



# Russia Field Report

February 2013 - Phoenix, Arizona

## Overview

*“Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.” – Joshua 21:45*

God never promised that our Russia field would grow. He never promised we would get visas, that we would not encounter hassles, that we would live in the country we wanted, or even serve in the capacity in which we thought we would serve. He never promised us that we would see great successes or triumphs. But he *did* promise us through his Word that he would never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5), that his Word would not return void (Isaiah 55:11), and that nothing could separate us from Christ’s love (Romans 8:38-39).

Looking back over the last three years of ministry in Russia, I think that I am only now beginning to realize the depth of the tumult and transition we experienced as a field. We were a young, largely inexperienced team that had been handed a plate of ministries and plans which had been highly publicized and promoted and for which none of us were particularly gifted or able to continue and further develop. Each of us was preoccupied with simply figuring out how we were going to remain in the country, while still trying to maintain some level of active ministry.

Virtually none of the plans my family had made for our lives in Russia ever came to pass. My original recruitment to InterAct had been to serve in Yakutia. During training to go to the field the location changed to Tuva. And by the time we arrived in Russia we were living in St. Petersburg. Plans to work in a preaching, teaching and discipleship ministry after language studies never fully materialized as after about one year in Russia I found myself being handed field leadership responsibilities and ultimately the job of field director, which occupied much of my time from that point on. I regret nothing. Though much was unexpected, it was a tremendous experience and we thank God for the task he gave us.

I believe we are now in a new era for our ministry in Russia. We are at a point of stability that we have not had for several years. We have two solid families positioned on the field, with two clear directions for ministries that are growing

and impacting the church in Russia. We are unified around a vision and strategy. In short, I believe we are the healthiest we have been in many years.

### **Krasnoyarsk – Lucas and Jamie Orner**



I am excited about what the Lord is doing in Krasnoyarsk. After almost two years of trying to reach Tuva and not succeeding, the Orners began to consider the fact that the Lord was calling them to stay in Krasnoyarsk. We as a team also recognized this and we all see tremendous value in opening this city up to the work that InterAct does. The Orners have already established themselves with a very healthy church in the city (*Izobrazhenia Baptist*– “Transformation”) that is involved in a number of ministries and has expressed a sincere desire to work with us. Right now, we see this happening in two ways:

1). *English-Teaching Ministry* – This is being used by Transformation Baptist for outreach to many young people in the community and has had many positive results. Lucas and Jamie have had much experience with this in the past and enjoy the work.

2). *Disabilities Ministry* – As the Russia field continues to pursue a partnership with The Elisha Foundation (TEF), we are excited about the connection with Transformation Baptist as they have already been involved with ministry to disabled children in the community for several years. There have already been communications between me, the director of TEF, Justin Reimer, and the pastor of this church as to how we can partner together.

In addition, the Orners are continuing to develop a ministry of hospitality from their home, which includes opportunities to minister to believers and non-believers alike. They hope the next few years of stability will allow them opportunities to explore ministry to the Native peoples of the Krasnoyarsk region.

We hope to have a team of 3-4 for our summer program in 2013 in Krasnoyarsk, primarily teaching English for six weeks.

### *Upcoming Visitors*

After some discussions with leadership, Dave and Kay Henry were invited to return to Russia for a two-month trip. This will serve a two-fold purpose:

- 1). They will spend a month in Krasnoyarsk to offer some respite and mentorship for the Orners.
- 2). Visit Yakutia and continue our relationships there.

We are excited about this opportunity. They currently hope to travel to Russia sometime in the spring of 2013.

### **Tuva – Scott and Vanessa Gilbert**



The newlyweds have established their home in the city of Kyzyl. Scott is finishing his last year of studies at the Tuvan State University (TSU) and continues to labor in transformational business development while learning how to put home and family first. Vanessa is fulfilling a yearlong obligation to work in the international department of TSU and is having many opportunities to interact with unbelieving coworkers there. She is also spearheading the university's foreign exchange program that will allow students from other countries to come for as little as two weeks up to a semester. While this program is explicitly not religious in nature, Christian students would be more than welcome to participate and would have the opportunity to simply be a life-witness in Tuva. InterAct could help promote this among schools so long as the parameters were understood.

The businesses continue to grow and develop and have had many tangible results that have benefitted the kingdom of God. Scott and Vanessa are still hoping to host several interns for the summer of 2013 for the *Kingdom Business* program.

Our partnership with Vzaimodestvie continues to strengthen, and the director, Vitaly Ondar, continues to grow as a leader. Last year his family went through some significant marital trials that, while not completely resolved, are significantly better. Dale and Carol had numerous opportunities to minister to Vitaly during their trip to Russia last fall.

While the primary focus of Vzaimodestvie up to this point has been transformational business, on my recent trip we discussed their desire to expand into more social work in the community as a means of witness and outreach. Some of the areas we discussed are:

1). Disability ministry (also in partnership with TEF) which would include camps for the disabled, printed resources for families and possibly bringing in physical therapists to help teach parents techniques that would improve the quality of life for their children.

2). Cultural exchanges through music: We have discussed the possibility of bringing over a black gospel choir as a means of cross-cultural exchange.

While in Russia we (me, Dale and Carol) managed to have a good discussion with the Gilberts as to how we hope to recruit and further work in Tuva. As it stands right now, broad recruitment efforts for work in the Republic simply are not practical. Efforts to begin new works need to be specific and intentional.

### **Alaska/Yakutia - Ted and Kate Mole**



Their plans continue as usual to return to Russia either full-time or itinerantly and establish a rehab center in the village of Namtsy, Yakutia. Ted was able to travel to Russia this year, continue talks with Vova and Tanya Burnashov about their involvement and talk with the village leadership about the center. All seems to be moving in a positive direction. The timeframe in regards to their return is still nebulous.

### **Gresham, Oregon - Our Family**



I have spent a considerable amount of time praying, talking with others around me, and discussing the direction of our ministry with Cristy. We have both come to the strong conviction that it is time for me to begin stepping back from the role of Russia field director and explore other ministry options. I feel that the Lord has allowed us over the past nearly three years to accomplish a major goal of re-establishing and re-stabilizing the Russia field together with the whole team. As we now no longer live full-time on the field, I feel it is best if this baton is passed to those who are engaged in Russian ministry every day and can speak first-hand to the issues of the field.

We are discussing and praying about what to do. As it stands right now, there are two possible options on the table, one of which has us remaining full-time with InterAct the other of which does not. While we have nothing but love for the organization, we feel this other option outside of the organization must be at least prayerfully considered. At this point in my report I would prefer to divulge further information in face-to-face discussions.

### **Conclusion**

I believe we are the strongest we've ever been on the Russia field. God has shown his faithfulness to us time and time again. We are stable, have a clear vision and strong opportunities that we are pursuing. I believe my work as field director is coming to a close and I am excited about what lies ahead.