

# ACTS OF ADVOCACY

These are photos from a local intake hospital- where children go right after they are given to the state.



**The Mission  
Society**

## Greetings in Christ from Russia!

We are officially in our 5th week as residents of St. Petersburg, and it has been quite a month:

**First and foremost** – About 5 days before we left Georgia, Charlie and I found out that we were expecting our second child!!! God is amazing. Yes, for those asking, there have been some moments when I've wondered about His timing in this. But the unchanging truth is that His timing is perfect, and His blessing on this family at this time is more than I could have ever dreamed.

Our flat in St. Petersburg is awesome! It is close to the edge of the city, so it is not as loud and the air is cleaner than in the center. It is also less than 2 blocks from a huge city park (like Central Park, NYC huge). Finally, one bus ride from here is a large grocery store that has - you won't believe it - peanut butter!

We began language school on June 1, which is held in our flat 3 mornings a week. Isabel has also started practicing sounds she's hearing on the playground and is telling Russians "Privet" (hello), "Spaceeba" (thank you), and "Baca" (bye bye).

We just finished hosting a team from St. John's UMC in Aiken, SC, who spent time working with disabled orphans and the staff at a few facilities in the area. Thanks for keeping this team and their families in your prayers during this time.

## Who are our brothers and sisters in St. Petersburg?

It took us several days, but we came to realize that the huge park near our flat is actually a memorial park, built after the 2nd World War. The park was built to memorialize the estimated 650,000 to 800,000 people (almost 1/3 of the city's population at that time) who died of cold and starvation during the 900 day siege of St. Petersburg (then called Leningrad), when German forces surrounded the city from September 8, 1941 until January 27, 1944, and the city refused to surrender.

We found out from our landlord that the park was originally the site of a brick-making plant that the city turned into a place for incinerating many of the bodies as they became overwhelmed with the death toll. The plant is no longer there, but in the park is located one of the large carts that was used during that time to carry bodies to the plant. There is almost always some sort of memorial left on this cart. Yesterday someone had left flowers on top of it. Today Isabel and I were walking by and an elderly lady was standing near the cart, crying silently. Of course in the U.S., we have seen significant tragedy in recent years. But it is humbling to me to be reminded of the incredible blessing in my life of growing up and living in a city – in a country - that has seen so little war within its borders in recent history.

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Further, it is amazing to me how easily I've taken this blessing for granted, and how ungrateful I truly have become.

If nothing else, a month living in St. Petersburg, Russia has me feeling humbled (almost ashamed I confess) and grateful. And I understand from others who've "been there" that this is just the beginning...

We ask for your prayers!!! Many of our prayer requests at this time are personal. This transition has had it's difficult moments for each of us:

**The pregnancy** has brought with it the nausea and exhaustion (and, yes, occasional emotional outbursts) one would expect, but for which we had not totally planned! Also, we are in the process of finding a clinic in St. Petersburg for prenatal care and delivery.

**Isabel** is coming to terms with what all this move means for her (in the way that 2 year-olds do that), and we are really praying that it will work out for her to spend more time with kids her age on a regular basis.

**Keep Charlie** in your prayers as well. He has worked so hard to get us here, and now that we're here, is really seeking to find his place as we begin to "be still" again (for the first time in over a year when we sold our home), and to study Russian and learn how to live in St. Petersburg.

It feels like it is not enough to say that we love you. Although we did not always understand it, our taking more than 2 years to finally move to St. Petersburg meant that we were able to spend a lot of time with many of you in the process, and we miss you all very much! Please let us know how things are and how we can pray for you, and may you know the love and peace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ in this time.

Love and blessings to you

**Miki,  
Charlie,  
and Isa**



**UPDATE FROM UKRAINE:** In our last newsletter, I promised I would tell you more about my quick trip to Donetsk, Ukraine for The Eastern European Summit on Orphans and the Church. It was an encouraging visit- Ukraine is embracing foster homes and has made great strides in reducing the amount of children under state care.

During the conference, I hosted a workshop on ways in which the local church can begin to work with disabled orphans in their area. Michael Norton, a friend from St. Johns UMC, helped me cast a vision by showing examples of disabilities care in his hometown. I feel optimistic about the future for disabled orphans in Eastern Europe.

During our time there, we were also able to visit local foster homes, a large rehab shelter for street kids and a foster home for HIV+ orphans. It was a powerful witness to continue our advocacy for these precious children of God.

Finally, some new contacts were made in the region, and possible partnerships are on the horizon. Please pray that Miki and I will seek HIS will as these opportunities present themselves in the near future!

Thank you for your continued prayers and support.

#### 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

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