

Anna's Sermon, December, 1993 at the First United Methodist Church in Baldwinsville, NY

People often dream and make plans about their future. They often worry a lot about what is going to happen to them or, on the contrary expect too much from the future. But there are things that happen sometimes, and change the whole course of events in a never expected direction. But whatever the direction is, God is always with you and I experienced that in my life. God does work miracles.

In my family things worked out that I spent half my life in Moscow, and went to school there. When I was a senior in High School I was among 12 students who were chosen from my school to come to America. The fact that I was chosen by my classmates was an absolute miracle. Why? Because although I was a good student I wasn't the best and I was pretty sociable, but not among the most popular. In other words, there were students who had a better chance of being elected. But I was elected, and it was the answer to a prayer. I'm convinced that God helped me. That election gave me a wonderful opportunity to see America, to practice my English, and raised my self-esteem.

After some troubles with tickets and sponsors, the day of our trip came. It was in February, 1991, and it lasted for 24 days. We had a wonderful time with our families and new American friends. We spent a day in New York City, and most of us saw Niagara Falls. Time went very fast, and it is amazing how in such a short time people can get so close as we did with our American friends. Everybody was crying at the departure. I thought that I might never see these people again, at least not in the near future.

That trip was a major event in my life. It was an event that helped me in the future in a way that I never expected.

In 4 months after our return home, the day of Graduation came. Each one of my classmates had some plans; all of them going to different universities and colleges, and soon had to face entrance exams. I wanted to go to Yerevan university in Armenia to study English Language and literature. I went to Armenia, and was getting ready for my entrance exams. But something very unexpected happened and turned my life in another direction. I was diagnosed with leukemia. My parents were looking for sources and ways to take me for treatment abroad, because not all medications and equipment were available in the former Soviet Union. The teachers from school send a fax to Baker high school asking if our

American friends can help. And that's when Mr. Schermerhorn, foreign languages supervisor at B.H.S together with Mt. Pleasants, Father Finnegan of St. Elizabeth Seaton and many many others organized a group of friends for Anna.

People in America who knew me and who never even met me at all extended their help. The distance of the thousands of miles over the Atlantic, didn't hold them from helping. The task of bringing me here seemed enormously hard. But with the faith and help of many people here and at my home country "the ball started rolling", and by November 1991 I was in Baldwinsville for treatment. This was another miracle in my life, which never would have happened if I hadn't come the first trip. Who knows what would happen with if I stayed in Armenia. Death was very possible. My grandmother who was my emotional and moral support came with me. We stayed at Mt. Pleasants for 8 months.

People who surrounded me here were extremely considerate and helpful. I've gotten wonderful care in the hospital.

After my intensive chemotherapy was over I still had 2 years of treatment to go.

I couldn't stay in America longer and going back wasn't desirable. Because there I would face devastating economy, and worst of all lack of medications.

When my grandma and I thought that there is no other choice but to go back home something miraculous happened and I was able to stay with Dr. Farrar and his family and go to OCC. My grandmother went back to Armenia.

Just recently I experienced the miracle work of God again. In January of 1994 my treatment will be completely finished. As the end of treatment was approaching, also the end of my stay in America was approaching. And I had to go back. The awful conditions in Armenia such as – absence of heat, electricity, enormously expensive life made it impossible for me to go to Armenia. So I was going to go to Moscow where aunt lives. But even in Moscow life is very hard. That's why I was trying to be accepted to a four year school in America, which seemed very hard. I already had my ticket to go home, at the end of December. I miss my family and friends greatly and wanted to see them and be with them. I really didn't know what was the right thing to do: to go back, or to try to stay. And I prayed to God to show me the way. Give me some sign. To do it how he wants it to be. I would follow what he wants me to do. As time of departure was coming closer, I was losing hope to stay, and was actually planning things that I would do when I get to Moscow, picturing different scenes. But God wanted it to be another

way, and he took care of me again. I'm going to stay in America. I'm accepted to Syracuse University until June. I'll be living with a wonderful family the Kisselsteins.

This past 3 years of my life proved to me, that miracles do happen and that God loves people a lot, and is always with us. We just have to have enough faith.