

# Russia Field Report

## July 2014

Praise the Lord that world politics and day-to-day life seem to run on two separate tracks. While political tensions have increased between Russia and the West, our team has sensed little to no measurable impact on our ministries and life in Siberia.

One of the most exciting pieces of news to report is that we are currently in the middle of the first big wave of summer workers in Russia that we've had in a long time. Actually, over the past five years I think we've only had a total of 3 summer workers and now we have 6 coming to serve this summer/fall (plus 7 more who will be here for a brief 4-day glimpse of Siberia). Praise the Lord!

### **Personnel Updates**

Scott and Vanessa Gilbert – Giving birth to their first child in Tuva was no walk in the park, but God has truly blessed the Gilberts with a wonderful gift in Albin. Scott and Vanessa continue to be involved in a strong church in Kyzyl, Light of the Gospel. Scott serves on the leadership team and leads a small group. Scott's business, G&G Nuts, has been able to bring processing up to par with their goals, but now lacks the sales it needs to move forward. They have temporarily laid off workers at the factory until sales pick up. Despite the setback, Scott is in the running for Tuva's Entrepreneur of the Year Award. Scott plans to continue to be involved with VZ until the end of the year, at which point he hopes to back down from his membership and participation in the organization.

Shawna Hess – Shawna continues to disciple young Buryat women in the local church as well as be a light to unbelievers through her interest and experience as a midwife. She recently made a trip to Mongolia to support the ministry of a Buryat women serving there. Recently Shawna has been spending time with a young believer in her church, whose mother is a shaman in the area.

Ted and Kate Mole – Ted continues his work with New Hope Counseling Center in Alaska (to which he is seconded). At the end of the secondment in 2015, Ted plans to make a final decision as to whether he will continue his counseling ministry in Alaska or move back to the Russian Field.

Lucas and Jamie Orner – Our Special Assignment (Oct '13-Feb '14) served as a helpful look back at how far God has brought us in our ministry in Siberia. We continue to deepen our relationships with unbelieving friends in the city, while still feeling the pull of passion for the more unreached areas of Siberia. We feel strongly that God has placed us in Krasnoyarsk to grow our team and serve in ministries here. Much time was spent preparing for summer teams and investigating future ministry opportunities for future team members in the areas of disability ministry and teaching English. We also enjoyed visits to Ulan-Ude and Kyzyl to visit and encourage our team members.

Vova and Tanya Burnashev (previously seconded part-time from Wycliffe) (Yakutia) – The secondment with the Burnashevs ended in April 2014 and was not extended. While Vova and Tanya serve in a

ministry that matches the vision of our team, the secondment practically did not play out as expected. Originally there was discussion of the Burnashevs assisting in the opening of a branch of VZ in Yakutia or Vova pursuing an entrepreneurial role to support his family,, but in the end this was not beneficial to their ministry. While we will have no formal agreement moving forward with the Burnashevs, they are friends with our team and we plan to continue to encourage them and lift them up in prayer as close ministry partners.

## **Other News**

### Recruitment –

A team of five students from the Master College spent six weeks in Tuva and Krasnoyarsk. Many of them expressed a sincere interest in returning to serve in Siberia.

We will host a team of seven students from Prairie Bible Institute for a few days in September, hoping to give them a glimpse of the need and ministry in Siberia.

EnGage! – We have one EnGage! participant this summer, Tina, a school teacher from Florida. She will be serving in Krasnoyarsk until August 16.

GO Trip (Global Outreach) with 5 students from The Master's College (TMC) partnering with The Elisha Foundation (TEF) and facilitated by the Orners and Gilberts — Without reservation I would label this trip as a success in many arenas. First and foremost the team was able to tangibly encourage a new disability ministry in a church in Kyzyl. They were also able to help us process the possibility of a future disability ministry in Siberia and what that would look like practically. Lastly we were able to give five students a glimpse into ministry and life in Siberia, serving with InterAct. Many of them left with a strong desire to return!

Vzaimodestvie (VZ) — Natasha Olenika, the new director of VZ has been doing an impressive job at the reigns of the organization. The is organized and driven and we look forward to seeing her establish a vision for the organization moving forward. We recently notified her that the fund from which VZ has been supported financially from InterAct is running low. We have presented her with a timeline over the next year in which financial support for VZ will be stepped down until July 2015, at which point we hope the organization will be able to be self-sustaining. Our partnership with VZ will continue but we hope that the organization will be financially independent at that point.

## **Prayer Requests**

- Pray for more workers in Siberia. Pray that we are able to sustain the interest of students who serve in the summer and then return to the US.
- Looking at each of our team members on a personal level, we need prayer for impact that the daily stress of living cross-culturally has on us as individuals and families. We have all been in Russia long enough to be very comfortable with our lives and ministries, but regardless, we still run into situations where we face stresses that increase tensions in our relationships.
- Pray for Vanessa and Scott Gilbert as they adjust to life as new parents in a place that does not make daily life easy.

- Pray for Shawna's health. She continues to struggle with medical issues.
- Pray for God to increase our team's passion for the lost.
- Pray that VZ will be able to make a smooth transition over the next year to becoming financially independent.
- Pray for the Orners as Sam, our oldest son, starts Russian school in the Fall. Praise the Lord that He miraculously placed Sam to a class with a believing teacher and fellow student (odds of that happened were one in a million).

## **Conclusion**

As summer draws to a close, we have been blessed with many things—a new team member in birth of baby Albin Gilbert, a wave of summer workers developing a passion and interest in Siberian ministry, and numerous blessings confirming God's calling on our work in Siberia.

Joyfully Serving Christ!  
Lucas Orner  
Russia Field Team Leader