

Hi Everyone

We just returned from New Hope Centre. There was a slight skiff of blowing snow - our first. Weather has been so great - only a couple of nights below freezing so far.

Ev and her colleague, Anya, had prepared and served a turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes and gravy, salads and dessert to 20 people tonight - 8 guys and one girl who are now at different Trade Schools, plus some of their friends. Then a young fellow, Sasha, and his friend, Slava, stopped by. Sasha came to our Centre several times 18 months ago. How great to see him again!

I (John) had opportunity to explain for about 15 minutes the Reality of Jesus at Christmas - not just tradition, nor just a holiday.

Tomorrow we will have Christmas Services at 10:00am and 5 pm. (We are 10 hours ahead of you). At 2:30, after I pick up our pre-ordered turkey for Monday, I will pick up 3 girls from the Orphanage - Katya and Vikka, 15 and 17 years old respectively. We also asked whether we could ask 6-year-old Lida to also come for 2 days. The Assistant Director quickly suggested 5 days. I phoned Evelyn and she immediately agreed that would be a great idea.

I had met Lida for 5 minutes in September when I took Peter and Alice Krahn from Manitoba to visit the Orphanage - they had brought along some clothes to donate. When the Assistant Director saw we had some clothes suitable for a 6 yr old, she took us to meet Lida. Peter then had taken a picture with me and Lida. Then 20-30 minutes later, Lida was returning from eating a snack at the Cafeteria, and when she saw me, she broke out into a run to give me another hug. Until 5 days ago, that was the only contact I had had with her. We were at the Orphanage Monday night for St Nikloas Day, and she came to say hello to me. I took her on my knee. She already knew she would be coming to our house. She had only one question: "Do you have candy at your house?" Of course - 3 gift packages were already under our tree.

The Assistant Director apologized, in advance, telling me that Lida has very few clothes. Why? Her mother simply dropped her off at the Orphanage - they didn't do any paperwork, so the Orphanage does not have official custody of Lida, and as such they have no government stipend to buy clothes for her. So Ev and I will have the fun of buying some clothes for her. While in Canada recently, a couple of people gave us money to use 'wherever'. And Peter and Alice have offered to help with these purchases.

On Monday, we will have 11 at our table, as we have our own Christmas Dinner celebration. Several American friends will join with us.

When we take Lida back on the 30th, we will pick up Katya and Vikka for another 3 days, for New Year's Celebrations

What a privilege to allow God to love these three through us, love our unchurched friends whom we have invited for tomorrow's celebrations, and love our whole congregation, as well.

Thanks for being Team with us, allowing us to be here in Ukraine, at our Father's choosing, as we honour His Son's willingness to leave the wonder and glory of heaven, that we might have reason to celebrate CHRISTmas.

Ev joins me in sending her love and greetings.

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

John and Ev Wiens