

Ukraine Revisited by Ann Korownyk

Twenty-three years have past since the last time I visited the land of my ancestors, Ukraine.

It did not occur to me that I would one day return and be involved in ministry with my daughter Ruth and my granddaughter. The Lord granted me this marvelous opportunity last June through HART, to spend 33 days with some of the most gifted people and committed Christian women I have ever met.

It was a memorable, life changing experience! What a thrill to see that the older women not only kept their faith through the dreadful communist era, but they also passed it on to the younger generation.

The first week I attended a retreat for leaders of Women's ministries from 23 provinces of Ukraine. The week was filled with Bible study, prayer, crafts and workshops in preparation for the upcoming summer season of children and women's camps.

"The genesis of the Christian Women's camp movement in Ukraine was HART"

What a challenge! My Ukrainian was put to the test, but it was amazing how God provided the necessary words. "The will of God will not take you where His sustaining grace cannot keep you."

The second stage of my journey began with a 26 hour train ride across the country to the city of Sedovo, on the Asov Sea in South Eastern Ukraine.

Approximately 100 women (ages 18-66) gathered for their first camp in that province. There definitely was an air of apprehension and anticipation as they registered and were designated into groups.

However, during the week the apprehension turned into joy and fellowship. The transformation was amazing! We prayed (6:00 am), did calisthenics, crafts, sang, laughed,

shared testimonies and enjoyed wonderful fellowship.

The week ended far too quickly. One lady came to the Lord, as these camps always include the unsaved. The depth of their commitment, their every day faith and their prayer life is very real.

The next camp was in Kirovograd (central Ukraine), another first for that province. Again, 100 women and some of their children gathered with similar anticipation and apprehension. The children also shared in daily activities and heard the gospel presented.

Once again, the apprehension turned into joy as the week progressed and when it was time to leave there was sadness and tears.

At both of these retreats, my primary responsibilities included leading Bible studies and the craft session as well as visit with as many of the women as time allowed.

Many of them shared their daily struggles and also expressed their appreciation to HART for sponsoring such an event. [The genesis of the Christian Women's camp movement in Ukraine was HART].

"I have never been to such an event in all my life and may never have the opportunity again. Please thank the people in Canada and USA for us." - a sweet lady probably in her early sixties.

"You have returned my childhood, as I never had the opportunity to do such things when I was a child." - women's leader commenting on the craft sessions.

"Praise be to God and thanks to all of you who organized and funded such a retreat for the first time in our province, all the women are pleased; this retreat has brought them much joy. We ask you to please come again next year." -

Senior Pastor, State of Kirovograd.

"We would love to have such a women's retreat in our province, but we do not have a sponsor" - women's leader from neighboring state.

Another opportunity God gave me was to spend several days with a ministry in the city of Lviv, called New Life. It was truly a highlight of the trip.

This is a ministry that reaches out to orphans, the homeless, recovering addicts, those released from prison etc, lives recycled from "the garbage heap



Ann (right) shown here with several ladies from the New Life Church in Lviv, Ukraine

of the world" gloriously transformed to a new life in Christ. God bless Pastor Misha Kinyo and his wife Halya as they provide leadership for this outstanding and fruitful ministry.

To say that my thirty-three days in Ukraine was an emotional roller coaster would be a gross understatement... joy, fear, sadness, insecurity, humility; but ultimately blessed to the core of my being.

[Ann is from Edmonton, Alberta, and is planning to again teach and train Ukrainian women at their summer camps this year]