



Motivations for Ministry In Russia

Mass evangelism vs. Biblical discipleship

by David Bromlow, Chairman of the Board of SRS

During the 1990s, Russian mission efforts focused on mass evangelization and this bore some fruit. Now, however, Russians are realizing their need for discipleship and in-depth theological teaching, as the Russian church struggles to sustain the Kingdom advances made in the 1990s. Most pastors have little or no theological training, and almost no such training is available. Disorder and false teaching have begun to spread as a result. There is a great need today for serious training of pastors in true Christian theology, biblical interpretation, and worship and preaching in order to equip and advance the Russian church.

To meet this need is the calling of the Slavic Reformation Society. SRS exists to promote the Gospel of Jesus Christ as outlined in the Presbyterian and Reformed theological tradition. Our four-pronged approach consists of the support and development of The Reformed Theological Seminary of St. Petersburg, Russia, The Reformed Evangelical

continued on page 2

Seminary Rector Reflects on Ministry

Ministry impact reaches well beyond St. Petersburg

Rev. Blake Purcell

Rector, Reformed Theological Seminary of St. Petersburg
Director of Field Ministries, Slavic Reformation Society

This is our first official SRS newsletter. By means of these letters, we hope to communicate the reality of the ministry here behind the former iron curtain, including upcoming events and ministry partnership opportunities. If you are not familiar with the Slavic Reformation Society, this newsletter will familiarize you with this strategic ministry of the Reformed church in one of the most challenging mission fields in the world.

My wife Cathy and our six children have lived in the former Soviet Union since 1990. In our fifteen years of life and ministry in St. Petersburg, Russia, we have never been more hopeful and encouraged than we are now. Why? Because the Lord of the harvest, as Jesus preached in Matthew 9, is in fact raising up Russians as laborers in the harvest!

When we started our student ministry in 1991 one of the first Russian men to give his life to Christ was **Alexander Schmidt**. Alexander is married to Olga and they have four children (four times more than most

continued on page 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- 2** Meet the SRS "Board of Directors."
- 3** What has the SRS accomplished? Join us as we look back to October 1990 at the ministry milestones.
- 3** Meet some of our seminary scholarship students and their families.
- 3** Ministry financial opportunities: What you and your church can do to partner with SRS.
- 4** The Spiritual Challenge of Russia: 1990-2005 "Replacing Despair with Hope in Christ."
- 4** SRS Upcoming Events—October thru December, 2005.

COMING UP IN THE NEXT ISSUE:

▮ The History of St. Petersburg ▮ Seminary Faculty Profiles



The Purcell family has served as missionaries to St. Petersburg, Russia, since 1990. Shown above are Zack, Lewis, Laura, Emily, John Mark, Cathy & Blake, & Graham.

Ministry in Russia (con't)

Publishing House of Russia, International Reformed Theology Conferences, and cultural reformation through evangelism, church planting, and discipleship.

The Reformed Theological Seminary of St. Petersburg, Russia, conducts a full-time, graduate-level theological education program for active ministers and ministerial candidates; provides a full-time Rector to teach, oversee, and conduct the activities of the seminary; and hires staff to teach appropriate subjects and fulfill key ministry positions. In addition, the seminary recruits and provides visiting theologians, pastors, and professors to teach seminary courses. The Reformed Theological Seminary of St. Petersburg also provides the means for as many qualified students as possible to attend.

The Reformed Evangelical Publishing House of Russia translates and publishes key historical and relevant Reformed and evangelical theological literature; and is producing the first-ever metrical Psalter in Russian, a project that is about half completed.

The Annual International Reformed Theology Conference attracts pastors and lay leaders from throughout the former Soviet Union and helps develop interest in Reformed theology. To this end, we recruit and provide leading theologians and teachers to lecture on the historic Christian faith and practice, and provide the means for as many individuals to attend theology conferences as can be accommodated.

Finally the goal of much needed cultural reformation through evangelism, **church planting, and discipleship** focuses on training indigenous pastors to plant churches, conduct evangelism, and disciple members of their congregations.



The steeples of the historic Peter & Paul's fortress at sunset.

Rector's Reflections (con't)

Russians). He came to Christ in our living room in 1992. Later he became a Lutheran minister, but since we have opened our seminary in 1999, has been working more and more with us. He now has become an instructor at the seminary and the editor-in-chief of the nation-wide magazine we are launching, *Sovyetnik* (The Counselor).

The second laborer the Lord has raised up for us is **Oleg Volkov**. Oleg is the assistant Rector of the Reformed Seminary of St. Petersburg, instructor, and the designer of our website and magazine.

At the recent board meeting of the SRS, our 501(c)(3) organization that supports the ministry of the seminary in the United States, the board decided that the time had come to "lengthen our cords" because the Lord had "strengthened our stakes" (Isaiah 54). In other words, with this team of in-house leaders, we can now open up the seminary to become a full-sized seminary accommodating up to 25 students.

As of today, seminary students and graduates are ministering in six churches from Siberia to the border of Finland, a span of 1400 miles (see map). Our students and conference-attendees have come from most of the Republics of the former Soviet Union and the eleven time zones of Russia. Pastors and elders are waiting to start studying with us in January 2006 from the Russian Far East, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan.

SRS Board of Directors



(1st row): Rev. Geoff Donnan, President, Reformation Christian Ministries; Joel Montgomery, Attorney at Law; Mike Forster, Managing Director, Internet Capital Group; Tony Douglas, President & CEO, Smith System Institute; Rev. Blake Purcell, Rector, Reformed Seminary of St. Petersburg; David Bromlow, Information Technology Manager; (2nd Row): Rev. James Jordan, President, Biblical Horizons; Jeff Meyers, Senior Pastor, Providence Reformed Presbyterian Church.

The Board of SRS invites you to partner with us

Board prayerfully seeks to double the student body
by Mike Forster, SRS Finance Committee Chair

The SRS board of directors met outside of St. Louis, MO, in August 2005 to plan for expansion of our ministry. As we began our deliberations, all of us realized that the Lord had given us an incredible opportunity! With the addition of two trained Russian in-house instructors, Oleg Volkov and Alexander Schmidt, we now have the capacity to serve twenty students. In addition, we have the *unique opportunity* to reach some of the most strategic places in all of Russia. Five pastors and elders have applied to begin study starting in January 2006, assuming we can endow their scholarships.

As we began our deliberations, all of us realized that the Lord had given us an incredible opportunity!

Two of them are from Uzbekistan and one is from Kazakhstan, both Islamic nations; the other two are from areas that have very limited Reformed or Presbyterian church presence.

Scholarships and living expenses for a typical seminary family costs only \$1,000/month. Would you or your church prayerfully consider endowing SRS with a full (\$1,000/mo), half (\$500/mo) or quarter scholarship (\$250/mo) so we can bring these families to St. Petersburg?

This opportunity to double the size of the seminary and reach some of the most resistant cultures to the Gospel of Jesus Christ exists now! Please help us raise a minimum of \$5,000 per month in new pledges by January 1, 2006; please pray fervently with us that God would move hearts.

Meet some of our seminary scholarship students:



Alexander & Olga Morozov (left). He is 34, from a former Pentecostal family, and is a pastor of a mission church in the eastern suburbs of St. Petersburg. Their son Matvei was born in July. Alexander is a 1st-year seminary student.

Roman and Olga Igonin (right). He is 31, from Magadan in the Far East and she is from Karelia – a region to the north of St. Petersburg. Married for three years, Roman is a 2nd-year student at the seminary and is preaching in a church in Tikhvin to the east of St. Petersburg.



Maxim Fokin (right) came from Rostov in south Russia. A 3rd year student at the seminary, he is a pastor of the Reformed Church of "The Way, the Truth and the Life". He is also planting a church in Vyborg, north of St. Petersburg. He is shown here baptizing children in his former Pentecostal church in Belaya Callitta in southern Russia.



Renat Ilyakov (2nd from left), from Tashkent, Uzbekistan, is 36 years old. He is the Associate Pastor of the Evangelical Reformed Church of Tashkent, UZ, and has applied to begin study in January 2006.

Ministry Milestones Since 1990

October 1990. Blake and Cathy Purcell move to Leningrad, Soviet Union with their three children to open a Collegiate Ministry with the Navigators.

1991-1997. 20 Russian university students dedicate their lives to Christ.

January 1999. The older members of the Navigator Fellowship, with their children and relatives, form the Reformed Presbyterian Church under Pastor Purcell, ordained in the Presbyterian Church in America.

September 1999. The Reformed Seminary of St. Petersburg opens its doors to 7 full-time students.

2002-2004. The seminary and the Reformed Publishing House of Russia publish *Christian World View* by Abraham Kuyper, *Reforming Marriage* by Doug Wilson, *To a Thousand Generations* by Doug Wilson, *Through New Eyes* by James B. Jordan, *The Lord's Service* by Jeffrey J. Meyers, *Against Christianity* by Peter Leithart, and 50 metrical Psalms for singing.

2003-2004. The Seminary confers Masters of Divinity on: **Oleg Chernachov**, who is now a deacon in the Reformed Presbyterian Church and is compiling a book of worship for the Presbyterian Church of Russia; **Rev. Oleg Volkov**, who is now assistant Rector of the Reformed Seminary of St. Petersburg; **Ravil Kunakayev**, new pastor of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Tyumen, Siberia.

April, 2004. The Slavic Reformation Society is formed to oversee and facilitate the ministry of the Reformed Seminary of St. Petersburg.

2002-2005. R.C. Sproul, Jr., James B. Jordan, and Jeffrey J. Meyers lecture at the annual Russia-wide Theological Conference to pastors, elders, and lay leaders from Belarus, Ukraine, Poland, and 15 Russian cities.

2003-2005. Students and pastors studying at the Seminary minister in 6 churches from Tyumen, Siberia to Vyborg on the border of Finland.

October 2005. The seminary gears up to launch *Sovyetnik*, a Russia-wide magazine giving biblical commentary on life and faith.

Fall 2005. Seminary graduates will be: **Igor Krutagolov**, Chaplain of Leningrad Region Prison System, and the **Rev. Maxim Fokim**, Pastor, The Reformed Church of "The Way, the Truth and the Life."

The Spiritual Challenge of Russia: 1990-2005

"Replacing Despair with Hope in Christ" by Rev. Blake Purcell

The poet Alexander Pushkin in 1820 wrote, "Woe to the man who is born talented in Russia." The proof of his statement was not long in coming: Many of his freedom-loving friends were shot or exiled in the Decembrist uprising of 1825.

Our struggle from 1991-1997 in our collegiate ministry was to win Russian men and women to genuine steadfast faith in Christ in the midst of a despairing country. Many of the "talented" of Russia have fled to Europe and America in search of cultures that reward the hard-working and gifted. Russia's oppressive and corrupt bureaucracy still impedes progress and robs hope.

At the same time, God has consistently given us faithful Russian believers. Though our six churches in Russia are small, a pastor from another denomination commented that we have as many diligent, honest, and talented leaders as any denomination in Russia.

Alexander and Natasha Firsonov are examples of the kind of people God has raised up in our midst. Alexander works for Gillette and therefore makes quite a bit more than the \$500 a month that most of

our church families make. Nevertheless, he works from 10 AM to 9 PM five to six days a week. In September, he was mugged in his own apartment stairwell. Two attackers hit him from behind with a metal object and made off with his billfold, cell phone, and laptop computer. Natasha and Alexander however are not discouraged about Russia, even after the mugging. "God promises to reward those that trust Him and are wise in their work. We can make a good living in Russia, and I am going to learn to close the door behind me when I go into my apartment building," Alexander concluded wryly.

But why do some Russians have hope with integrity, when so many families here do not have one or the other? My answer has to be the "tough" Gospel of Jesus Christ. By "tough" we mean that believers must not only believe that Christ is powerful enough to save them, but also to provide materially for them by blessing the labor of their hands, and changing their culture through the influence of the Gospel through the church. We preach that Russian believers should stay in Russia not to simply endure, but to overcome (Isaiah 2:1-4).

God is blessing us, making disciples of Christ the old fashioned way, one at a time!

The Ministry of the Reformed Seminary of St. Petersburg



*PLEASE PARTNER WITH US AND HELP TAKE
THE GOSPEL TO RUSSIA AND BEYOND.*

*The Reformed Seminary of St. Petersburg, Russia &
The SRS Need Your Prayers & Your Financial Help.*

Make your tax-deductible contributions to:

The Slavic Reformation Society
P.O. Box 270094 - St. Louis, MO 63127
314.843.0724 srs@jslink.net

**IN OUR NEXT ISSUE, LEARN HOW YOU CAN GIVE TO THE
SRS and THE REFORMED SEMINARY OF ST. PETERSBURG
USING THE INTERNET.**

Ministry/Field Director's Upcoming Events

OCTOBER

9: Field Director Blake Purcell preaches at Christ the King Presbyterian Church, Sacramento CA.
12-13: Blake gives report to General Assembly of the Confederation of Reformed Evangelicals, Portland, OR,

along with two Russian elders, Igor Krutagolov & Alexander Firsonov.

15-16: Blake & Russian Elders present the reformed work of Russia to ministerial conference in Moscow, ID.

17 & 19: Blake and Russian Elders address student body of New St. Andrews College and Greyfriars Hall Seminary in Moscow, ID.

23: Blake preaches at Trinity Presbyterian Church, Moscow, ID.

NOVEMBER

15-22: Blake and Elders of the Presbyterian Church of Russia travel to Tyumen, Siberia, to ordain Ravil Kunakayev.

DECEMBER

10-20: Exams - Reformed Seminary of St. Petersburg, Russia.