

ACTS OF ADVOCACY



Over these past few months of travel, Jasper has learned to be a good traveler like his big sister, Isabel.

Greetings to you in Christ Jesus this Christmas season! We pray the Lord's peace and blessing are on each of you during these precious weeks of Advent.

Last year we spent this time in Russia. The most "celebrated" holiday this time of year in Russia is actually New Years, when Russians put up their "yolkas", or their "New Years trees". The day of Christmas, which is celebrated in Russia on the 7th of January, is actually considered by many Russians as more a day of reverence and reflection of the birth of our Lord. Gifts, if given, are generally small. Christmas day in Russia I think looks more like our Thanksgiving Day, with families coming together and eating and eating and eating.

Last year we did manage to find a small artificial tree, which we put up early in December. Of course, we were the only apartment in our neighborhood with a Christmas tree up before December 27th! I had also brought a couple of our Christmas decorations from the states, which we hung around the apartment. And occasionally I would find an American radio station online that was playing Christmas music, which I would turn up as loudly as I could on my little laptop so as to be heard through the apartment.

Earlier this week, Charlie and I decided to take the kids to Callaway Gardens, just south of Atlanta, to see their annual Christmas Lights display. It was gorgeous! The show included a lighted butterfly garden, a magical lighted forest, and even Tinker Bell and her magical garden! Then we went inside the Christmas Tent where we found homemade fudge, a working toy train, Santa Claus, and what must have been 50 Christmas trees all lit and decorated so beautifully.

Driving down the road these past several days we've begun to see Christmas lights showing up on houses as well. More than once already we've turned around to let Isabel get a better look at some of the amazing decorations we've seen! I turn on the radio and Christmas music is playing. I even found some awesome little "peppermint candy" lights in the dollar bin at Target, which are hanging from the 3 ft. tree that was loaned to us to use while we're in the states this month.

And in the midst of all of this in these recent days, I keep asking myself: When my kids grow up and Christmas rolls around for them year after year, will they too be consumed by the sentimentality of the season? Will they, like me, seek to use artificial trees and lights and activity to fill up these days, which hold more expectation than any other during the year?

Or will this time be for them a time of reverence? Will they come to truly understand that the great expectation that is so prevalent in these days can only be satisfied by watching and waiting. Will they be able to discern how great is the enemy's efforts during this time to distract us? Will they realize the evidence these distractions provide that these days must be among the most precious in all of humanity, because these are the days that we celebrate the coming of the Savior of humankind?

The intensity of the void in each of us increases in these days simply as a result of nearness of the presence of our Creator – the quickness with which the day of His coming approaches. We all know that these days are few, so with love there is also a sense of urgency in seeking our Lord, and in our watching and waiting and believing that He indeed is coming.

Assuming all things come together (Lord bless the visa process!), we are leaving for Russia on the 11th of January. No, we do not feel prepared – i.e. there are still several folks we've not been able to see on this visit home, our financial support is not quite back up to the level we'd wanted (of course let us know if you'd like to help with that!), Miki is to start teaching "American" English to Russian kids once we arrive back in Russia, just to name a few examples.

But mostly, we feel that we've been hearing a good bit recently from the Lord on some of the direction He wants to take once we're in St. Petersburg again. Some of these things we feel may be able to

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start immediately, such as reconnecting with some of the kids we used to work with who are now living in adult facilities or in communal apartments, or furthering our support of other Russians and Russian churches who are feeling a call into the work with orphans.

Some other things we sense the Lord discussing with us are financially and logistically a bit more "involved" than prayer meetings and social visits at our flat. Some of you may be hearing from us about some of these things in upcoming weeks and months – so fair warning! In any case all of us, our 4 year old Isabel included, are feeling a great deal of peace and joy at the idea of getting back to Russia, and that in itself is quite a miracle given some of the other feelings we've all had about it at different times in the past couple of years!

We can not express how humbled we have felt by the grace and love and generosity so many of you have shown us in recent weeks as we have traveled and spent time with you. Today we visited a church near our apartment, and in his sermon the pastor said something so simple, that by now should be so obvious to us - "The Lord enables us to do that which He requires." We pray that in these days you will know the presence of the Lord in your life, and that we all will be able to testify without a hint of doubt that the works of our generation were done – could have only been done – because of the move of the presence of our God in and through us all, in the name of Jesus Christ.

**Peace be on you this Christmas season!
Charlie, Miki, Isabel and Jasper**

Loving Father,
Help us remember the birth of Jesus,
that we may share in the song of the angels,
the gladness of the shepherds,
and worship of the wise men.

Close the door of hate
and open the door of love all over the world.
Let kindness come with every gift
and good desires with every greeting.
Deliver us from evil by the blessing
which Christ brings,
and teach us to be merry with clear hearts.

May the Christmas morning
make us happy to be thy children,
and Christmas evening bring us to our beds
with grateful thoughts,
forgiving and forgiven,
for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Robert Louis Stevenson

FUNDING UPDATE

As year three begins in St. Petersburg for the Chastains, we find ourselves feeling more and more privileged for the blessing of your financial support to do this amazing work in Russia. We will return to Saint Petersburg on January 11th.

However, as with everyone in this economy, our monthly support has seen a decrease in recent months, and the reality is that in order for us to sustain our next term in Russia, we do need to have an increase in our financial support, either in the way of one-time gifts or in monthly commitments.

We're looking for \$200 more per month to keep projects going. As 2010 is coming to a close, we want to invite you to consider partnering with The Mission Society by pledging \$25, \$50, \$100 or more per month to "fill the gap". Even if 10% of the readers on this mailing list decided to give \$10/month, we'd reach our goal!

If you feel the Lord is leading you to begin to financially support the work we're doing in Russia, please see the options below.

**Would you join us in
praying that we will have
sufficient support to work
in 2011 without budget
challenges?**

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 debit:

- go to our website: 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 (678-436-3016) so that we can send you the appropriate documentation, or go to our website: www.actsofadvocacy.org and click on "Give" to go to the Mission Society "donations" page.