country whose language I don't speak? My answer to all of these questions is – Christmas lives.

My prayer is that each of you might experience Christmas throughout the year, as I do.

Blessings of love and healing,  
*Mark*