

# News From GHT



By Nita Hanson

## STEPPING OUT IN FAITH

In the midst of our worst year financially, we found ourselves running out of wheelchairs. Not only did we not have enough wheelchairs to meet the needs of our outlying cities, we didn't have enough for the Bila Tserkva Region. Since the wheelchair ministry is the largest outreach for God's Hidden Treasures, this was truly a tragedy in the making.

As I prayed and asked God what to do, I knew that we had to step out in faith and buy some wheelchairs. All other sources had either dried up or would take too much time to get to us. Again I prayed and asked for the Lord's direction. The next day I got on the Internet and typed in "wheelchairs made in China". A request for information popped up and I filled it out, not really knowing where this was going, but trusting in the Lord's desire to guide me.

A week or so later I was contacted by a company in China who had seen our information. While I was looking at their site, I saw some wheelchairs that looked like ones we had received before from The Wheelchair Foundation and in conjunction with the Rotary Club. As I found out later this company supplies wheelchairs all over Europe, including Russia (over 30,000 to just one organization).

After much communication back and forth, we were told that we could order 320 wheelchairs, including the shipping to Ukraine and delivery to Bila Tserkva, for approximately \$28,000. And we were able to give a lot of input into the types of wheels we wanted which solved a huge problem we had had in the past with wheels. In faith that God would provide, I signed the contract, placing the order for the 320 wheelchairs.



As I asked for prayer and guidance from many of you, we were blessed with a donation that paid for most of the wheelchairs. The remainder of the funds came in from several unexpected places – but that is another story! What I do know is that **God is always faithful when we step out in faith to do what He has told us to do!**

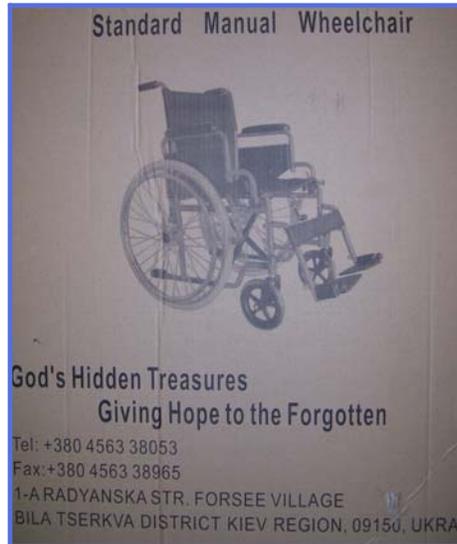
In February we received the wheelchairs, just two short months after placing the order! Our cupboard (our wheelchair inventory) never went empty. We had enough to last us until the new ones arrived.



The Truck Arrives



Unloading the wheelchairs



The Boxes from China



Wheelchair Delivered



Wheelchair Assembled

## In Memoriam

I first met Vicka Polienko when she was a little girl about nine years old. From the beginning she touched my heart with her beautiful smile and positive attitude toward life in spite of her many problems.

She attended all of our camps for the disabled children, and won the hearts of everyone she encountered. She also entered the university which was a huge step of courage given her disabilities.



It is with deep sadness that we announce that Vicka went home to the Lord on March 25<sup>th</sup>. She will be missed greatly by all of us whose lives she touched. Please pray for the Lord to comfort her family.

Psalm 116:15 Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His faithful servants. (NIV)

**Gary Payton**, mission coworker of Presbyterian World Mission, serving as the Regional Liaison for Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Armenia, recently traveled to Bila Tserkva to experience firsthand the ministry of God’s Hidden Treasures.



Below is his report:

Mission in Partnership: Armenia and Ukraine, Post 6, Gary Payton, 17 March 2011

Our Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has undergone a “seismic shift” in the practice of mission in recent decades. Gone are the days of international mission solely organized and undertaken by national church offices. The enthusiasm of Presbyterians at all levels of the church combined with the relative ease of travel and advances in communications have enabled congregations, presbyteries, synods to be “mission sending agencies” themselves.

When Nita Hanson of Thousand Oaks, California saw the often desperate circumstance of orphans, disabled, and invalid persons in Ukraine in the 1990s she acted. In 1997, Nita established God’s Hidden Treasures in response to her sense of call from the Lord. The year 2001 saw Santa Barbara Presbytery “validate” the ministry and across the years the outreach from a little village near Bila Tserkva has grown and grown.

For two days I have enjoyed the Christian hospitality of the staff of God’s Hidden Treasures and been invited to participate in two of the many ministries.

First impressions mean a lot, so can you imagine a small warehouse recently filled with 300 new wheelchairs adding to the older, repaired wheelchairs ready for sharing? And, adjacent is a small machine shop which can tailor all manner of mobility aids for children, youth, or adults.

Valentina, Special Projects Manager, (as a guest I am a “special project”!), introduced me to the staff. Each person explained in detail their role within GHT: Bible study leader, outreach, social work, bookkeeping, equipment assembly, logistics coordination, and much more.

“God has called me,” writes Gary, “to use the knowledge developed for war during the first half of my life for the ends of peace and reconciliation during the second half of my life. It is an exciting and a humbling responsibility.”

Understanding intellectually how mission is organized is one thing; being asked to participate in sharing God's love is another. Mid-afternoon, Ira, Ruslan, Tanya, Vadim, and I departed in a van loaded with wheelchairs and walkers for three persons. Each circumstance had been carefully reviewed and the team was well prepared, well rehearsed for compassionately delivering, sizing, and instructing the use of the chair or walker.

Three stops, three families in need: a senior lady bedfast from a recent stroke and her caring daughter, a senior lady with Alzheimer's lovingly cared for by her life long husband, a young woman with encephalitis nurtured by her pensioner mother.

Three different life circumstances in central Ukraine with three things in common: tears at receiving a mobility aid, smiles and emotion-filled thank yous, and prayer. As a guest, I was invited to offer our prayer to the Lord for healing, health, thanks as we concluded the delivery.

This morning, I traveled with Luba as she engaged in the critical ministry of follow up. What some may describe as "social work" has, in fact, the opportunity to share the Good News, to discuss faith, and to pray together. This afternoon, I traveled with Dr. Tamara as she visited stroke victims to check vital signs and lead them through chair-based exercise routines to improve circulation. As always with GHT, our time together ended with prayer.

In addition to the wheelchair and stroke rehabilitation ministries I participated in, God's Hidden Treasures also reaches out with orphanage, mobile clinic, summer camp and picnic gatherings, and many more ministries.

As this day comes to an end, I am deeply humbled by my time near Bila Tserkva. I pray the Lord will continue to bless the loving outreach of all involved with God's Hidden Treasure and all those touched by that care.

May the Peace of Christ be with you,

**Gary**

For 24 years preceding his work with the PC(USA) Gary was an officer in the United States Air Force and was stationed in Turkey, Germany, England and a variety of locations in the United States.

Gary was coordinator of the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program from 1996 to 1999 and was appointed as a mission co-worker in the year 2000. As regional liaison for Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Poland, Gary serves as a "bridge" between partner churches and other mission co-workers in the region and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Gary is married to the Rev. Dr. Nancy Copeland-Payton and they have three sons, Ian, Adam and Graham. They reside in Sandpoint, Idaho, where Nancy is a spiritual director, retreat leader and writer.

Kostyah (Konstantin) is the pastor of the First Christian Church in Bila Tserkva. He was part of the youth group that a missionary named Betty Dollar taught during her time in Ukraine. He is now head of the church that was begun because of Betty's faithfulness. Kostyah is a very special man with a real heart for the disabled people in Ukraine. He teaches many of our young disabled people in his church. Kostyah has faithfully volunteered more than a week of his time these last four years playing Father Frost – the Ukrainian version of Santa Claus.



## Father Frost

**I don't look like Father Frost -- at all!** So when I was asked in December 2006 by Liliya Oleksiivna (God's Hidden Treasures' Office Manager) if there were men in our congregation who could play Father Frost and visit the disabled people in Bila Tserkva, the first thing I thought was – **not me!** But as the time got closer to New Years I realized that there was no one but me who could take a week off for this program.

I can't say I dreaded it, but I was worried. I'd never done this before, I didn't know what to say and do and, again, I didn't look like Father Frost is supposed to look! Father Frost is a character from the ancient Russian legends. Father Frost usually comes on New Year's Eve and brings gifts to children. He's usually accompanied by his granddaughter, Snigurochka, (Snow Girl) and his transportation is a sleigh.



Now, the thing was that we were to visit not only the kids, but mostly older people, and all of them had some kind of disability. The very first day of visits I realized everything was much different than what I expected. I saw that whether I look like Father Frost didn't really matter. What mattered is what we do. It was heartbreaking to see tears on the faces of the older people. Most confessed that it was the first time in their lives that they had Father Frost visit them at home! And – to my surprise – all of them remembered New Year's and Christmas songs that they learned in their childhood.

Of course, these visits are not merely about entertainment. Some of these people have no one to even visit them on a regular basis. Some get out of their apartments only once a year - to attend the annual picnic hosted by God's Hidden Treasures, while some are well taken care of by their relatives. Some of them complain about their bad luck, and some are optimistic about everything in their life.

In December 2010 we visited a lady who sang several Christian hymns, so besides being encouragers we were encouraged! In many homes we are invited to have tea or coffee. But the best reward is always a smile given by someone who rarely smiles, and a chance to wish God's blessings to someone who desperately needs them.

It was then, in December 2006, that I decided I want to do it in the future, and I've never missed a year. It is not only an opportunity to serve, but it's a great blessing from God. I wish I could always serve these people as much as the staff of God's Hidden Treasures does. Vadim (GHT's driver) and Tanya have been my companions all these years, and I greatly appreciate what they do. I hope to be able to be Father Frost in the years to come.

May our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you in your efforts to do His will!

*Father Frost (Kostyuh)*





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### Opportunities for Involvement

I would like to:

- Join the prayer team. Put me on the e-mail list to receive prayer requests.
- Make a monthly contribution.
- Make a special donation.
- Invite Nita to speak in Jan/Feb 2012.
- Receive my News From G.H.T. by e-mail
- Sponsor a Family

Please mail to:  
GHT  
P.O. Box 4276  
San Clemente, CA 92674

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Contact info \_\_\_\_\_  
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God's Hidden Treasures is a ministry that serves the needs of the poor, the disabled and the orphaned of Ukraine and brings God's love through personal relationships in the name of Jesus Christ.