

## **The Point**

Alex Seregin is trying to replace \$100 of his support as he lives and works in Moscow, Russia. With the dollar dropping in value his continued support has taken a hit lately so even a hundred dollars becomes much more over the long run. Individuals or churches desiring to fellowship in this work of helping a native preacher on Russian soil should contact and communicate with brother Seregin directly.

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### **A Bio on Alex Seregin**

By Carl McMurray rev. 04/05/08

I first met Alex when we were planting the church in Tula about 1995. He was our first translator and chief “errand runner.” He stepped aside, by his own choice, from translating work as we hired young translator students from the local university. Alex was an English teacher at a community college level in Tula. At that time teachers had not been paid in over a year so he was also a businessman. He owned a small bookstore and 2 street kiosks. He came to be known to most of us as “Alex the businessman.”

Alex was noteworthy for a couple of reasons. One is that we noticed he kept attending every service even after we stopped paying him as a translator. Most didn’t do that. We kept encouraging him to obey the gospel, but he would just smile and respond that he hoped he could be a brother someday. The second thing happened after we left. When we left the church in Tula, there were about 8-10 baptized believers and 10 visitors each Lord’s day. They were meeting in a nice room in the public library. Soon after our visit, the laws were reversed and public buildings like libraries and schools were no longer allowed to be used for church meetings. The church had nowhere to go to meet, and no money to get there. Alex invited the church into his home. He became host to the church over the next year. His mother (who never attended worship services) began making the bread and Alex purchased the juice for the Supper each week. He also led the worship and taught the Scriptures. Alex hosted the church in his home and we were back in the U.S. scratching our heads because it was the next year before he actually submitted to obedient baptism. We found out later that the reason he hadn’t obeyed was because all kiosks on the street (including his) sold alcohol. Alex didn’t think that one could be a Christian and make his living from selling vodka. When he finally quit wrestling with that, he sold his kiosks and was baptized. Later on he was given the opportunity to teach full time so he quit his teaching job and sold his little bookstore to do that. He was now making approximately 30% of the salary that he had been making on his own, but he was preaching for the church in Tula and he loved it.

Over the next few years, he brought a friend on board, Michael Lapyonko and with the two of them preaching as a team in Tula the church grew. There were approximately 20-25 Christians and a regular visitors group of 10-15. He and Michael had developed ways to reach out and study with people and the year before he left Tula they met, studied with, and baptized 6 Russian men. No small accomplishment.

Alex moved to Moscow to work with some Christians there at the encouragement of an American preacher I shall refer to as RR. RR developed a secular business in Moscow and Tula and hired various men to work for him. Later, it got to the point where these men were being “placed” in preaching positions in Tula, Orel, Kaluga, and I believe one other place. These men have been investigated by myself and two other brethren and were found to be a drunk, a wife beater, a felon, guilty of “hitting on,” i.e. propositioning a single mother in the congregation, as well as being cheats and at least one we visited with was a liar. At some point Alex and Michael refused to take orders from RR and there was a falling out. RR appeared in the worship on Sunday with one of these so-called brothers with the announcement that he was going to take Michael’s place in the pulpit and Michael and Alex were to be withdrawn from. Michael was accused of threatening the lives of these “preachers” if they didn’t hand over their support money and Alex, from what I’ve been able to understand, was also included as “guilty” simply because He wouldn’t point the finger at Michael. Most of the church subsequently walked out with Michael in Tula and has been meeting in his home ever since. He refused to accept any more American support and has since been supporting himself in secular work and preaching as he can for the church in his home. Several more have been reached and been saved since that time.

Alex’s support was cut off immediately. He ended up having to get 3 jobs in order to support his wife and daughter in Moscow. Four or five went to meet with the new preacher that RR assigned to Moscow. Most decided to stay and keep meeting at Alex and Natasha’s home. However, Alex began missing more and more weekends having to travel with his job as well as having to go to Tula to check on ailing parents. The church slowly fell apart.

It took about three years for Alex to heal from the betrayal, false accusations, etc. from RR, one whom he had considered his friend, as well as brother. When I spoke with him several years ago he was wishing that he could teach again. He said, “It is my dream to preach Jesus again.” In ‘06 several of us began to raise support for him. We HAVE gotten several one time gifts, and in late ’07 the goal of full support for this fine man and his family was reached.

Alex is not living in the Philippines or Africa. He lives in Moscow which has the #1 cost of living of any city in the world at this time. To compare, living in New York would be cheaper! He asked me if he could keep his English teaching position two days a week at a school in Moscow. My answer was to encourage him to do that very thing in case he loses support again for some reason as well as for his pension. I have worked 8 years receiving outside support and am very familiar with churches who drop their support without warning (although I did not share that with him).

Brother Seregin has been my friend for over 10 years and I have never found him anything but trustworthy. I believe that he has done well to keep his faith after the treatment that he received. He is a talented teacher, English speaker, and is computer literate and can communicate by email with any of his supporters. He has translated a workbook on Timothy and Titus for me, and was working on a commentary on the New Testament in Russian when he was still preaching earlier. He had no small volume of material completed at that time. His wife, Natasha, is a gracious host, hospitable, and a fine preacher’s wife who also speaks English btw, and tutors young children. They have one daughter, Dasha, about 11 years old I believe, in ‘08.

I would love to see this able gospel teacher freed from the burden of concern over supporting his family so that he could dedicate himself to the word. He did effective work in Tula and was doing a great job in Moscow until trouble decimated him and the congregation there. If you could see your way clear to fellowship the gospel in Moscow by offering fellowship to Alex, I believe the kingdom foothold in that great city might be secured.

You can contact Alex direct at his email, alex\_word@mail.ru. Several of us set up a bank account in Chicago where you can send his support directly to him. He withdraws it in Moscow. If you would like the details on sending support direct to his bank account, please contact me, Carl McMurray, at mcmurray@Spiritbuilding.com.

Thanks for taking the time to read this,

**Addendum to the above letter:**

As of '08 and the latest revision to the bio above, the “new” church plant in Moscow under Alex’s guidance continues to do well. Visitors are regular and Alex continues to reach out in his community with hand-outs and an English Speaking Club that uses Bible reading as its English text. The church is small, and struggling, but hopeful.

In His service

Carl McMurray