

# Where *He* Leads...

FOREIGN MISSION NEWSLETTER  
of the APOSTOLIC LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AMERICA

Vol. 15, No.3

JULY – SEPTEMBER 2013

## Little Sister *Nastya*

BY GREG GREVE

I am sitting at an early morning, sunlit kitchen table in Ekaterinburg, Russia, which is a large Russian city, nestled in the green, gem and iron filled Ural Mountains bordering Siberia Asia. I have been in Russia for a week now, beginning yet another of the many mission trips I have taken to Russia over the last years. It's amazing for me to think that I have been involved in the Russian foreign mission efforts of our ALC Federation for fourteen years already, but the time has been but a breath for me because I have loved Russia and her children so very much. Across those fourteen years I have been to Russia twenty-one times and I have, as you can imagine, become very close to many brothers and sisters here and have been involved in many repentances, weddings, births and baptisms.

A couple days ago in the village of Schekino, Russia, where this trip began, I took a moment, while visiting Pastor Vitaly Praslov, a longtime friend and brother in faith, to check my internet mail and saw a letter from our mission director, John Ruotsala, asking if I might supply him with an article for the Foreign Mission newsletter. Sitting beside me and watching me with keen interest as I read and replied to John's



Little Nastya.

# From the Foreign Mission Administrator Desk

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**T**he Foreign Mission's annual planning meetings, together with services, are going to be held at the Tri-Cities, WA, ALC church on September 27 - 29. Please pray that the Foreign Mission board and the administrator would always be looking to God for His leading as we strive to be obedient to the Great Commission.

## UPCOMING TRIP SCHEDULE

**Russia ..... (ongoing at this time)**  
**South Africa ..... October 7 – 30**  
**Kenya ..... October 31 – November 21**  
**Russia ..... January 2014**  
**India ..... January 21 – February 7, 2014**  
**Myanmar ..... Mid-February 2014**  
**Pakistan ..... Late February 2014**  
**Ghana, Togo, Liberia . March 2014**  
**Guatemala ..... Dates to be determined**  
**Philippines ..... Most likely May 2014 (exact dates later)**  
**Vietnam ..... Directly from Philippines**

Please pray that the Word of God would be proclaimed by the power of the Holy Spirit on these trips.

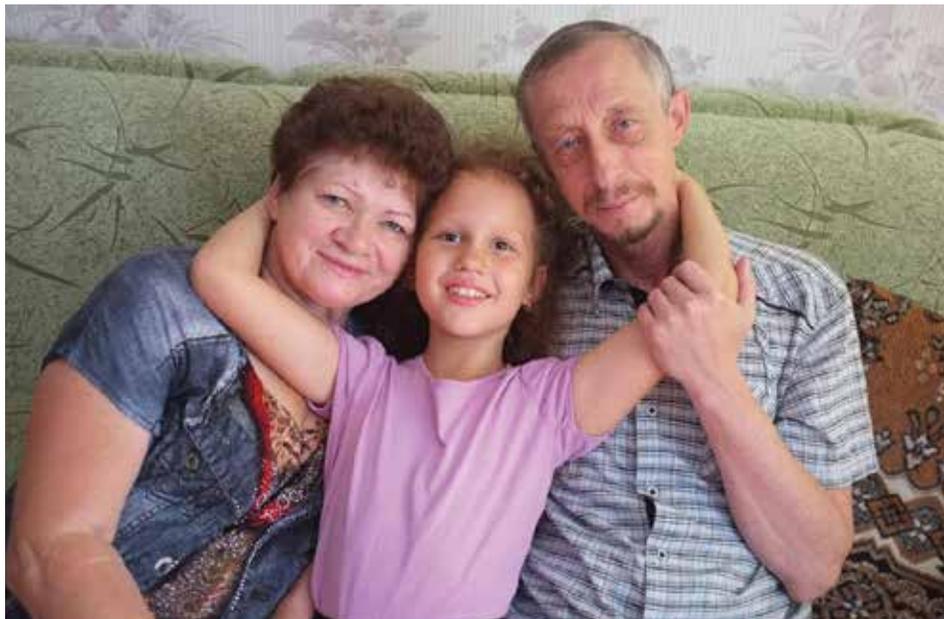
Do you feel the Lord prompting you to go into the mission field? If so, you are most welcome to join us on one of the above trips! Just send me an email at [foreignmission@comcast.net](mailto:foreignmission@comcast.net) to sign up.

As with all people traveling with the Foreign Mission, you will be required to provide your own travel funds and to complete the Mission Training program, along with signing the release form before coming. The process takes less than one month, so there is time. PLEASE JOIN US!

John Ruotsala, Administrator

letter was Vitaly's seven-year-old granddaughter, Nastya. This little girl is a truly amazing Christian and as I thought about John's request, the idea came to me that I should write about Nastya for the Foreign Mission, not only as an example of amazing faith, but as an example of how the Lord continues to work in and throughout Russia.

The night before I read John's request for an article, I had held an evening service at the village music school where the local Lutheran congregation meets each week. When the service and evening fellowship came to an end and the brothers and sisters began to make their separate ways home, a few of us decided to walk for a while before heading home as it was a beautiful summer night. Along with the adults who went walking was little Nastya. As we walked and fellowshiped and pointed out stars in the night sky, I was totally in awe listening to little Nastya tell us how she often thinks about the stars and the universe: "They seem so endless to us" she said, "yet there is an end to them and God knows where it is. It's so amazing to me that people can see this creation and not believe in God!"



**Nastya with her grandparents Vitaly and Galina Praslov.**

I have known little Nastya, or Anastasia, which is her full Russian name, since her birth. She is the daughter of Mikhail and Svetlana Butrov and the granddaughter of Pastor Vitaly and Galina Praslov. Vitaly, Galina and Svetlana have all come into faith over the years our Foreign Mission has ministered in this village. Svetlana, who struggles with different medical issues, seemed unable for years to have children until, as she tells it with shining eyes and grateful passionate praise, God granted her a miracle named Nastya. Since Nastya first began to talk, and I have witnessed this myself, she has often expressed her heart and thoughts concerning faith and Jesus.

One time, her grandmother Galina tells us that Nastya came home sad from kindergarten. She told Galina how she had gone to all the boys and girls in the class that day to tell them about Jesus Christ and how He had died for them. Nastya had been so astounded and sad to find that almost

all of the children began to laugh and make fun of her. Still, this little faith-filled girl has not been discouraged. She continues, when God touches her heart, to proclaim her faith and her Lord Jesus Christ.

Nastya's great grandmother, Maria, is not a believer, which worries Nastya very much. As we walked and listened to Nastya that evening, she told us how her great grandmother, or Manya, as she tenderly calls her, does not believe and how she worries very much for her. She can't imagine her grandmother dying without a living faith in Jesus. As we walked, Nastya continued on telling us how one day she was reading the Bible to her Manya and how her great grandmother thought what she was reading was so beautiful. But when Nastya told her that it was from the Bible, her great grandmother Maria told her it was not a good book and that she should throw it into the fire!

Grandmother Galina, who writes down many of the stories about her grand daughter, tells the story about how when Nastya was 5 years old, she was sitting with great grandmother Maria flipping through one of her Bible picture books. They came to a place with a picture of Noah and the ark. Nastya



**Nastya with her great grandmother Maria.**

began to tell her great grandmother the story of Noah and then when she finished the story, she pleaded with her great grandmother. "Manya, do you see how all of these people outside the ark perished because they did not believe? Will you believe dear Manya?" Nastya continues daily to pray for her Manya.

Nastya often does not feel worthy of God and expresses it with tears running down from her soft brown eyes. She tells about how once she beat a boy in school who offended her. "I know I did not hurt him very much" she told us, "as he didn't cry or anything like that, but I felt so very bad about my actions and asked God over and over again for forgiveness".

She told us about how one day she was going up the stairs in their apartment building and on one step she saw a colorful sticker, which was an accessory to the popular fad dolls called "Vings" that she and so many of the Russian children her age were collecting at the time. She wanted to pick the sticker up and add it to her collection, but she thought in her heart that she was not worthy to have it, so she stepped over it and continued up the steps. Her father, Mikhail, was coming up behind her and he saw the sticker and knowing Nastya collected them, picked it up and gave it to her when he caught up with her at the top of the stairs. Nastya was astonished and thanked God. She said she felt it was a gift from God to her.

"I know I am just a little girl" she rattled on as we walked, "but I realized recently that I want to be more serious about my faith. I used to sit in church and draw on my little chalk board and not pay as much attention as I should, but now I know that was wrong. Now I try to sit still and listen as grandfather preaches the Word of God."

Nastya told us how she wants to be like Jesus. "Jesus saves people, so I think to myself how I need to be like that. I have decided for now that I want to be a veterinarian so that I can save animals."



**Nastya with her mother, Svetlana.**

When our walk ended and our group was about to part ways for the evening, I asked everyone to gather around and we took each other's hands to pray there under the Russian stars. I asked little Nastya, such a tiny form against all of us bigger adults, to lead us in prayer. My request seemed to surprise her a little bit and I could feel her child shyness emerge, but she took a tiny breath and, no doubt beckoning His Spirit to help her, she with true sincerity ended our night with a simple but heart-felt prayer.

In these last days in which we live, I find myself worrying about my beloved Russia, especially as the government continues to tighten its control and power, not only over its own citizens, but also in the Middle East and elsewhere throughout Europe and the world. I wonder to myself what might happen if suddenly the government moved to completely control Christian activity here as it has done in the past

and is beginning in so very many ways to do again. Yet despite my fears, I see, as I travel in Russia, that God has not forgotten her. Faith is still growing here in this great and ancient land and there are now thousands and thousands of evangelical believers proclaiming His love and grace throughout Russia. I know that our ALC Foreign Mission efforts are just a small part of what God is actually doing here, so despite my worries for Russia and for our precious family of believers here, I also know that God will keep her and all of us all to the end. When I look at how powerfully His Spirit moves here in Russia, especially in examples like little Nastya, I realize that with brave little souls like this to proclaim God's Word in Russia, there will always be faith and hope.



## Insightful Seminars in **Notsé**, Togo (West Africa)

**P**astor Frank Famiyeh from Ghana, West Africa, has worked with the Foreign Mission of the ALC for many years. For several years he has been holding seminars in some West African countries. Here is his report from the most recent one he conducted in the small country of Togo.

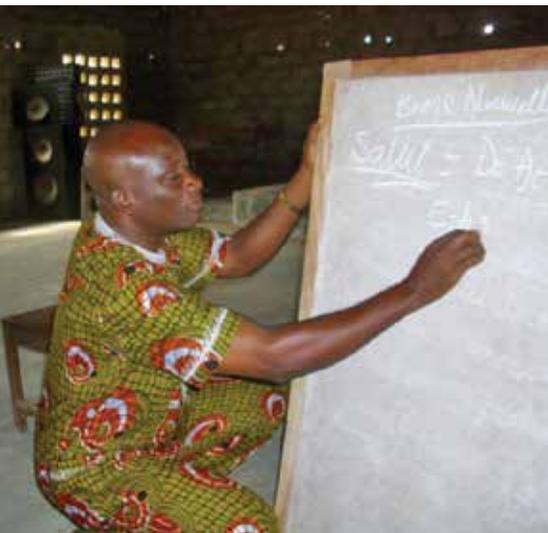
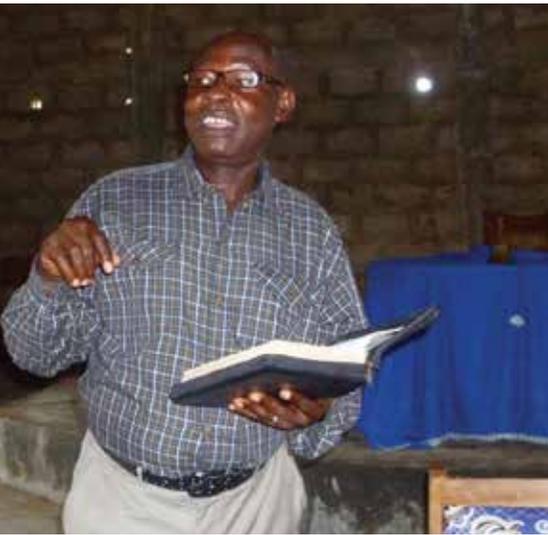
*God's Peace!*

*Below, please find the report on the Togo seminars for your records.*

*In the morning of July 23, 2013, I left Accra by road to the Ghana/Togo border, reaching there about 1:00 pm. Pastor Nestor Devigan was at the border to receive me. We drove to the city of Lome where Pastor Victor was waiting to accompany me to Notsé, venue of the seminars. Pastor Devigan could not travel with us on that day because he had an examination paper to write the next day.*

*The seminars began at 9:00 am on Wednesday, July 24th with seven pastors and four women leaders of the Togo Church. In the first three we reviewed the April seminar notes in detail because five of the participants were not at the previous seminars. Of course, that offered us an opportunity for those who had come to the April seminar to refresh their minds and to get a better understanding of the topics discussed, especially because I had improved on my presentation and course content.*

*On the second day, two pastors including Pastor Devigan and one church elder joined in the seminars, and so the total number of participants increased to 14. On the fourth and final day we focused on the truth about forgiveness of sins that we have received from God in Christ as an incentive for us to teach and preach the same forgiveness to our churches and people who come our way. Pastor Victor*



did most of the interpretation with Pastor Devigan occasionally lending him support.

On the whole, it was successful and even more participatory in terms of questions asked and contributions made. Participants speaking through Pastor Philippe, expressed gratitude to the Foreign Mission Board for funding the seminars and looked forward to receiving more teaching. I personally thank the Foreign

Mission Board for another opportunity to share God's promises in Christ with thirsty souls in the Togo Church. I am also thankful to Pastors Devigan and Victor for their assistance in facilitating the seminars and their support to make my time in Togo a good one.

In His Service,  
Pastor Frank

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it. Proverbs 22:6



# ONGOING & RECENTLY COMPLETED TRIPS

## Guatemala

At the end of June, our churches in Guatemala held their annual convention. Missionary Ryan Ruotsala shares the following about this time;

*Our time together was very blessed, as Scott Niemitalo and Pastor Giovanni took turns speaking on different aspects of the church, her purpose and place in this world, and her place in our lives*

*as purchased members of Christ's spiritual building. We started with two services Saturday afternoon, and concluded Saturday with a beautiful evening of worship and a chance for each congregation to share, through song and personal testimony, God's goodness in their lives. The young teens and older youth all were part of various skits that reinforced the idea of the church, our lives, and congregations being built on the ROCK of Christ, and the important place the church has in reaching out to the hurting and desperate people with the GOOD NEWS of Jesus Christ.*



## Russia

At the time this newsletter was being written, there was a small mission team in Russia. Here is the update from Dennis Hilman written shortly after he arrived in Russia.



*CELEBRATION IN YOSHKAR-OLA. This congregation was founded 20 years ago through the efforts of missionary couple Juha and Anu Valiaho and the supervision of the Lutheran Church of Ingria. And how it has been blessed! This weekend people from many different congregations of that church, including Bishop Arri Kuukappi (second row), as well as people from Finland, gathered for special seminars and services. I was also asked to contribute. What a blessed opening to my month in Russia.*

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### WAYS TO HELP THE FOREIGN MISSION

- 12-month pledge program (min. \$10 per month)
- Foreign Mission general fund support
- Pastor support program (\$30 per month)
- Supply a Bible (\$3 each, min. ten Bibles)
- Support an orphan (\$30 per month)
- Buy a bicycle for a pastor (\$80)
- Memorial donations
- Endowment funds
- Full time Missionary support (\$200 per quarter – Dennis Hilman)
- Wells in India (\$500 per well)
- Mission Hospital in India

### DONATIONS

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

Apostolic Lutheran Church  
of America  
1601 NW 4th Avenue  
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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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## MISSION HOSPITAL TO REOPEN BY OCTOBER 15

**D**ue to a heavy infestation of white ants, which are common in some parts of India, the Mission Hospital was forced to stop performing major surgeries until the problem was resolved. The white ants are similar to termites in their destructive nature.

Donations have been received to correct the damage done to the woodwork in the hospital by the ants. The poor people, pastors, and government officials are happy that the hospital will soon be open again. It is anticipated that up to 150 people/day will again seek the medical help provided by the hospital.

Even though the hospital was closed to major surgeries, it was still open as a Medical Clinic. In addition,

Medical Camps to the poor villages and tribal areas continued as before. Major surgeries still will not be performed, however, until replacement anesthetic equipment and crucial surgical instruments are available.



Patients waiting at a medical camp performed by the Mission Hospital in India