

Russian Report
April/May – 2006

We arrived in Moscow April 5th and was met by Kostya who lives in Moscow and Alicia from Tambov. Ura is our driver who takes us to the train station on the other side of Moscow and has been faithful to deliver us safely for a number of years now. Ura is not a member of the church but is a fine person. He took us this year to his flat to meet his wife and daughter. Kostya has been preaching to him so we have hope in the future that Ura will obey the gospel.

We arrived Thursday morning in Tambov and invited the church members to meet with us Friday evening at the building to get a feel for how things are going in the church. We set up services for Sunday morning, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday evening meetings.

Vadim (my interpreter) showed me a diagram of a new building project. This project is a half block from our building. This diagram shows that it will eventually include our building to be destroyed. The members are aware they may need to relocate in the near future. All of our papers are up to date and in order concerning the building so we should be paid for it's market value. If this happens we should be alright and able to purchase property in another location.

The Sunday morning service was good and we could visibly see friendships had been restored. Church problems had created a divided congregation. Sister Alicia said, "friendships had been restored," and we could see that was the case. Some who had departed the church over the problems have returned.

I baptized a young man years ago who has since married. His wife's name is Eve and they have a daughter named Zhanya. Teresa has been taking clothes for Zhanya for quite a while and I believe it has touched Eve's heart. In conversation Teresa was having with Eve, we learned that Eve has a brother in Minsk his name is Oleg. I wrote Oleg an e-mail to try to establish correspondence and he wrote me back. He is a member of the church with the brethren who use individual cups in communion. I am going to continue writing him through this year in hopes we can come to an agreement on this subject. If we can I will meet him next year either in Minsk or Moscow. I would certainly love to see our work expand to Minsk.

Brother Kostya is working in Moscow and it is a very difficult work. I asked him if he would like for Teresa and I to help him next year for about a week and he replied, "I would simply love that!" We plan on doing some advertising and will hold Bible studies all through the day if possible. The rent on the room is \$20 per hour, so I'll have to see how much money I will have to invest in that work. It will also be a good time to try to meet Oleg either in Minsk or he can come to Moscow. If I go to Minsk I will have Kostya to interpret for me. Another real advantage is that Oleg speaks and writes good English. With the help of Kostya (who came to Tambov 2 times to help with the work) I was able to meet with some brethren who had not been attending services. Sister Vera's husband Alexey met with me and said, "he was going to start coming to services again," and he was there the following Lord's day and thereafter. He can teach the Bible in the public service so he is quite valuable.

I mentioned last year that brother John was being abused by his dad and brother and needed a place to live away from them. Sister Valentina went to work on the problem writing president Putin and receiving a reply from his office. We left money for some of the legal work and there was a court hearing while we were there but we hadn't heard about the outcome. In the mean time I received an e-mail from Alicia the other day that stated, "brother John had been killed." I am waiting for further information on the matter.

We enjoyed some good crowds at the services and could see things were much better than the past two years had been. When the problems started the members told me, "we are not going to invite our neighbors and friends to come to church here." This year looked more like the old Tambov. Members invited neighbors and friends and we had visitors at every service. Sister Natasha invited a neighbor who is recovering from surgery who said, "she is going to be baptized as soon as she is well." Another man named Misha came nearly every service and I believe he will continue coming.

Teresa did Bible crafts with the children with the help of mothers and grandmothers. This was a big success and got a number of people involved. It has made a big positive impression on the children and their parents. Zhanya missed one of the craft sessions and cried and cried! Her mom, Eve called Teresa and asked, "if a special session could be conducted so she could do her craft," Teresa obliged.

Rumors pass around in Russia just as they do here in America. As Christians we should always investigate or ignore rumors. Rumors can hurt reputations and destroy ones credibility. I will include this exchange I had with a Doctor. "Gary, do you realize Russia's population is going down one million people per year? George Bush is trying to reduce our population to forty million." Gary, do you realize we are a very rich nation in natural resources and these resources bring in a lot of revenue, yet our people are poor?" "The money is being sent to invest in the United States." I addressed both of these comments but you can see how such rumors are spread around placing America in a bad light.

I had two services to preach before leaving Tambov and got a sore throat to the point I almost could not swallow. I had come too far not to finish my work, so I proceeded on. I had blisters in my throat and fortunately Teresa had some antibiotic. The crowd Lord's day was quite impressive.

At the train station one of the largest crowds in a long time came to see us off. Teresa and I were certainly encouraged by the improvements made with the church this year.

Remember to continue praying for these folks and they told me to tell you," thank you very much for all you are doing for them, for your financial help, your prayers, and your love!"

Gary Barrett