

Tim McCallan April 2009 Prayer Letter

Hey everybody.

I'm very sorry for those of you hanging on the edge of your computer swing chairs, as if you are! But this review of my mission trip to Russia is well overdue, 5 weeks overdue tomorrow actually, so I am sorry. It has been so hard to find a computer and to get time and inspiration to do this but it's high time now.

Firstly I'd like to thank all of those who invested finances, time in prayer and general counsel to help prepare me for the trip. Every bit helped and was most assuredly needed. I want to thank personally my beautiful girlfriend Laura who has been a blessing in many ways and her experience of team trips, mission trips and travelling was like a well of knowledge and wisdom. I also want to thank David Jennings who heads up the mission interests at the Eilim Ulster Temple Church in Belfast, Pastors David Hamilton and Stephen Thompson, the leaders in the church and everyone who helped in any way. I felt very blessed and as prepared as I could be to take on the role as team leader in such a massive, amazing and scary country.

Okay no beating about the bush. We left Arlanda Airport close by Uppsala and the whole team were filled with expectancy and excitement. We had heard many Word of Life stories about mission trips in Russia so we had a very basic outline of what to expect. When we got there, there was much snow! We had just left the cold weather in Sweden and were prepared to come to minus 50 degrees! Well, if you could call a hat, scarf and winter undies prepared, then we were well set! Thankfully it wasn't more than minus 20 on our trip and that was for two days only. It was mostly around minus 5-0 degrees. I would have loved to experience minus 50, just for five minutes to show off like but it wasn't to be. The Lord had other plans than just my crazy ambitions! Amen to that!

The country is still very scarred by communism and there are huge class divisions. If people are rich, they are VERY rich, if they are poor they are VERY poor. There is no middle class. If you are between these two extremes then society will delegate your position. Mostly from business men such as the guy who owns that blue wearing English football club, tend to have the monopoly where money is concerned. We had heard a report of a doctor who had two educations and I believe worked 6 days a week, 12 hours a day who was only paid 5000 rubles (1250sek, £110) per month! Teachers get an average of 3000 rubles (850sek, £75) a month. Most make a little extra with private home lessons and the likes but it's not much. I felt very concerned by this



because when we went to the University (which I will tell you about later), most of the students were studying to become teachers. Some of the teachers are former students, who are young themselves, and are now teaching students just below them. This gives us an idea of the differences that exist between realities only a few thousand kilometres apart.

We have pictures and videos but it's hard enough getting time for this. There is so much more I could say specifically about the conditions but time would fail me. One thing I would say is please don't get a pre-judgmental view of Russians or the country. I'm not a political activist but I had been speaking to some people from Ireland/Britain who had very wrong opinions and ideas and thought some bad things about the Russian public, largely due to the media. I can say this, the Russian government DO NOT represent the interests of the Russian people. They are the most welcoming, kind, warm and interesting people you can meet. The history of suffering within the former Soviet Union is a gross misfortune.

Okay what we did. When we got to Moscow Airport our contact met us and would guide us through the City by bus, train, bus, train, bus train, lol! Honestly, it's funny now! When he met us he told us that the Orthodox church put pressure on the authorities to take away the church building we were going to operate from - they don't like free Christianity. From

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then we knew we'd be very restricted in what we could do. We do our best, God does the rest, right?

Cutting a long story short (hopefully) we got to Ryazan and had a few days to spectate, if I can say that, including the next day at the Church service. The Church would meet in the flat we stayed in. It was a small church, maybe 35 people including youth. The first preaching was by a man from Korea and he spoke on going through the dessert. We had translation, two very good language students who were both only 18 years old from Armenia. Actually, I have to say, Armenian people are so beautiful inside. There were many in Russia and we felt we had such a close family around us, and they cook some good food!

In this little church I preached on two out of the four Sundays we were there and it felt so good. One and a half years of Bible School teaching is such a huge benefit when you go to preach, I tell you! I had to put on an American accent for most of the trip because of the translators, lol. It was funny but I'm trying to purge that now.

Anyway... Most of our 'work' was focused on the University. Nikolay the leader of our church wanted us to concentrate there and we did to a certain extent. It was hard to introduce the Gospel because he warned us not to be seen as visibly active with it because of the Orthodox. So basically, we established relations with the students and took them to somewhere neutral, such as 10 pin bowling and for walks etc. There were some good conversations but they were more interested in us as foreigners, mostly as westerners.

My personal focus was on the youth in the little church we where based in, which included the two translators who studied in the University. Both were Christians and also the only Christians in the university. Given that we only had a month, I wanted to teach and encourage them because anything that we as a team would start, in that hard atmosphere, could be continued on by them. That was my aim and I think we succeeded as God blessed whatever work we could do.

There really is so much I could say but it would be a book, wow there's an idea, lol! The next most significant thing was the New Generation Conference that our church organised but was held in the Baptist church. There are so many stories connected to this but I will refrain for now. I'm sure most of you will see me soon so you can ask me about them. Anyway the conference was evangelism focused and one girl from the University was saved. It was lead by three guys from the Word of Life Church in Moscow.

A highlight for me was when we visited the Baptist church orphanage that had young adults living there. It's more a transition home. These people have been raised and educated there since their childhood. It was a great work. But something really cool happened which excited me. I was personally invited to dinner with a Pastor responsible for this work along with a Pastor from the Pentecostal church. I was really excited about this opportunity as I have a real desire to unite churches and start working partnerships between ministries, so this was perfect. We established a little contact and exchanged e-mail addresses.

The trip wasn't lined with many, huge, extravagant miracles but there were touches from God upon people and circumstances. From Moscow to Ryazan we had travel miracles, this was fun! Every method of transport was the last (train, bus etc) and we made every one just on time. We prayed hard, people were staring at us, lol! After my first preaching we prayed for a lady who needed a financial breakthrough. The Tuesday after we where at her little village she informed us that she had received the blessing, Amen!

We had a miracle coming home, we had our taxi paid for us from Ryazan to Moscow, 180km! This was a really cool, story but you will have to ask me about it again as I have to go to street mission now.

Thank you so much to everyone who has prayed and supported me in anyway, especially my amazing Laura. I'm very thankful for her if you hadn't guessed.

Two prayer requests actually. It's only a few weeks until Bible school ends. I need:

1) Direction from God. I know He will not leave me but I still have to make the decisions if they arise. Pray for guidance, divine wisdom and revelation. I have very very basic plans for after Bible School but I need His touch upon them to give them life or to give new plans.

2) For His continued provision. It is only few weeks and it's been hard for everyone financially and spiritually.

Right now these are the two most important things.

Thank you all so much and God bless.