

Where *He* Leads...

FOREIGN MISSION NEWSLETTER

of the APOSTOLIC LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AMERICA

Vol. 14, No. 3

July-September 2012

Hungering for the Word in Russia

by Shane Juuti

In March, Mikhail Krupinov, Brian Niemitalo and I had the privilege to return to Russia. We had a very blessed time in fellowship with a number of people. There is most definitely a hunger for the Word that is so refreshing. When one looks at the size of Russia we can feel overwhelmed by how insignificant what we are able to do is, as I'm sure it is in every place we go. But the sheer magnitude of Russia really emphasizes this fact. Brian and I spent time in just a couple of areas, and met a number of new people. Mostly we were able to fellowship in small groups, and with the leaders of these groups. I was glad with the depth that we were able to visit. We were able to find out the scope and soundness of many of their understandings and teachings. We were able to encourage them to stick to the truth, share the Gospel when God gives occasion, and leave the rest to God. I feel if we are able to work

with and encourage sound teachers and preachers in Russia, God will use them to spread His living Word daily to all hearts He draws.

I have not been to other countries, and I'm sure the devil is busy everywhere, but I believe Russia has some important things to be aware of. It is amazing, for a country that was officially atheist for so many years, how many people believe in God. The Orthodox followers are growing, as well as any number of so called Christian teachings. (Where there is a hunger the devil will be very busy also.) The lines between denominations are not as large as in North America, which is good, and they seem to be most interested in Christian fellowship. I think it is good to share the truth with anyone who wants to hear. Brian and I spent one evening (and I think they would have spent most of the night if it had been possible) visiting, sharing, and answering questions with a group that was made up of at least four different denominations. They asked us to please come back, and we promised to try and be there on a Sunday next time, so we could be at their worship service. They had some very deep and important questions: what is the unforgivable sin and questions about millennial doctrine. What I'm getting at is that I feel that it is very important in Russia to send people who are sound in the Word. There is so much opportunity to share the gospel, but at times it takes a clear understanding, and firm foundation

Where there is a hunger the devil will be very busy also.

in the Word, to be able to bring out the truth in spite of some of the subtle twists the devil would like to put in the way of people's understanding.

We were also able to speak to some college classes, even though supposedly it is illegal to preach about religion in schools and universities. The Dean of the English department is feeling something of the call of God, and for other reasons I will be



Anya Kuzmykova and her Mother, Lubov, from the Sherokino area.



Saying good-bye at a small village church near Yushkor Ola.

rather surprised if she doesn't come into faith.

May God bless all in the mission field, and powerfully lead, to His glory, the saving of souls.

From the Foreign Mission Administrator Desk

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Did you know?

- The first missionary from our church was Rev. Andrew Mickelson, who went to Nigeria in 1965. Since this trip, the Lord has allowed us to participate in many ways in His vineyard around the world.
- Your Foreign Mission regularly visits 13 different countries. In the past year, 17 mission trips have taken place with about 40 different people participating.
- Forty-six people have completed the Foreign Mission training program that better equips people to meet the realities and situations they will confront in the mission field.
- Kenya, Central Africa, is the latest country that the Foreign Mission is working in. This work started after a 2-year email correspondence initiated by several Kenyan pastors.

Many places to sow the seed remain:

- There are over 7000 people groups in the world who are considered unreached. Pray for them each day when visiting our website at: www.themissionsite.com.
- The unreached people groups mostly live between 10 and 40 degrees north of the equator, commonly referred to as the 10/40 window. Most of the countries we visit are located in this 10/40 window.
- Most of the unreached people groups are in Africa and Asia, but there are even some in North America.

Methods of operation of your Foreign Mission:

- On mission trips, the Foreign Mission pays the expenses for two pastors. All other people on the trip cover their own expenses.
- The Foreign Mission is managed by a 9-person board, each of whom serves a 3-year term. They are elected by the ALCA churches at our Annual Convention.
- Your Foreign Mission administrator carries out the directives of the board members and reports to them weekly.
- A Foreign Mission blog is available that contains current updates and can be read at: www.foreignmissionnewsblog.blogspot.com.
- Each mission field has different ways to reach out; no two places are the same. Pray for the leading of the Holy Spirit to guide our pathway as we only want to be willing servants in His vineyard!

My Return to Russia

by Mikhail Krupinov

In February-March, I returned to Russia, my homeland, on a mission trip for the ALCA. Brian Niemitalo and Shane Juuti were with me. It was good to again meet dear Christian friends and visit the places and congregations that I know quite well. On this three-week trip, we visited three different areas, which are relatively far apart: Tula region, Udmurtia, and Ekaterinburg area

In the Tula region we visited a Lutheran congregation in Schekino, which was started by the ALCA in 2000 beginning with just one family. Now the congregation is stable and its pastor, Vitaly Prasolov, even carries out missionary work in another small town, Bogoroditsk (about 50 miles away). Vitaly, Brian, and I went to this town where we had a service with a group of elderly ladies who have a German background. It is very precious for them to have regular monthly Lutheran services. For me it was especially interesting to visit Bogoroditsk because I was born in this town and lived there for 15 years.

Before the trip, I had made arrangements to meet some old school friends, some of which I had not seen for 40 years. One of the friends attended our service and had a positive attitude toward Christianity afterwards. I pray that God would continue to work in his life. We had the opportunity to tell three other school friends about Jesus and the Bible. We told them that our faith in God and our relationship with Him are the most important things in our lives.

On this trip, there were many interesting meetings, spiritual conversations, and services with the Russian people. I would like to relate the events of my last day of the trip in the Ekaterinburg area. We had planned to visit Gagarka, a village about 50 miles from Ekaterinburg. Before the trip we knew that there was a family – a mother (Marina) and her five children – who wanted to be baptized. Greg Greve ministered to her during his last trip to Russia and at that time she desired baptism for herself and her five children. Before we left for Russia, she was contacted and she confirmed her desire for baptism.

Other missionaries to Russia know this area very well. Several years ago Dennis Hilman came to this village and started the mission work. He and other missionaries became especially close to one family, which had a difficult life because of drunkenness, and the father was in prison several times. The name of one of the sons is

Marat. Readers of this newsletter may remember reading about him after one of the missionary trips to Russia. We can say that at one time the family was very close to the bottom of society, but God found them and their life was changed, although it is not easy even now.

When we came to the village, we found our old friends – Marat, his parents, and grandmother (babushka). Marina, her husband, and five children (Dasha 13, Natasha 12, Zhenya 8, and two, two-year-old brothers, Ilya and Ignat, were also there awaiting us. We made some preparations for the baptism and bought six crosses for the newly baptized people. It was important for us to find out more about the family and the condition of their hearts before the baptism. Brian asked many questions of the mother and also some questions to her daughters to know better about their faith and relationship with God and Jesus. We could see that even though Marina does

not have a large knowledge about the Bible, she has something that may be more important – simple and sincere faith in God and His Son Jesus Christ. We explained to Marina and her children what Jesus had done for all of us and how we can have salvation and eternal life because of His perfect sacrifice for our sin. We were glad to see that Marina and her girls

completely accepted this simple teaching and confirmed their desire to be baptized.

We held a service before the baptism with prayers and a sermon. I was asked to speak and I chose a text from Revelation 21:1-7 in the Russian Bible. I tried to encourage all of us in that room about what a beautiful heaven awaits us when our sins are forgiven in the glorious name of Jesus. After the sermon and prayer, Brian baptized Marina and her five children. I ask you to pray for this family. It is not easy for them in this life with so many sins and temptations around them. May God bless them and keep them in this world. And some day He will be their God in heaven and they will be His children (Rev. 21:7). After the service and baptism, we gathered for food and tea and good conversation. I hope that someday I will be able to see those dear people again, and I will pray for them until that day.

I would like to say a big thank you to the Foreign Mission Board and to all Christians who support missionary work and mission trips. May God bless you.

After the sermon and prayer, Brian baptized Marina and her five children.

Philippines – May, 2012

by Tamasen Tervo

*Igbet: Let
the Little
Children
Come to the
Father*

“Mayan buntag!” Eli woke up, looking so startled, the children filled the air with laughter. They crowded on the benches along the tables, watching Leona Matson with rapt attention as she told the story of Samuel. She had employed Frat Aho as Eli and little Joshua as Samuel to act. Joshua quickly caught on and played his part beautifully, while Frat continued to make the children giggle. Leona walked among the children, telling them what she wanted them to learn from the story.



The Children’s Church.

The church was made of wooden slats to let the breeze curl through, and it had a beautiful red tin, roof, made with donations from the US. The church sits right on the beach. We were in Igbet, at the children’s church that Pastor Bernie and his wife Daisy have started. Daisy teaches the children every Saturday, evidence of that is on the walls – an alphabet and Bible verses – and in the children’s quick responses to Leona’s questions. The children also get regularly fed there. “Remember,” Leona said to the children in closing that afternoon, “God knows your name, and He knows you better than you know yourself.

”But Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.” - Matthew 19:14

*Cagayan
de Oro:
Miracle
in the City*

Her eyes shone, and she smiled, nodding to the music. Frat Aho and Randy Kinnunen were playing for her as she sat on the marble porch on a piece of cardboard, where she had been combing her hair and filing her nails. The porch of the hotel was her home for the night.

Dennis asked her if she wanted to be prayed for. Though the woman’s English was limited, she consented. Dennis laid his hands on her, along with Randy and Gary Bertram, and prayed. She was so grateful and appreciative. When it was time to leave, I knelt down tying my woven leather bracelet around her brown wrist. “Pagpalain kayo ng Diyos,” I said. May God bless you. Her face lit up with joy for the small gift, and she thanked me with two besos on one cheek, and one on the other.



Randy Kinnunen singing for a homeless woman.

God has done great things in Cagayan de Oro! The first night, there was a welcome at the Overcomer’s Christian Fellowship church. We climbed a steep set of stairs through the warm night, a chorus of bugs and waving coconut trees escorting us. The ALCA team was asked to render a song along with sharing different thoughts. The youth performed a wonderful drama of the disciples healing a leper in Jesus’ name, and Jesus reminding them to have joy, not because they have such powers, but because their names are written in heaven.



Drama performed by the youth.

Kitcharao: The Power of Prayer

“If there’s anything you want prayer for, please ask one of us. We would be happy to pray for you.” Pastor Colin closed his sermon, and the music began to play. At first, everyone sat where they were. Then Pastor Bert gave the people of Kitcharao an encouraging wave, and they surged forward, in confirmation to Colin’s call. There were so many wanting prayer. Probably more than fifty percent of the chairs emptied. It was time for the ALCA team to follow through on Pastor Colin’s promise.

As Scott Hakala watched them coming forward, he prayed, “God, You’re going to have to send the

first one to me because I can’t do it myself.” Almost immediately, a woman approached him asking for prayer. When he was done, it was the same again: “I’m sorry, God, but You need to do it one more time.” Right in that moment, a young boy in a yellow shirt at the back of the crowd squeezed towards Scott.

With the reassurance of answered prayer, Scott reached out and continued to pray for people.

Every single person was prayed for, and many of them opened their hearts. Mothers came with their children. The hurting and the worried came. Any care was cast upon God, and asked of God to place His hand in every one of the situations. And yet, “I feel like so many of them were praying for **me** at the time” (Fratt Aho). The power of God was in that place. **God’s power** was in that gymnasium!



Scott reaching out in prayer.



130 steps up to the Overcomer’s Christian Fellowship Church.

Faith Comes by Hearing and Hearing by the Word of God

by **Fredrick Aho**

In order to share a little snap-shot of the time spent in the mission field with the Foreign Mission, I’ll tell you about a tiny bit of the trip to the Philippines.

The most amazing part of any mission trip, that I have been a part of, is realizing that God can use me to do His work. If you know me at all, you know that I’m not a shining example of what a missionary would look like, if you looked in Webster’s dictionary. That is one of the beautiful things about the God we serve. He uses common people to do uncommon things – because He is great, not because we are great.

While traveling from Kitcharao toward Cagayan de Oro we spent lots of time bouncing down a beat-up road with 18 people jammed in the van holding back

the urge to call out for a bathroom stop. So what do you do? Just start talking to the one next to you or behind you or in front of you. Different conversations criss-cross each other, some are light and some are heavy.

Next thing I know I am in a deep conversation with Dennis Hilman about a man he prayed for who was delivered from AIDS and became a minister in his village in Africa only to fall victim to the enticement of alcohol. The conversation continued on the same vein about others who had fallen into the same temptations. Finally, we prayed about it ... but we wanted to pray “believing,” so we remembered the battle of David and Goliath and how that was fought.

We remember how faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.



Bibles were distributed.



Beautiful Philippines.

We recall how David set the example of recalling the past victories God had given, thereby renewing his faith toward God. So we recalled past victories in our own lives and then prayed a prayer of faith toward God. Together we believe in the victory that God shall have over anyone who has defied the army of the living God. And together we rejoice ... and shall continue to rejoice!



Mission Hospital India

Update

God's Peace! Greetings to you, in the most precious name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We have been praying for you and your health. Many thanks from the women who had a hysterectomy by the kind support you have given to the Mission Hospital. They asked me to convey their gratitude from the bottom of their hearts.

With the support you have donated, the lives of 12 women who were suffering with cervical cancer have been saved (their pictures are below). They had the cancer for several months or for some years and had been praying and watching for God to open the doors so they could have the surgery. These women are very poor and their families are also very poor. Without your support they would not have survived. We thank you for your generosity, love, and kindness to poor people in India.

The women who had the hysterectomies are all doing well and following Jesus and sharing with other people about Jesus. Through their witness, God has provided them, through you, the strength to believe in Jesus and be blessed to follow Him in faith. May God bless you and continue to bless you and your family to save and rescue many more women who are suffering with cervical cancer and breast cancer.

Cervical cancer is very prevalent amongst the poor women in India where 60% of them will die from the disease unless they die from another cause beforehand. A hysterectomy is the normal method of treating the cancer. Before the Mission Hospital had to discontinue major surgeries, 3564 hysterectomies for cervical cancer had been performed since 1999. A waiting list had been established for women needing a hysterectomy, but was discontinued when it reached 5000 because of lack of funds for the surgeries.

The following letter from Dr. Syam Kumar at the Mission Hospital that was sent to a donor, shows how the donation was used to save the lives of 12 women suffering with cervical cancer. The average cost for one hysterectomy is \$250. The donor is not identified, which is the practice we have always followed in this newsletter.

by Alvar Helmes

by Syam Kumar
Mission Hospital India



Welcome to West Africa!

by Leona Matson and Dennis Hilman

Ghana, Togo, and Liberia are not large countries – many people have never even heard of them – however, they are each precious mission fields. Here are three short snapshots from the recent mission trip taken to West Africa this April. If you want to know more about the trip, please visit the Foreign Mission blog www.foreignmissionupdate.blogspot.com. If you want to know more about our ongoing work there, visit the Foreign Mission website www.themissionsite.com.



Hilltop church in Gbawe.

Christ has risen! He has risen indeed!

It was such a blessing to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord with our Ghanaian brothers and sisters this year. As the Pascal cry rang out on Easter Sunday morning from the hilltop church of Gbawe in Accra, we were reminded of Micah's prophecy, *And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD...and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths... (4:2)*

The Apostolic Lutheran Church of Ghana has undergone some tough times in the last few years, but it has rallied and is continuing to work together and to look to God. The strength of the church was evidenced by the crowd of people who squeezed into the church that Easter morning: children, youth, men, and women all were gathered to remember the first glorious Easter morning. Even the church building evidenced this fact; it was built entirely from local donations and tithes! It isn't completed yet, but it is standing as a testimony to the dedication of God's children in Ghana.

We have been blessed!

Our short time in Togo was mainly spent at training seminars for pastors and church workers. Money was sent from the Foreign Mission to help with transporting, housing, and feeding the people who would be attending. The seminars took three days and covered topics such as repentance, God's will, and our "treasure in

earthen vessels." The participants were serious, attentive, and full of questions.

On the last day, the host pastor stood up and announced, "We have all been blessed by you – spiritually and physically. To thank you, we want to take a collection to help you with your ministry. You have blessed us so much and we want to bless you." And then they all came forward to leave us their offering in the collection box! It wasn't a large amount, but that didn't matter, we were blessed just by their heartfelt gesture of love.



Collection in Togo.

Pray for peace and comfort!

It was sad to learn that the Apostolic Lutheran Church in Zwedru, Liberia had split. It was even more sad to find out that it was the head pastor who left. However, the saddest part of the whole tale is that when the pastor found out that some of the members wanted to stay with the ALC, he told them that he was going to personally pray to God and that God would

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Where He Leads... is published quarterly by the Foreign Mission Board of the Apostolic Lutheran Church of America, 13519 NE 181st Circle, Battle Ground, WA 98604, under authorization number (USPS 02 1-043), and is distributed free-of-charge to congregations in America, Canada and foreign countries.

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- Pastor support program (\$30 per month)
- Supply a Bible (\$3 each, min. ten Bibles)
- Support an orphan (\$30 per month)
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- Full time Missionary support (\$200 per quarter – Dennis Hilman)
- Wells in India (\$500 per well)
- Mission Hospital in India

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Donations in support of the Foreign Mission efforts should be sent to:

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On check, write: Apostolic Lutheran Church Foreign Mission. Donations can be earmarked to support any of the areas identified.

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strike down and kill every member who didn't follow him.

Perhaps that threat seems ludicrous to you as it did to many members who remained faithful, but some members took the words of the pastor to heart and either left with him or stayed home out of fear. We visited one such member named Benito and she said, "I was worried, so I didn't go to church. The pastor said he'd pray that I died. So I was really worried." We assured her that a prayer for death was a satanic prayer and not a prayer God would answer and we also promised that people all over the world would be praying for her, other frightened church members, and the church as a whole. So, please pray! Pray for strength and comfort for these people as well as for a strong foundation for their faith so that they wouldn't easily be swayed by threats so contrary to God's Word. However, let's also remember to pray for the pastor

who left and those who followed him. Pray that God would open their eyes to the Truth and give them the grace to repent.

Despite the sadness that comes from dealing with a split, the overall visit to Liberia was inspiring! The other eight congregations rallied around the one in Zwedru and fully supported their brothers and sisters who remained faithful...and many have. The seminars we held were well attended and the church was filled to capacity on Sunday morning. They are even building a new church building right next to the old one, which is the headquarters for the ALC of Liberia. God is faithful to those who remain founded on the Rock of His Son!

In each of the three countries we visited, the people asked us to return, to stay longer next time, and to bring others with us. A trip to West Africa isn't easy,



Benito with her son, nieces, nephews, and father-in-law.

but it is rewarding! Is God calling to you to go?