

I know it has been longer than one month since I have written the Harbor monthly email update. The main reason why I am behind is due to my travels around the country. Throughout the year I travel speaking about the Harbor, my life story, preaching and sharing the good news. The Lord is doing some awesome things in the lives of orphans and the new generation being raised at the Harbor.

In our previous emails and hard copy newsletters Melinda and I have shared about Luba (The Harbor program director), but in this edition I would like to give more details about her life story. I am sure most of you would agree that we would feel more connected to a person if we knew him/her better by knowing that person's life story.



Luba was born and raised in a loving and happy Ukrainian Christian family. Unfortunately, it was a difficult time because of the persecution under communist rule. They attended the underground church because religion in the Soviet Union was forbidden. Her mom is Russian and her dad is Ukrainian. Luba comes from a family of three siblings: an older sister and a younger brother. Her parents taught that we must love and pray for

those who persecute us; thus she daily prayed for people who hated and persecuted them. It is a difficult concept to understand at times how you can pray and love those who persecute you, but the scripture says, "**They first persecuted me**". Luba was a very faithful believer who prayed on her knees daily, went to church and read the Bible. She was active in the church playing a violin and singing in the choir. Yet, she never saw herself being a missionary. After she finished high school since she was a Christian there were limited choices where to continue her studies. The state would not allow her to go to medical school because of her religion. Nor could she go to the pedagogic university to become a teacher because the state was afraid that she would preach the gospel. Instead, she went to sewing school to become a seamstress. Upon her graduation the Soviet Union collapsed and entrepreneurship became very popular making it possible for Luba to start her own sewing business. She was very prosperous in her business.

One day she found out that her cousin had become a drug addict. Her aunt whom she loved dearly who was like a second mom to her could not bear the pain and shame and suddenly at the age 47 died. Her aunt was married to a highly intelligent and successful man who was an atheist. Luba's family loved him very much and tried to share the gospel with him, but he always rejected it. Furthermore, Luba prayed for him since she was 3 years old for 20 years so that her uncle would become a Christian, but he did not. Yet, when his wife died one day he came to Ukraine and Luba noticed that he was a different person. He said that he became a Christian and confessed all of his sins to God. He cried and prayed with Luba and it was a gift from God to Luba because she thought that he would never become a Christian. It was God's timing that made him to make that decision.

Luba's uncle then challenged her. "You have been Christian all your life, yet for some reason you are not involved in missions, why is that?" It was a challenge for Luba because she never thought that her uncle would challenge her like that. Every night his words would come to her and it was almost like his words were from God. Luba found out that there was a Christian university in St. Petersburg, Russia, 1,500 km away from her home in the Ukraine. At this university she, as a woman, could actually get an education in

theology; in the Ukraine this was not possible. She knew that her parents loved her so much that they might never let her go so far away. One day she asked her dad, "Can I go to Russia to get a Christian education?" With tears on his eyes he said, "I know that this is the right thing to do so you may go." Then she came to her mom and they both cried and she asked for the same permission. Her mom cried everyday for six months while preparing for Luba to go to Russia. Her mom gave Luba her blessing to go to St. Petersburg. At age 24, she came to Russia where she had to study the language, history, culture, mentality, and how to live in a big city. She attended St. Petersburg Christian University (SPCU) for 4 years, receiving a Bachelor's degree in theology. It was a wonderful school because her professors were so passionate for their subjects and very supportive. Furthermore, they all lived in the same building so the students had access to their professors practically 24/7. Luba shares one story, which I find very funny. One year she studied three languages at the same time: Greek, Hebrew and English. Hebrew was to read and translate the Old Testament, Greek was to read and translate the New Testament, and English was to read and translate commentaries and concordance. Most of her professors were foreign missionaries, but there was one professor who taught Greek and he was Russian. One day he told his students, "Students all of you are Russians, yet when you speak Greek you do it with the English accent!"

At SPCU Luba met Katya. Katya was a few months ahead of Luba, had already graduated and had heard about the Harbor. It was Katya (The Harbor's former psychologist) who told Luba about the Harbor. She told Luba every day until she came to Melinda's house. There Melinda shared her heart and why she wanted to make the difference in the lives of lost and forgotten souls of Russia. Luba was amazed by Melinda's passion, care and love for foreign children who were orphans. This touched Luba's heart deeply and this is how she became the program director of the Harbor. Since then Luba has been passionate for the ministry putting in 16 hours every day for six years.

The Lord was preparing Luba's heart for His mission to uniquely prepare orphans to become spiritually whole. Jesus truly becomes the Heavenly Father to the fatherless and motherless orphans in our ministry. If not for the ministry and passionate and committed staff most orphans would die or become the victims of drugs, alcohol, prison, poverty, homelessness or death. Luba is not just the Harbor program director; she is a sister, friend, role model, mother, supporter, motivator and encourager.

Thank you for making the difference in the lives of young adult orphans and for giving them an opportunity. Our ministry takes orphans because no one else wants, or notices, them. We will do whatever it takes to help them become educated, skilled, employed and spiritually whole. Thank you for supporting the Harbor and for being part of this ministry that transforms one life at a time.

Love, the Harbor & Alex

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