

Siberia Field Report

Submitted to Dale Smith by Lucas Orner

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From the Western perspective it may seem like a lot has changed for the Siberia Field in the last six months. It's true our team has had to make adjustments, but the on-the-ground feel and ability to continue in ministry has changed very little.

Here is a simple non-exhaustive list of everyday changes that have appeared over the last five months after Russian troops moved into Ukraine.

- Our team's US debit and credit cards no longer work in Russia. While we are no longer able to directly withdraw money, we have found multiple ways around this change, and more develop each month.
- Many websites have blocked traffic from Russia and Russia has blocked access to some sites. Both have a work-around through VPNs, which are legal in Russia.
- The vast majority of airlines no longer fly to Russia. There are exceptions, but currently the cheapest route to the US is to fly to St Petersburg and take a bus to Finland and then fly from Helsinki.
- Very little has changed ministry wise. For the first few months following the start of the military operation, we did not travel far from our homes, but now sense that is not an issue.
- Missionaries from other organizations who left Russia shortly after the military operation began, have since been able to reenter the country.
- The economic changes have had the biggest impact on our team. Prices for groceries jumped 30-200% and the ruble has strengthened by 15-30% against the dollar. So, cost of living has noticeably increased. Depending on what the economy does in the next 6 months, our team may need to raise more support.

Dale, I want to express my gratitude to you for trusting me during the past five months and especially immediately following the start of the conflict. You asked wise questions and stayed informed but trusted our team's decision to stay. A huge part of our team's ability to remain was based on the relationships we had in our local communities. We have all been in places of vulnerability with them in the past and we knew that if we suddenly couldn't get access to money that we had people that would help feed us. And by staying we strengthened those relationships even more. While most churches that we work with don't have a category for mission organizations and therefore don't even know InterAct's name, they do know our team and associate longevity and faithfulness with us.

The Emricks continue to deal with the challenge of paperwork both for Ira's US green card and Frankie's Russian visa. Frankie met not only with immigration officials but also the FSB before leaving for Georgia and they have told him that he is welcome and just needs to turn in the paperwork, which he is currently gathering.

As Field Director, one challenge is trying to keep up with new laws and decipher skewed news coming out of various outlets (not delving into the political stories, but practical legal issues).

Advancements on the field include the Costanzos completing CIT and planning to arrive in Krasnoyarsk in February 2023. In July, Shawna joined a group from her local fellowship on a ministry trip to another Buddhist/shamanistic people group in Western Russia. Also in July, the Orners took a trip to Tuva. Ministry in Siberia continues and for that we are grateful to the Lord.

Prayer and Praise:

- Our team is incredibly thankful for the Lord's provision and protection in allowing us to continue ministering in Russia.
- Pray for the Emricks as they pursue Ira's US green card, Frankie's Russian visa, and Pasha's US documents.
- Pray for the team's financial sustainability, that if additional personal support is needed, that God would supply.
- Pray for continued church growth in Tuva and Buryatia.