

Russian Evangelism Report

Evangelistic trip to Tula, Russia and Mariupol, Ukraine August 20 — September 16, 2002

Dear friends and brethren,

The Lord has graciously returned us home safely from our travels and for that we are very thankful. We appreciate so much your interest in the Lord's work in Russia. We have had the opportunity and privilege to be involved in this work since 1994. Some of you have graciously supported each of our four journeys. No doubt your generosity is storing up treasures in heaven.

Our Team

I had the privilege of working with brother Carl McMurray from Nashville, TN and brother Joshua Creel from Pinson, AL on this trip. This was brother McMurray's ninth trip and brother Creel's third. We maintained a good working relationship throughout the trip and I pray that much fruit will be borne by our feeble efforts.

Return to Tula

Just as the apostle Paul often returned to the places where he had been to encourage the brethren so we too determined to return to Tula for the same purpose.

Misha Lapaenko, who has been preaching in Tula since about 1996, met us at the airport in Moscow with a van to make the 2 1/2 hour drive to Tula. We spent the next 10 days in Tula meeting with the brethren and conducting Bible studies with any who were interested.

Following are some of the people we met and studied with:

Sasha "the cop," (pictured at left) is a young man whom Misha has been studying with. Sasha was very interested in our coming and he very much desired to study. Brother Carl McMurray taught Sasha almost daily proceeding through the gospel of Luke. Sasha listened intently and asked many questions for understanding and diligently read the next chapters ahead of each study. Sasha is married and has two young sons. Sasha became a great help to us in many ways as well as a good friend before our trip was over. It is our prayer that he will continue his interest in spiritual things and a desire to study God's word.

Anthony was formerly a member of a charismatic group in Tula. We made an appointment and went to study with Anthony one afternoon. It seemed evident in the course of our talk and Bible study that there had been something which happened with the other group which had disturbed Anthony. He no longer attends the charismatic group and as we studied he asked some good questions. Anthony is actually building a website for the Lord's church in Tula and Misha regularly seeks to invite Anthony to study with him.

Sasha "the English speaker," served us on this trip as a translator from time to time. As in the picture he studied with Josh and Misha a couple of times.

The church in Tula currently meets in the home of Misha and his mother, Emma. Emma was her sweet self just as we had remembered from previous trips. Her gracious hospitality and love for the Lord and His word is evident in both her words and demeanor. It was a joy to meet the Christians and worship with them. Their numbers were down a little due to the harvesting season. Most Russians have a "dacha," a small cottage outside of town, which is usually not much larger than a tool shed. It is there that they have a small parcel of land for a garden so they can grow enough fruits and vegetables to store up and survive the long winter.

Unfortunately, there has been a serious disturbance to the work in Tula. More on the particulars of that are discussed in the addendum page.

God's Providence in the Ukraine

To get a picture of the providence of God working throughout our trip I must back up a little. In the spring of this year, around May, Carl McMurray and I agreed upon the dates for our trip to Russia. Two weeks after the scheduling of our dates for this trip brother McMurray received an email from brother Gardner Hall in New York. The email was actually a forwarded message from some Christians in Argentina who said they had a relative in Mariupol, Ukraine desiring to study and be baptized. So on August 31st we (Carl, Josh, Misha and I) boarded a train for a 20 hour trek to Mariupol, Ukraine. At that point we really had no idea what we would find. We did not know if we would even find the woman mentioned in the email because all we had was an address and a phone number and

we had found out that the phone number did not work.

We arrived in Mariupol on Saturday afternoon and we set out to find the address with the help of a taxi driver. We found the address but the lady we were looking for was not home. She had gone to her dacha and was to return the next evening. We returned on Sunday evening to meet Alexandra Sinitcena. Alexandra told us how it came about that we had received word from Argentina about her. Alexandra's daughter and son-in-law now live in Argentina because her son-in-law is in the Ukrainian navy. Alexandra's daughter had been trying to teach her mother for years. Alexandra described herself as an atheist at first. She talked about how she has been making "little steps" in her faith for some ten years now. Through studying with her daughter, reading her Bible and studying literature that her daughter was sending her she had decided three months earlier that she was ready to be baptized and she had been waiting for us to arrive so we could baptize her! It was because of her desire and obvious understanding that we went the "same hour of the night" and baptized Alexandra into Christ for the forgiveness of sins.

For the next week we had Bible studies at Alexandra's flat with family and friends which she gathered to study with us and whom she had already been talking to about the word of God. Before our brief stay in Mariupol was over we baptized a total of 8 souls into Christ! With the addition of those souls to the Lord's kingdom there is now a local church of the Lord in Mariupol, Ukraine.

On September 9th brother McMurray and I flew from Mariupol to Kiev and then from Kiev to Moscow. Brothers Josh and Misha stayed in Mariupol for another week to continue teaching and encouraging the brethren.

Return to Tula

On September 10th I then returned to Tula for the last week of my trip. I had a couple of more studies with Sasha the cop in the book of Luke. I encouraged Sasha to seriously consider obeying the gospel. Please pray for Sasha as I believe he is "nigh unto the kingdom."

I had the opportunity to meet with some of the brethren during that last week and then we worshipped together on Sunday, September 15th.

On September 16th I returned home.

A Call for Workers

With the beginning of the Lord's church in Mariupol there is a desperate need for workers to go teach and ground these babes in Christ in the faith. Will you go? We are seeking to find 12 teams of 2 or more workers to go for 2 weeks each month in 2003. Do you know someone who can go? Will you support someone to go encourage these young believers? Please pray and consider what you can do to be a part of the providence of God.

Check out these websites:

EvangelismUpdate.com (reports and pictures from many different countries)

GwoodchurchofChrist.org (Over 500 pictures, PowerPoint presentation and report posted on the local church site)

Shannon Shaffer, evangelist

Financial Supporters			Expenses	
Dale & Maysel				
Cross	St. Albans,	\$500.00	Documents	\$488.00
WV				
Kent & Virginia Yeater		100.00	Transportation (airfare, train,	2,039.00
Paden City, WV			bus, taxi)	
New Castle, IN church		405.00	Trip Preparation	150.00
Englewood Drive				
church	Crawfordsville,	1,000.00	Communication	25.00
IN				

Ravenswood, WV church	200.00	Living Expenses	1,018.00
Jerry & Vinny Price Rossville, IN	100.00	Food	360.00
Brownsburg, IN church	500.00	Benevolence	150.00
Myrtle Grove church Pensacola, FL	500.00	Translating	250.00
Central church Westland, MI	500.00	Teaching materials	150.00
Oak Grove church Louisville, KY	300.00	Total Expenses:	\$4,630.00
Avon Heights church Avon, IN	500.00		
Theda Duncan Brownsburg, IN	25.00		
Total Received:	\$4,630.00		