

### Russian Report - 4/3/2007

Upon our departure from Wichita, sitting right across from us on the plane were two people Teresa thought she recognized. She inquired if they were from Germany and they replied, "yes." We had met Klaus and Sigi about eight years ago when we stopped through Frankfort to visit with Mike & Angela Wilson . We visited with Klaus and Sigi for two days. Teresa has a remarkable memory to be able to recall those folks no longer than we were with them.

We arrived in Moscow and met Kostya, Yuri and Alicia (from Tambov) Yuri has a van and is a big help to us. We transport clothes that Teresa gathers for the children. Kostya said, "Yuri has decided to be baptized when the water warms up in the river." Three or four years ago when Kostya tried to talk to Yuri about baptism he would say, "I don't want to discuss it."

We arrived in Tambov on Wednesday and I set up lectures for Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday with open days for private visits.

Teresa was able to hold two women's Bible studies and ten to twelve women showed up. She also conducted children's crafts which were Bible based to teach a Bible message and these were well attended. Children who have parents or grandparents who may not be members of the church will come to these, so it is a good outreach.

Brother Valera (Kostya's dad) a member of the Tambov church was in the hospital so Alicia, Tamara (Valara's wife), Teresa and I went to see him. On the way back to catch the bus a lady had been hit by a car. Alicia, who is a nurse and I ran to lend assistance. We helped load her in the ambulance and she was taken to the same hospital where sister Alicia is "head nurse." Later on that day I called Alicia and she said the, "lady had passed away."

While services were going on one evening some boys outside were pecking on the windows. Sister Lera went outside to talk to them and the next thing we knew here came six boys into the service. They set down and listened and were well behaved. They came other times as well and we were very happy to have them.

The Sunday morning services were well attended with visitors from the area as well as from sister churches at Tula and Michurinsk. I was happy to hear that there are about ten people meeting in a home in Michurinsk. One of the visiting sisters from Michurinsk said that, "Nikoli had baptized her a few months ago.

Alicia made me some business cards with the church buildings address, times of services and a phone number for information. Teresa and I pass these out at the market and every where we have a chance. Some people heard us speaking English in the park and came over and introduced themselves. Art, a teacher of English, had his classmates with him. He said, "I have been to America five times and loved it." He invited me to speak to a class at the University. Wednesday evening he and five members of the class came to the services. All together we had about twenty visitors and these will be our leads for next year. The church is doing very well and the attitudes were good. It was one of the best trips we have had over there in five years.

As we left Tambov on the train many friends and church members were there to see us off. We arrived in Moscow about 6:30 a.m. and was met by Kostya and Yuri. Kostya said, "Yuri wants to be baptized and wants you to perform it." Teresa and I were thrilled and what a wonderful ending to a great trip!

**"Included – an extremely interesting day by day report! Gary Barrett**

As we boarded the plane to leave Wichita Teresa recognized a couple she believed was from Germany. Upon inquiring she found that was the case. We had met them eight years ago when in Frankfort to visit Mike Wilson. We were all so thrilled to meet again and simply amazed that this could occur. A young man named Jacob was praying for our trip that we would meet someone we could lead to the Lord or encourage. This prayer was amazingly answered! Klaus had been able a few years ago to come to CO. and go to school to become a preacher. He was visiting one of the sponsoring churches not far from Wichita. They had been here about three weeks and were heading back home from Wichita on the exact same day and same plane we were on. I hope to be able to stop through Frankfort next year to visit the German church there. Klaus and his wife, Teresa and I concluded, God had brought us together for a purpose.

We arrived in Moscow and was met by Kostya and Yuri. Kostya has been working with the church in Moscow. He told us that, "Yuri wanted to be baptized as soon as the water in the river warmed up a bit." Interestingly, about three or four years ago he told Kostya, "I don't want to talk about baptism any more." Yuri has been a tremendous help to us with his van moving our luggage across Moscow from the airport to the train station. We usually have 350 pounds of luggage which includes many clothes for the children in Moscow and Tambov and some vitamins and medicines that are hard to get or too expensive to purchase.

We arrived in Tambov 4/4 and I set up lectures for Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. The other days were left open for private studies and visits. Vladimir Motov is doing a lot of interpreting for me this year. Vladimir is a psychiatrist and has some of his work published on Wiki pedia on the internet. When I first met Vladimir he was an atheist. We have had many good studies on evolution and the creation of the universe. He told me, "Gary, I use to think science could answer everything but now I do not believe that."

My lectures have been focusing on "self centeredness." I realize we in America have this same problem but theirs is a result of the communist years. Everyone looked out for "self." Vladimir said, "we didn't talk to neighbors or even look at them. It could very well be your neighbors that would turn you in to authorities to direct attention from themselves onto someone else." No one wanted to make a ten year visit to a Russian prison camp in Siberia. I remember when Teresa and I first started going to Russia. We stayed with a couple named Dusya and Ivan. Dusya would fix something for Teresa and I to eat and my interpreter Vadim who was with us was asked to wait outside the flat. We would have no part of this so we invited him in to eat what we ate, ignoring Dusya's frowns.

Sister Marina (Boris's mom) invited a visitor to come to services named Paulina. Paulina came and then invited us to come to her flat and have dinner with her. She said, "she was originally from south Russia and remembered her parents having church services in their home every Saturday as they were Seventh Day Adventist." She attended a number of the services and said, "she enjoyed it and would come back." She will be a good lead for our next visit.

I told Vladimir Motov about Jacob praying that we would meet someone on the plane we could encourage and as a result we met the Germans we hadn't seen for eight years. He couldn't believe it and was simply amazed! He said, "the possibilities of that happening would be nearly impossible." We said, "we believed God was behind it," and I believe

Motov was moved by this strange incident. Vladimir and I discussed Communism which based some of its ideas from the situation that occurred in Acts chapter 2 where the disciples had all things in common, sold their possessions and divided the money among those in need. I explained to Vladimir this was a special occasion and wasn't on going. Jews had come to Jerusalem to worship at the Passover celebration and remained in Jerusalem to hear more about the Messiah Jesus Christ. As a result they ran out of money and food and needed help till they returned home. The Christians at Jerusalem took care of this temporary need.

14<sup>th</sup> – Teresa is holding a woman's Bible study and ten sisters are present. Teresa stressed reaching out to the lost and letting people know you love them and care about them. Later we met Zoya and her daughter Natasha. Natasha lost her husband to death from alcoholism and is in a depression. She said, "she feels nothing is good in her life." Zoya said, "there is no help anywhere." We began to point out God's blessings to them. Natasha has a job but doesn't like it which pays her about \$200 per month plus she may be in line for a promotion so she doesn't want to leave that job. I told her, "you have a place to live, a healthy son, food to eat, and you still have your mother with you." She smiled!

Teresa held children's crafts and ten children with parents were present. These are Bible based crafts to teach a spiritual lesson and are a good source of encouragement.

We are enjoying very good crowds at the church services on Sunday morning. Brother John is with us but has been having serious nervous problems. He will laugh and then cry. He has been wondering around the city and has trouble remembering where he lives. Sister Valentina takes care of him doing his clothes and sometimes feeding him. This is quite a load for her as she is taking care of her very ill husband. The Tambov Doctors have been looking for John to put him in the hospital to receive medical help. Valentina called them and told them he was at church. After services they took him (he being very unwilling) away to the hospital. It was a very sad event for the church members!

Jimmy Vannoy converted Valodia and Eula in Michurinsk that have four daughters and two sons. We had not seen them for a number of years as they started going to church somewhere else. Sunday morning Assyia (20) and her sister Masha (14) were at church. Assyia is going to school in Tambov and attends church. She said, "I remember you," and it was so good to see those girls again!

16<sup>th</sup> A young man named Samoly from the Congo came to the flat to talk to me. He said, "pastor, I am in serious need." There is a civil war going on in the Congo so my dad, who is a minister, gave me money and sent me to Russia for safety. I have been threatened with death if I stayed in the Congo. My dad was to send me money for schooling but he and my mother have been killed. Now the Dean of the university has told me, "I must pay \$1000 or will be sent back to the Congo." I asked, "Samoly, you are a believer?" He replied, "yes." I inquired, "so you have been baptized?" He replied, "what is baptism?" I said, "turn to Mark 16:16," and he didn't know where to look." I thought, how strange for a preachers son not to know about baptism. I presented our talk to the woman's Bible study group that was in progress downstairs. Sister Lera said, "I will go to the university and check out the story." She did just that and returned with the facts. The Dean said, "Russia pays for all his expenses and Somaly would be called in and reprimanded for this scheme."

At 11:00 a.m. Teresa and I met Alicia and Tamara (Kostya's mother) and went to the hospital to see Valera (Kostya's dad) who has been quite ill. On our way back down the road to catch the bus we heard tires screeching and then a thud. I thought there has been a car crash. I ran a short distance to the corner and looking across the street I saw a body lying there in the road. Alicia and I ran across the road to lend assistance. Alicia is a nurse so she knew what to do. An ambulance was called and in the mean time Alicia did what she could. About one third of the lady's head was gone and I saw her scalp and a piece of her skull laying in the road. The ambulance finally came and we loaded her on the stretcher and she was placed in the ambulance and was taken to the hospital where Alicia is the head nurse. Alicia said, "the hospital let her lay there in shock and did nearly nothing," and later that evening she passed away. It was a terrible sight to see and I had trouble sleeping for quite a while as I could see that lady's face in my mind!

Brother Boris (sister Marina's son) has to have a cornea transplant or the Doctor's say, "he will go blind." He is waiting on that procedure to take place. Marina said, "A while back he and a friend were at a restaurant and they walked outside so the friend could smoke a cigarette. The police were standing there and told Boris, "he had broke a mirror on a car and had to pay for it." Boris told them, "I didn't break a mirror on any car." They ordered him into the police car and took him out of town a piece and told him to get out of the car. There two men were waiting and told him to pay money and started hitting him in the face. He told them, "he had no money," so they told him, "to go away," so he walked back to town.

18<sup>th</sup> – we had a good service this evening and a number of members came out. While services were going on some boys were tapping on the windows so Lera went out to talk to them. In a few minutes here came six boys and they sat down and listened very intently. After services we gave them coke and cookies and they said, "we will be back." Sunday morning the 22<sup>nd</sup>. The church house is nearly full. A number of visitors have come and some members that haven't been around for some time. Nikoli has been talking with them trying to encourage them. Four members from the Michurinsk church have come to visit. Nikoli has recently baptized a woman from Michurinsk and she has come to visit. One of the sisters from Michurinsk said, "we have ten people meeting in my home now for services." Nikoli goes to Michurinsk every Sunday after Tambov services. I had business cards made up for me with the church address, times of services, and Alicia's phone number for information. Teresa and I hand these out everywhere we go. We meet many people in the market that get use to seeing us and we will often hand them a card. We were walking by the river one evening while Teresa was trying to help Dema (Vadim's son) with a English lesson. A man named Art heard us talking in English and came up and introduced himself. He said, "I have been to America five times and love it." He invited me to speak at the university as he teaches there. I gave him a card and Wednesday evening he and five of his English students showed up at services. I met with Dominic, Roman, and Vladimir for lunch. Roman and Vladimir are young men who need to obey the gospel and I preach to them every year when we meet. Vladimir said, "when he was twelve his grandfather took him to the Orthodox Church for baptism." He said, "the priest took him by all the icons (pictures of saints) so he could kiss them. A piece of his hair was cut and placed in wax then into water to see if it would float. Then water was poured on his head for baptism." I told him, "water baptism is a burial not a pouring," and he took the information quite seriously.

While I was meeting with the boys for lunch Teresa had a visitor at the flat. One of the neighbors was upset about the boys coming to the services. She was speaking to Teresa in Russian which was not understandable but shaking her fist at her. Teresa said she tried to shut the door but the lady wouldn't let her and the woman kept trying to come in. Alicia went over to talk to the neighbors about the problem. The neighbor said, "you have made for yourselves about thirty enemies." The parents and grandparents don't want the children attending your cult as you are twisting their thinking." I met the boys on the street and told them what had happened. I told them they needed to talk to their parents and invite them to services to see what we are about." Alicia said, "the boys looked quite upset." Evidently the parents have no control over the boys so they want us to run them off any time they come to services. Why do we have an appeal to the boys? I told them when they came to services, "we thank you for coming and hope you will bring God great happiness by the life you live and I want you to know I will be praying for you." Vladimir Motov told me later, "Gary, when you told the boys you was praying for them they were shocked. They will never forget those words you spoke for the rest of their lives." The boys have not returned since this episode.

We spoke with Olga (Vladimir's wife) about her baptism. She was baptized in the Orthodox Church but has been reading her Bible and is coming to the conclusion her baptism isn't right. So I asked her, "what are going to do with what you are learning?" She replied, "I don't know. You see, if I obey the Bible I will be like a "traitor" to my country and the Orthodox Church." Not only that, her sister is strict Orthodox and would be relentless! Olga is suffering from acute FEAR! Has fear ever caused you to make a decision that was contrary to the Bible? We can just as easily find ourselves afraid of other Christians, family, or friends. Isn't it easy to tell others what they should do to obey. We often tell them, "don't worry about what others think." But when we are faced with a decision that will cause us religious problems in our fellowship just as it does Russians in the Orthodox Church, then to often all the rules and good advice is modified. But then again, our situation is much different, isn't it??

Sister Alicia said, "when her mom Lena was alive and found out Alicia was going to be a Christian she received the reprimand of her life." She said, "I was so nervous, my hands were shaking, it was just awful!" My mom said, "you will be a traitor and that church is nothing but a cult, etc." Now I want to return to the woman who came to the flat to face Teresa with vituperation. She shook her fist, gritted her teeth, made ugly threatening faces to intimidate and frighten. We later had her message interpreted that went something like this, "the teaching of your cult will corrupt the children's minds, don't do it, I'm warning you!" To understand this unchristian like conduct we need to understand the Russian Orthodox mentality. As one Russian priest said, "when Jesus was hanging on the cross he was facing Russia anticipating the arrival of the one true Russian Orthodox Church." They believe their doctrine, customs, and traditions are all pure and right. Anything contrary to this is carnal, worldly, and a cult. Any truth Russians learn about Christianity should come only from their writings and the faithful priests. No other doctrine or beliefs are tolerated. The protestant churches are held in scorn. I have been told all manner of evil things are said about anyone opposing the Russian Orthodox. We are cursed and slandered."

I have also been informed that Russians are departing the church at an alarming rate. Attendance is dropping rapidly and the Priests are blaming it on false teachers

(Protestants – that would be you and I) and worldly enticements. Both may be true to some degree but it just may be their violation of John 13:35 “by this shall all men know you are my disciples, if you have love one for the other” that is the real problem. They demonstrate an “elitist” mentality. Their Priests are the only faithful ministers of the Bible. They will tolerate no differences in doctrinal beliefs and opinions. It is their way or you are vilified and excluded. They often demonstrate a harsh, unloving, intolerable and narrow minded mentality. It appears to me their real problem with church decline isn’t Protestants or the world but they are destroying it from within!

Today is Wednesday the 25<sup>th</sup> and Vladimir stopped by to tell me his wife Olga talked to one of the neighbors who is a mother to one of the boys that came to services. The lady said, “we don’t want the boys attending the cult as it will ruin their thinking.” The lady went on to say, “we may have to call the militia (police) on the cult members.” I have decided to take up the challenge if the parents want to call the militia. Maybe we can set down with parents and militia and work this out. The Lord never said it would be easy! It is our last Wednesday evening service as we will be leaving Monday evening. The boys have not returned. We have prepared special invitations for the parents to come and meet us and find out for themselves what we are about. Alicia will give the boys an invitation to give to their parents.

Art, the teacher we met on our walk by the river is here with five of his students. He speaks real good English and has offered to interpret for me at any time. I have his email and he has mine so we will communicate through the year.

Saturday – Teresa is having a woman’s Bible study and about twelve are present. Two brethren have come to visit from the Tula congregation and will spend the night and attend services with us in the morning.

It is Saturday evening and Teresa is conducting children’s crafts. In through the door comes four boys – they are back. Sister Natasha talked to one of the neighbors and she told Natasha, “you all put up a sign showing you are registered with the city and I’ll come.” Sister Luda made the sign and it is now in the window.

Dominic has a job and we are glad. He is a night watchman at a building that stores and protects cars. He said, “a while back a wind storm came through and broke out one of the windows in the building. His boss told him, “since he was on watch it is his responsibility to pay for the window, about \$80.” Sister Vera said, “a friend of her husbands was a watchman over new cars and one got stolen. The watchman said, “he believed someone put a sedative in his coffee so he would go to sleep so the car could be stolen.” He had to sell his flat and all his furniture to pay for the car, he had nothing left.”

May 1<sup>st</sup>. Tuesday – We arrived in Moscow after an all night train ride and there to meet us was Kostya and Yuri. Kostya said, “Yuri wants to be baptized and he wants you Gary to perform it.” I said, “I would be honored!” We located a bonya (bath house) and I baptized Yuri into Christ.

Yuri took us to Sergey and Olga’s to deliver clothes Teresa gathered for their five girls. We also had some clothes for Kostya’s family.

This was absolutely one of the best works we have done in Tambov in at least five years. The attitude of the members was wonderful and their willingness to invite friends and neighbors to services.

John and Gayle Ash from Temple, TX. are to arrive Saturday with their three children for a two week stay in Tambov.

## **Kostya's work in Moscow**

Moscow is one of the largest cities in the world and as a result is a very busy city. People work very long hours and their time is precious. Teresa and I have said many times, "this would be a very difficult work for us to do." Kostya is still reaching out to people with the gospel and as a result Yuri finally obeyed the gospel. I spoke with sister Nadya over e-mail and she said, "it was so great having another brother in the church services on Sunday." The church is renting a room for \$40 per hour to hold services. They told me, "they don't want to give up the room though it is expensive because visitors are still coming." I gave Kostya all the money I had left after helping Tambov. Kostya said, "he also has two more people he has been studying with that he believes very soon will obey the gospel." From all indications Kostya is working as best he can in the city of Moscow to win souls for Christ. He and his family (wife and three children) are financially strapped. Kostya's wife is a teacher and works long hours. Kostya is not financially supported by any congregation. He is trying to get a resume in order, but since he has not worked at a secular job for quite a few years it will be difficult. Kostya is working hard on trying to teach people about the lord, he feels things are going to become more difficult in the future to spread the gospel over there. Kostya could move back to Tambov and his life would be much easier as the cost of living would be much less than in Moscow, but he will not leave the church there unless it's a matter of starvation. He has dedicated himself to the church and is going to try to make it work there. Of course Yuri will be a big help and in turn Yuri will be relying on Kostya as do the other church members.

Brother Nikoli is doing most of the teaching in Tambov with the help of brother Alosha. Nikoli is working full time and teaching at the church in Tambov. After services in Tambov he boards a bus and goes to Michurinsk and holds services there. A few months ago he baptized a lady into Christ and they now have about ten meeting in a home. Nikoli works very long hours and has a full day's work with the churches on Sunday. I am thankful we have these men in Russia that are willing to do the work that needs to be done. It can be very difficult to get brethren to take care of public worship so we are fortunate to have these men that will do this. I told the members, "there are better preachers than myself, more intelligent, and better equipped to do this work but I am what God has given you." God has given the Moscow church, Kostya and the Tambov church Alosha and Nikoli. I am thankful for these brethren God has given to do this work!