

ACTS OF ADVOCACY

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's hard to believe, but October is here! The summer is over, our first 15 months in Russia have come to an end, and we are back in the U.S. for our first furlough! There is a lot to tell about what the Lord has been doing these past months, and we hope to do just that when we see many of you in upcoming weeks. But we'd also like to share about a couple of particular ministry opportunities we've seen develop in this month's newsletter:

Summer Teams

This summer we had the privilege of working with several different short-term teams from the U.S. and the U.K. Here's some info about a couple of them.

Elama - In late May and June, we worked with two different teams who came to St. Petersburg in efforts with the local Russian charity, MIR, and the free youth camp MIR operates, which is located north of the city and is called Elama. St. James UMC in Athens, GA and Tuscaloosa FUMC in Tuscaloosa, AL both sent teams to work at Elama. Over the course of 3 weeks the two teams were able to construct a new kitchen and open pavilion for meeting space for the children's camps that are held there.



Intake Hospital #15 –

During their trip, the team from Tuscaloosa FUMC also spent a few days working with some of the kids staying at one of the intake hospitals in St. Petersburg. The intake hospital is the first place a child sees immediately after he/she is removed from their parents' custody. Typically they spend 3-4 weeks there before being assigned to an orphanage. As you can imagine, this is a very difficult place for ministry, but may also be one of the most vital. If a healthy, loving relationship based on the love of Christ can be established here with these children before they ever see the orphanage, then it increases the chances of that relationship having a significant impact on the child as they grow.



Of course, ministry at the intake hospital also carries with it an importance to maintain relationships established between team members and children if possible. We ask that you keep the intake hospital ministry in your prayers, and particularly those folks who feel called to serve the children at this



Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (Matthew 19:14)

location, as the important commitment created here can become difficult physically, spiritually and financially to maintain over the years.

Orphanage #1 Summer Camp – St. John's UMC from Aiken, SC sent a team to St. Petersburg in July who spent a week working with kids from the disabled Orphanage #1 while they were at summer camp. Because the schedule is much more relaxed at summer camp than while they are at the orphanage, working at summer camp often means that teams can spend more free time with the children. The types of activities the team enjoyed with the kids included arts and crafts, outdoor games (i.e. scooters, frisbees, volleyball), and socializing at the evening "disco" (i.e. listening to music and talking).

The team from St. John's UMC was also able to spend time with the counselors and staff of Orphanage #1, encouraging them and giving them gifts to show their appreciation for all that these ladies do for the kids. This part of the ministry is often overlooked, but is very important as the staff often works very long hours for very little pay. Over time these counselors have the closest relationships with the kids, and encouraging and supporting them during the few days a year that we are with them means a lot during the rest of the time when we are not. On the day the team left the camp, a couple of the older counselors as well as several kids cried as they said goodbye.



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Volkhov Orphanage Camp – Love Russia, a partner organization of ours out of the U.K. sent a team early in August to work with two orphanages located in Volkhov, a small town about 100 kilometers outside of St. Petersburg. Due to their location out of St. Petersburg, these facilities get very little attention from foreign workers. It is hard for us to comprehend how much this type of team must mean to the staff of these facilities that receive so few visitors over the months. The Love Russia team was comprised of individuals who'd received extensive training in working with disabled children. Their work each day proved not only to be beneficial for the kids, but also turned out to be very encouraging for the staff workers to realize that they are not the only ones who have a desire to love and see the Lord's blessing on these children.



Support of Local Organizations

One of the biggest surprises to us these past several months has been the Lord's direction for us to move away a bit in our work directly with the kids and staff of these facilities, and for us to move towards **supporting and helping empower local Russian-led charities and individuals** that are seeking to do the work instead:

Local churches – During our first year, we continued to feel the Lord moving us to develop relationships with a few different local churches. For example, the associate pastor of one church has spoken to us about his vision of holding Friday night praise and worship and fellowship meetings for boys living at a local shelter. This idea of working with these orphans is so new for the Russian church, that he seemed almost embarrassed to share it with us, and was so encouraged by our response that we thought that it was an amazing idea and that we'd love to help him with it in any way we can. We introduced another pastor to the intake hospital located near her church after she'd mentioned that she'd thought about getting involved in the orphan ministry, and she and some of the members have begun volunteering at this intake hospital on a regular basis.

Krilova/Volkhov – We were blessed this past spring to have the pleasure of meeting Vera Zhuravleva, who grew up in the underground Baptist church of which her father was the pastor during the time of the Soviet Union. Several years ago, Vera was given the opportunity to purchase the land on which the church stands. Since that time, she has invested a great deal of her life in restoring the property, even digging a well and restoring additional "guest" facilities there. Now the property is used in ministry of the

community of Murmanskies Varota, including providing canned goods and water to shut-ins during the winter (the town well freezes in the winter, and many rely on Vera's), and running a summer camp for the many street children who live in Volkhov.

Also, this summer we were able to introduce partner organizations Love Russia (mentioned previously) and Tuscaloosa FUMC to the ministry at Krilova House in Volkhov. Through these connections, doors have begun to open not only to support the current ministries there, but also to what seems to be the Lord's expansion of that ministry. By bringing in teams to work with local orphans, relationships have strengthened between Krilova House and the local orphanages in Volkhov. Further, both partners are discussing plans to support capital projects at Krilova House, including building a winter kitchen, so that the needs of the community during that difficult season may be met more easily.



Individuals – Through partnerships with the local Russian charity, MIR and with other Western ministries, the Lord has provided the means for supporting a few of our Russian brothers and sisters in Christ who feel a call to minister to the orphans there on a full-time basis. Given that the idea of charity is such a new one in Russia, the fact that these individuals are stepping out in this direction speaks very highly of their faith and dependence on God. Also, however, it means that finding support for this type of work locally (i.e. from Russian churches) can be very difficult.



Along with their efforts in the ministry of the orphans, these individuals are also working to engage the local church in hopes that they will not always have to be so dependent on support from the West to do the work to which the Lord has called them. **To be clear, the desire to enable the Russian church in this work is less about trying to "break away" from Western support, and is more because these individuals have seen firsthand how the Lord uses the work with the children of Russia to bring healing and restoration to His church, and because they long to see this type of movement of His Spirit in the church of Russia as well.**



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Being home these past few weeks, Charlie and I have heard from so many who have lost their jobs and who are struggling to make ends meet, often both physically and spiritually. In this time, especially, we want to express to you how much we appreciate your support for us to be able to do this amazing work in Russia. Only the Lord knows how long we will be able to continue living and working in St. Petersburg, and we really do consider every day in this ministry to be a privilege.

We are planning to see many of you soon at your church! Please contact us if you'd like for us to come to your church and share about what the Lord is doing in Russia! We'd love to see you!

Love and blessings -

Miki, Charlie, Isa and Jasper



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 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.

TO MAKE A SPECIFIC CONTRIBUTION FOR THE VAN PURCHASE, PLEASE SPECIFY "CHASTAIN VEHICLE" ON YOUR CHECK NOTE OR ONLINE DONATION.

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 are making plans to return there in January. 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 be able to return in January, we do need to have an increase in our financial support, either in the way of one-time gifts or in monthly commitments.

If you feel the Lord is leading you to begin to financially support the work we're doing in Russia, please let us know or see below for different ways that can be accomplished.

DEAR CHARLIE AND MIKI,

- I will pray for you. Please send me your prayer letter.
- Update me by email: _____
- As God provides, I plan to partner with you by giving \$ _____ per month / quarter / year for _____ years.
- I would like to donate a one-time gift of \$ _____.

Name (PLEASE PRINT) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (_____) _____ Home Church _____

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Designate gifts: "Chastain Support 5/322"

