

HeartBeats

Service From the Heart Since 1984



Sharon's Travelogue

May 17, 2001

4:00am - UGH! It's WAY too early to be up - but if we're going to be at the airport by 6:00, it's now or never! It's going to be a VERY long day - we won't be in St Petersburg until 4:45pm *tomorrow afternoon!*

May 18 - We're finally here, and we're SO tired! We were met at the airport by friends - it was SO good to see people we love waiting for us! Now that we're at the hotel we can try to go to sleep - which won't be easy, since "white nights" have begun, and it's light until well after midnight - (it's like trying to sleep in mid-afternoon) - but we'll manage! Lida just warned me that I shouldn't be walking barefoot in the rooms, especially the bathroom - since there's roach powder sprinkled on the floors!

May 19 - We slept in - what a treat! We didn't have anything planned until this evening, which was a good thing, since our brains and bodies feel like they're somewhere over the Atlantic. We met with Roman and Nadia - a couple attending Logos University (a Christian Bible college in St Petersburg). They are graduating next week, and hope to be starting a church in St Petersburg with two other graduates. They want to know more about Silent Voices - Nadia has been volunteering, and hopes to continue after graduation.

May 20 - We went to church at Horizon in Pushkin - Lida's "home" church - and were asked to share a few words with the fellowship. What a blessing to look out into the sea of faces and realize that these are our brothers and sisters in Christ! As I listened to them worship, my heart yearned for the day when we will worship the Lord together - and understand each other with no language barriers!

May 21 - Today was the first day of a two-day seminar for the staff and volunteers of Silent Voices. Vera came from Volgograd, and Oksana and Helena came from Tartastan - Oksana will be the Director for the new center we'll be opening there. We were SO blessed by the level of spiritual maturity we saw in these women! After our meetings, we had a wonderful dinner with the pastor (Horizon) and his family. This is the first time I've been able to spend much time with the Russians from the church - I'm SO glad we have the time to get to know them on this trip!

May 22 - It was COLD when we woke up this morning - it's been cloudy and rainy since we arrived, but today was much colder. As we were getting ready to leave the hotel, I realized that it was SNOWING! I'm SO glad I checked the weather reports before packing - we have some warm clothing, but it was still TOO COLD today! The second day of training went well - we did some role playing, which helped them put into practice what we taught.

May 23 - It didn't snow today, but it hailed and rained and was still too cold! We stayed in this morning and met with Oksana and Helena - sweet sisters in Christ! Oksana's pastor is eager to open a Silent Voices center, and will be very supportive. We talked about the details of starting a new ministry - and prayed for them before they left. They have a two day train trip ahead of them! We've provided them with supplies and support - the rest is up to them - and the LORD! This afternoon we had "tea" with a lady from Horizon, and she shared that her daughter went to Silent Voices when she became pregnant, and how *happy* she is that her grandchild is alive today!

At 5:00 we attended a Board meeting, where Larissa (the Director in Pushkin) and Denis (Board President) updated us on the ministry. We were shocked to hear that since January, they've had to pay a 35% tax on all humanitarian aid they've given to clients! Anytime the ministry gives a client *anything* - a piece of clothing - a pregnancy test - vitamins - *anything* - Silent Voices has had to pay a 35% tax on its value! Just to operate at the same level they did last year, they will need an additional 35% in support to cover the tax! Other than that, though, things are going very well - there are many seeking help from Silent Voices - babies are being saved - and post aborted women are finding hope and healing! When we got back to the hotel, Lida tried to take a shower and discovered that the hot water has been shut off! She decided to wait until morning to see if it's back on.

May 24 - The hot water was NOT on today - so we heated water in an electric kettle and had a "spit" bath. Not quite as refreshing as a shower, but neither of us were willing to take a shower with ice water! We had "blini" at Luda's house this morning. I met Luda the first time I ever came to Russia - and this is the only time she has ever asked me to come to her home to visit. She lives on the outskirts of town, in a home with few amenities. (They use an outhouse, and don't have a shower in their home - it's outside, next to the outhouse, and they *never* have hot water for showers!) She's been too embarrassed to have me over before, but has decided that we're friends, and that I won't care what her house looks like - and I didn't! She has grown SO much in her faith and relationship with the Body of Christ in Pushkin!

We met with Mark and Shirley Willson at 4:00, and had more tea! Shirley has been like a mother to Larissa, and has spent hours mentoring her and loving her. I was blessed to meet them and to see the genuine love and concern they have for Larissa. Sadly, they are moving to Moscow in October, and Larissa will be without her "mother." I told Larissa that maybe the Lord will raise someone up to take over in Pushkin - then she can move to Moscow and start a Silent Voices there!

May 25 - We still have no hot water! It's cold and miserable outside, so we stayed in most of the day. Larissa came over, and we had a nice time talking with her. She had LOTS of questions about things that have come up in the ministry since we were here last - and was so grateful to finally have someone she could ask! We had dinner with another pastor from Horizon - what a treat!

May 26 - Yippee! The hot water is on today!!! Lida's parents and uncle came to visit - they hadn't seen Lida since our last trip to Russia 18 months ago. The day went by way too quickly - they said "thank you for bringing Lida to us" - and cried as they said their farewells.

May 27 - We went to Logos Church today - Larissa's "home" church. The pastor asked me to share my testimony, which I did, with Lida as my translator. As I looked out over the congregation, I could see several men and women crying - there are SO many whose lives have been touched by abortion in this country! A woman - a physician - approached me after the service and asked if we had an office in Moscow - her sister is an OB/Gyn there, and needs a place where she can refer patients. Her sister is a Believer, and tries to talk her patients out of abortion. As a result, her career is going nowhere because she isn't meeting the quotas set by her superiors! How sad!

May 28 - This morning we went to the porcelain factory in St Petersburg where Lida used to work, then met up with Ella (a volunteer) at "Slovo" Christian Bookstore in the afternoon. Ella spends every Monday afternoon at Slovo, doing pregnancy tests, talking to women who are considering abortion or who have already had one. It's a GREAT location - LOTS of ministry opportunities, and potential for growth.

May 30 - After two days of travel, we're HOME!

Silent Voices believes that God is the Author of life, that all human life is valuable - born and preborn - and that abortion is never the answer to an unplanned, "crisis" pregnancy. We are dedicated to giving compassionate, practical assistance to women experiencing unplanned pregnancies, providing accurate information about the realities and possible consequences of abortion, and offering help, hope and healing through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ to women already struggling with the trauma of abortion.