



Dear Friends of The Harbor:

April, 2015

What would you say to a friend who you thought you might never see again, and who you believed might be facing impending persecution for their faith? I don't want to be melodramatic, but this is the question I was wrestling with the several months before my recent trip to Russia. Though we certainly do not feel as if we are at war with Russia, many Russians believe we are in a cold war scenario, once again. Anti-American sentiment is clearly on the rise, most obviously expressed in the rolls of toilet paper being sold around the city with the likeness of Obama's face on it. Correspondingly, ultra-nationalism is on the rise, and with it, growing anti-Semitism and opposition to any non-Russian Orthodox form of Christianity. Freedoms are subtly being curtailed and the news carefully controlled. There is an uneasiness in the air that things may not be the same for much longer. What if this is my last chance to get into Russia? What if my dear friends and colleagues begin to face some costly persecution? I have been asking the Lord to "help me number my days that I may present to Him a heart of wisdom" (Ps. 90:12), and address my responsibilities with more intentionality.

The morning after I arrived in St. Petersburg I was on a train for Vyborg, a city 2 hours away. I stayed with Lena for two nights and trained her in the new trauma informed therapy I have been learning. She is in charge of the orphan ministry at her church and has expanded it significantly over the past several years. In addition to the training, we spent time talking about the universal church, the days in which we live, Russia in end-times prophecy, and how to live with and prepare for persecution. In the midst of such sober conversations, we found space for mutual encouragement and even some laughter.

Back in St. Petersburg, I met with Nastya for two days. She is a Harbor graduate, and now a Harbor employee, whom I have been mentoring for the past several years. We had similar discussions. She wanted to know how one prepares to endure persecution, like that of an ISIS caliber persecution. We talked about when to stay and when to flee. Where would she go if she did flee, and how would she leave? We discussed issues of discipleship and how you know if you have adequately fulfilled the Lord's command in Mt. 28:18. Many more conversations with friends and colleagues there caused me to reflect anew on the reality of the spiritual battle that rages through the nations.

The major focus of this trip was to train our staff and others who work with orphans, foster care, or adoptions around the region. I finished my program studies for trauma informed therapy on March 3rd and left for Russia on the 4th. I was very nervous about the training, fearing I had built it up too much, or perhaps somehow they already knew all the latest research. I was thrilled to find out that all of my learning and preparation this past year was not in vain!

I am so grateful for the training I have received from Dr. Karen Purvis at Texas Christian University and for the years of research she, her team, and a few other developmental psychologists have carried out. The really exciting thing about this information is that it simply affirms the way in which God has so wonderfully designed us to develop and relate to one another. There is personal transformation, first, in those who receive the training and, then, resulting transformation in the way they begin to intentionally relate to others, especially to those with traumatized histories. I truly sense the Father's pleasure as we seek to create environments that more accurately reflect His love.

The feedback I received after the full three days of training was most encouraging:

- A Harbor staff person said, “Now I know why the girls do not respond to me. It is all my fault, and now I know what I can and need to do to change it.”
- Our director told me that he had been exposed to many of the concepts before, but in a piece meal way. This training put all the pieces together with much greater depth and practical applications of the theories. He was very excited to begin to implement the new strategies and felt confident this was going to improve our ability to help our orphan residents even more.
- Two graduates of The Harbor were also there. Both told me the training gave them deeper insight into themselves, as well as, new tactics for pursuing deeper healing.
- The landlord of the facility we were renting was milling around the first morning. At break time he asked me if he could join the training. After the first day he asked if he could invite some more people for the next day. At the end of the training he asked if I would come back and train another group of people for the ministry he works with.

Thank you for your part in allowing me to receive this training myself and then to take it to others who are serving the orphans! The Lord is opening many more doors for me to take this training elsewhere.

In these days in which we live, may we all be found faithful, wise, and courageous. I am most grateful for your partnership in this journey.



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Melinda (center) with some of the training group

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