

From: Veronica Thompson

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I wanted to send another update since I'm flying to Azerbaijan and Ukraine!

I want to give a brief refresher of what I'm involved in before I explain about Azerbaijan and Ukraine: I believe the Lord has led me to join the Strategic Missions department at YWAM Montana (which is currently led by LaDawn). Our base has what we call "Target Nations" which are nations we have developed long-term relationship with YWAM. These nations are: Ukraine, Nepal, India, Thailand and Taiwan. This concept of "Target Nations" came about roughly 15 years ago by the leaders of our YWAM Montana base in an effort to be more strategic in our short-term missions by focusing our efforts on a few, well-established relationships. Our base still allows freedom for outreach leaders to be directed by God to nations other than these 5, but because of our strong relationships with YWAM in each of these nations we send teams to at least one of these 5 every quarter.

As I had mentioned in a recent email, our Strategic Missions team was praying and seeking God's guidance about taking a scouting trip to Azerbaijan because we have been invited to work with YWAM there. After much prayer, and talking with our contacts, we felt God really was opening a door to this location. In order to gain a better understanding of what our role could be in Azerbaijan, LaDawn and I are taking a 1 week scouting trip from January 11-18. We meet with all of the YWAM leaders there, taking trips to ministry locations in the North and South, as well as spending time at the main YWAM hub in Baku (central). It's a brief trip, but we should get a much better idea of what ministry opportunities there could be for teams from our base and what ways we could possibly help the leadership there.

Following our meetings in Azerbaijan, I will accompany LaDawn to Ukraine to help with leadership development at the YWAM Kiev base for 2 weeks. LaDawn invited me to come with her because now that I'm working with our Strategic Missions department, I really need to get my feet on the ground and meet the leaders in every one of our 5 Target Nations.

Simultaneously, Leadership13 (the team I worked with last year) will be at the YWAM Kiev base to coach the leadership for 2 weeks. LaDawn and I will fly from Azerbaijan to Kiev and I will take on the administrative role I had been doing when I worked with Leadership13. This will give me the opportunity to meet with the leaders, see how YWAM functions there, and begin understanding the culture. We will be in Ukraine from January 19-31.

In total, it's a 3 week trip. I was able to purchase a ticket at a really good price for this flight route/schedule through a travel agent (\$1,400 total). On top of that, I need a visa for Azerbaijan (which costs \$180) and the stay in Az. is quite expensive because their dollar is worth more than ours (about \$260 for the week). I'm praying, and trust, that God will bring in the rest of the money I need. He is leading me to go, so I know He will provide!

Before this email gets too long again, I better stop! I wanted you all to know how I'm moving forward according to God's leading. I now have a very different focus than before, where God isn't just leading me to take an outreach team to one location, but rather to build long-term relationship with YWAM leaders in specific nations so that many people/teams can be mobilized in the future. This relationship building takes time and requires me to go in person to see what it's like on the ground, the greatest needs, what God is currently doing in each area, and ultimately how to mobilize our staff/students to best help meet those needs to further God's Kingdom.

I was really blessed to have had a ticket purchased for me to fly home to NY for Christmas! I will be in Long Lake and New Hampshire from December 12 until the 31st. I haven't been home in a year, so I'm really grateful for this chance to see my family at Christmas time and hopefully I will be able to see a few more of you! I am trying to set up a time to share at the Long Lake Wesleyan Church. I wish I could see all of you, but it's a difficult time of year to travel weather-wise and I know everyone is busy with family.

I will write again soon to share more of what I believe God is leading me toward, which involves traveling again in March/April. I can't thank you all enough for your support and prayers as I follow God's call on my life; I couldn't do this without you.

In Christ,
Veronica