

A note from Charlie...

Happy New Year from the Chastains! It's an exciting time for us. In many ways, this is year zero for our family. This is the year of our move to Russia.

A new year- a time to reflect on the past and look to the future.

We've had a big one! Isabel went from a quiet little newborn to a active, passionate toddler. On the mission front: it was a busy year. Our support raising slowly ramped up as the year progressed. We've made new friends here and abroad and the Lord has continued to mold and define our ministry. Isabel made her first trip to St. Petersburg, which she took in stride (her parents on the other hand, are still recovering).

Yet in the midst of my praise for these blessings, I can't help but reflect on the recent tragedies involving two young girls we have worked with in St. Petersburg. It was God's wake-up call to remain steadfast, look to him and prepare.

Those of you who received our earlier newsletters remember Natasha, the young mother in a state home who recently had her 2 young children taken away to begin their own unfortunate cycle of orphanhood. We have been doing this work long enough to see orphans now starting to have children, yet ill-equipped to do so. Ironically, we had just come back to the states and reported big improvements from Natasha, so the news came as quite a shock.

Our November newsletter paid tribute to Tanya, a young lady who lost her battle with kidney failure. Like many of the kids we know there, Tanya could've lived a long life if not for the cruelty and neglect she received as a disabled orphan in Russia. Preventive care and treatment options such as Dialysis were not even considered for her.

Tanya's story is particularly hard for me due to the connections I made with her through music. Most of you know that music is my passion, and I've been fortunate enough to make a living at it. It was Tanya who on my first trip approached me and my "papoose," a small travel guitar I often take to the orphanages. She would sit and listen as I played and sang to her and her fellow housemates. I offered to let her play my instrument, but she was so shy and would always decline. Later in that week, Tanya's orphanage put on a show for our team to thank us for visiting. Right up in front was Tanya playing keyboards and bass during the performance. I was proud and inspired by Tanya, and I wanted to nurture her talent. Before we departed St. Petersburg, I made sure that Tanya had a guitar of her own.

That was in 2001. About 3 years ago, Tanya reached the age in which she had to leave the orphanage. She and 3 other girls were moved to a state nursing home where they worked as maids for the patients there, and in return were given room and board. (This, by the way, was a miracle in comparison to most situations kids face after the orphanage) Over the past couple of years we could tell that Tanya wasn't taking care of herself. (Now we know there were far more severe issues beyond Tanya's poor diet) So every visit we would make a special trip to see the four girls and to make sure their needs were fulfilled. We would take them out for a good meal, prepare them for winter with clothing and supplies, and try to encourage them in their lives. It was always a very important visit for us, because we knew the chances of these girls "making it" were slim, and we were determined to maintain contact to give them support and guidance as the years passed.

Tanya's death finally hit me during the Christmas Eve service last month at our church. One of the musical performances showcased a little girl with a beautiful voice named Rachel. The unique thing about Rachel (besides her tremendous talent) is that she's an adopted orphan from Vladimir, Russia, a small town outside

of Moscow. Rachel has been in the USA for years now, and she's a typical little girl from Kennesaw, GA. It was a blessing to see this child whose circumstances mirrored those of orphans we know in St. Petersburg thriving in such a glorious way. She was happy and healthy- and she was singing to the Lord. It was like our goal was standing up there staring us in the face. It could've been Tanya playing piano up there, too.

In that moment of reflecting on the birth of Jesus, I was overwhelmed by the comparison of Rachel's bright future with Tanya's short life. Rachel is thriving today, but given different circumstances, she may have followed Tanya's path. I asked God, "What makes one story so positive, yet another so heartbreaking?"

I don't think he's answered yet. (I'm one of those always looking for a "burning bush") But to me, it comes down to sacrifice.

Rachel's parents sacrificed A LOT to bring her to America. Miki and I constantly struggle with the fact that we can't do more in Russia. We're tired and we haven't even moved there yet.

I recently read in a book, "Giving is not giving until it interrupts your lifestyle."

Miki and I are giving up our comfortable home, close proximity to family and good jobs to answer God's call to help some of these children become "Rachels." We really need your help. So my question to you is, what could you do to interrupt your lifestyle?

Could you skip Starbucks a couple of times each month to commit \$204 a year to this ministry? (I understand how important this is to all you caffeine heads! I've began a campaign to get Dunkin Donuts to build a store in Russia!)

How about waking up 30 minutes earlier once a week to pray for us when we're there?  
How about buying 2 pairs of shoes instead of one while out shopping for your grandkids and sending one to an orphan?

How about not "supersizing it" the next time at your favorite fast food joint and putting aside the money saved for street kids living in Russia?

What about trading in those vacation tickets to a tropical locale in for 2 weeks in the former Soviet Union? I promise that it would be just as memorable.

With the political situation as it is in Russia right now, missionaries serving there are struggling. The government is attempting to isolate itself more and more, and this is affecting our ability to work in all facets of ministry. Even here in the US, Russia's rhetoric is having an impact on our fundraising. Miki and I are asking you to set aside political opinions and focus in on the Great Commission. The rhetoric of a few men in power has very little impact on our capabilities to help suffering children at the local level. Many of you have said you will support, now we ask you firm up your partnership with us. God Bless! Charlie & Miki

#### Ways to donate to this ministry:

##### To make a donation by check:

- send a check to the following address, noting "Chastain/Russia 322" in the memo:

The Mission Society  
6234 Crooked Creek Road  
Norcross, GA 30092

##### To make a donation by credit card or electronic debit:

- go to our website: [www.actsofadvocacy.org](http://www.actsofadvocacy.org) and click on "Give" to go to the Mission Society "donations" page.

##### To make a monthly pledge:

Either contact us via email or phone (770-428-7105) so that we can send you the appropriate documentation, or go to our website: [www.actsofadvocacy.org](http://www.actsofadvocacy.org) and click on "Give" to go to the Mission Society "donations" page.

