



COME OVER & HELP

2021 Issue 4

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Mission Statement

Come Over & Help partners with churches in Eastern Europe to bring glory to God through gospel proclamation and practical ministry.

Vision Statement

Our vision is to see thriving, biblically faithful churches serving Eastern Europe.



Mr. Raymond Roth
Administrator & Project Director



Mr. Greg Slingerland
Communications Director

Come Over & Help is a non-profit organization with charitable status in Canada and the USA.

The foundation of Come Over & Help is the Bible, which is the Word of God. Come Over & Help adheres to the revealed truths and principles in that Word and to the Three Forms of Unity (Heidelberg Catechism, Canons of Dordt, Belgic Confession) and the Westminster Confession.

The board and staff of Come Over & Help are affiliated with Reformed, Bible-believing Churches and ministries.



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He is Worthy!

By Miroslavs Tumanovskis, Youth Pastor, Riga, Latvia

Life is busy! We go to work, we provide for our children, we solve problems, we interact with other people, we go to school, we rest, we cause problems, and we do all kinds of other things. And somewhere in this list God fits in. We live our lives and then we also add the fact that we believe in the One and Only God. To be frank, at times it happens that God is just one of the many items on our list. He is important but nevertheless just one of the items on the list.

When God entered into covenant with Israel, He spelled out the summary of the covenant agreement. In simple terms, God explained what it means to be in relationship with Him. The first commandment is this: *I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me* (Exodus 20:2-3). God's people need to learn that God wants to be their only God. He must be the most important person and value in their life. Ancient Israel dwelt in idolatrous cultures where many gods were worshipped. But the God of Israel is so important, so glorious that He demands exclusive worship! God is the Creator of the world and the Rescuer of His people. It is just unthinkable that He would share His position with someone else. God requires exclusive worship because He is truly worthy of it.



Riga, Latvia

Let us connect this with the fact that life is a multidimensional enterprise. We do many things in life, but God is more important than all of that. God is more important than children, family, hobbies, dreams, health and wealth. He is worthy of such honor because He is the one who sustains and reigns over reality. Deep down in our heart of hearts we all reject and stand against this truth. So may God help us to acknowledge Him daily and to stand against the wicked tendency to worship idols!

Baltic Visit

By Greg Slingerland

It seemed surreal to be back at an airport after being grounded for so long due to Covid. Raymond Roth and I boarded the LOT Dreamliner and flew to Riga, Latvia for a short trip to Latvia and Lithuania to visit some of our partners. Riga is a beautiful city close to the Baltic Sea and bisected by the Daugava River. The towering steeple of St. Paul's Lutheran Church bears witness to the impact that the Reformation and Martin Luther made to the city of Riga. After decades of Communism, and a secular emergence after independence in 1991, the Reformed presence in Riga, and across all of the Baltic states, is almost non-existent.



Riga, Latvia

In recent years, new church plants have been started and new life has been breathed into Reformed churches that were dormant. Through your giving, Come Over & Help has been partnering with many Reformed churches across this region, as well as supporting Baltic Reformed Theological Seminary (BRTS). It was good to meet up with the director of BRTS, Artis Celmins, and BRTS board member Pastor Alvis, to hear about how Covid brought on unexpected blessings through the move to online classes.



Ray Roth, Artis and Christina Celmins, and Greg Slingerland

We spent a Sunday with the Pardaugava Reformed Church in Riga where we met up with Miroslavs Tumanovskis, or Miro, who works with the youth in the three Reformed churches in Riga. Miro is a great big guy with a booming voice, who loves interacting, teaching, and mentoring the young people in Riga. Some of the young people bring their school friends who have never heard the gospel to the youth meetings, and Miro gets to share the gospel. Currently, the Pardaugava Reformed Church is renting from a Baptist church but will need to find a new space to rent. Because new churches were not allowed to be built during the Communist era, church space across the city is limited. Please remember this need in your prayers.



Pastor Martins (right) and Miroslavs

After a few busy days of meetings in Latvia, we crossed the border into Lithuania. In the city of Kaunas, we visited the Kaunas International Reformed Church, which is pastored by Pastor Frank VanDalen, an Associate Reformed Presbyterian missionary. This Reformed church was built in the 1920s but was confiscated by the Communists after the Second World War to become a police training academy. The sanctuary was turned into a basketball court. After the training academy moved to Vilnius, the church building fell into a state of disrepair. Due to the inadequate heating and poor windows, the sanctuary is unusable in the winter months. Through Come Over & Help's support, a space was renovated in the basement for worship services, a nursery, fellowship hall, and a bathroom. Despite the poor state of the building, this church is a vibrant flock of new believers. Pastor Frank and his wife Emily pour themselves into the fellowship and continue to reach out and evangelize to many in the city.



The sanctuary of the International Reformed Church of Kaunas.
The basketball court lines are still visible.

Raymond and I met many more faithful servants across Latvia and Lithuania and were encouraged by their ministry and desire to see the church of Jesus Christ grow through the saving power of the gospel.

PRAYER POINTS

- A new location for the Pardaugava Reformed Church
- Continued growth in the Latvian and Lithuanian Reformed Churches
- A spirit of unity for the churches
- Reformed Literature Centre in Lithuania
- Baltic Reformed Theological Seminary

Evangelism in Serbia

By Raymond Roth



Pastor Dragisa Armus and Slobodan Markovic

A considerable part of the 'good life' offered to us here in the West are the golden years of retirement, generally seen as the time of life when we can finally stop working, slow down, relax the pace and enjoy life.

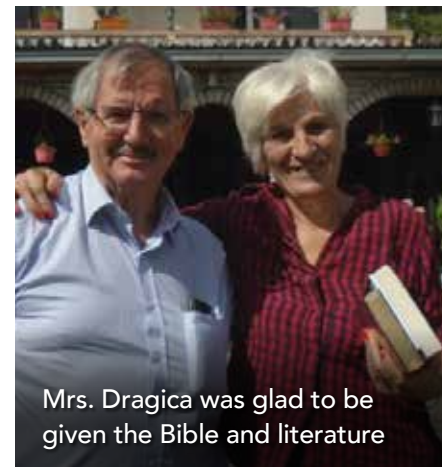
I think Pastor Dragisa Armus of Serbia missed the memo. Now well into what we would consider retirement age, he remains zealous for the sake of the gospel. Recently, he told me that his dream was to see all of Serbia evangelized! It seems that the older he gets, the more enthusiastic he is to preach Christ Jesus. He embodies the sentiment of Charles Wesley's hymn, "O for a thousand tongues to sing":

*My gracious Master and my God,
Assist me to proclaim,
To spread thro' all the earth abroad
The honours of thy name.*

Recently, Dragisa and his friend Slobodan Markovic traveled to Montenegro to evangelize in the towns, encourage the small churches, hold prayer meetings, and distribute Bibles and literature.



Pastor Dragisa is zealous for the gospel



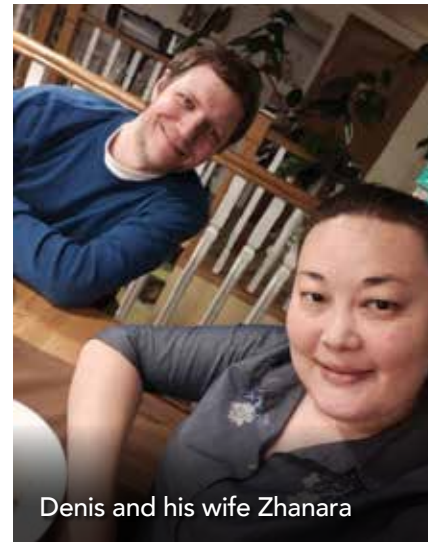
Mrs. Dragica was glad to be given the Bible and literature

Friends of Come Over & Help, thank-you for your love for the gospel and for the church in Central and Eastern Europe. Your gifts enable brothers like Dragisa to hold forth the Light of the World in a dark place. Please pray for Dragisa and all gospel efforts in this forgotten part of the world!

Deep Trials in Kazakhstan

Recently, Pastor Denis Boris from Kazakhstan went through a severe bout of Covid, and then, after his recovery, he had trouble with what doctors at the time thought were life-threatening blood clots, but thankfully turned out to be inflamed veins. He writes about the lessons he learned from the past few difficult months.

I would like to share some of the lessons that we have learned along the way that I hope would be helpful to you, our friends.



Denis and his wife Zhanara

- 1 Closeness of death makes your relationship with God "undiluted". Closeness of death cleanses your relationship with God from anything secondary and artificial. No thoughts about "what would people think about me", "how would I look", "how would I be remembered". Thoughts become like bullets – quick and to the point. Emotions abound. All the thinking and stressing comes down to this: I don't want to die, but all is in God's hands. And then the question, "Do I trust God? Do I trust Him that whatever He would do is truth and mercy?"
- 2 Closeness of death grants a unique understanding of God's sovereignty. None of us will live a day longer or a day less than what God has ordained (Psalm 139:16). He is Master, and the sooner we submit under His mighty hand the better.
- 3 God is not indebted to us. God didn't promise to us a life of ease and comfort here on earth. He promised eternal life, which entails the knowledge of God and His Son (John 17:3). That in turn is impossible without suffering and trials. We often buy into wordly thinking that says that every black stripe is followed by a white one. No, things might get worse and then worse again and so on. We don't live in a white-black-white stripes world. We live in God's world in which God is in control of everything and bad things happen because sin still is present and because we are to follow in Christ's footsteps (cross-crown).
- 4 Be open about your experience. Pastors and people in general in our part of the world are quite reluctant about sharing their weaknesses and their moments of pain and struggle. It's considered inappropriate. We are a culture of machos. We will get through it. But I believe that is unbiblical. Ephesus' church elders wept with Paul when he was departing to go to Jerusalem (Acts 20:36-38). It was appropriate. Jeremiah is even called the weeping prophet. His whole book is called "Lamentations". Joseph cried when he opened up before his brothers and when they doubted his forgiveness. Jesus wept when He looked at Jerusalem, and at the death of His friend Lazarus. And let me tell you that somebody saw Jesus crying, otherwise how would we know about that? Our Savior wasn't shy of His tears or of His fear (think of Gethsemane). We need to let others into our lives not only when everything is bright and happy, but also when we are still in the midst of troubles and don't know what might happen. People will benefit from it. Don't think that you are putting too much burden on other people's shoulders. Think about the good that God would do in their lives through your suffering (2 Corinthians 1:4-11). Suffer with them. One of the brothers from church saw me in fear of death and then rejoiced with me in the wake of life. He definitely benefited from my suffering and I from his support.

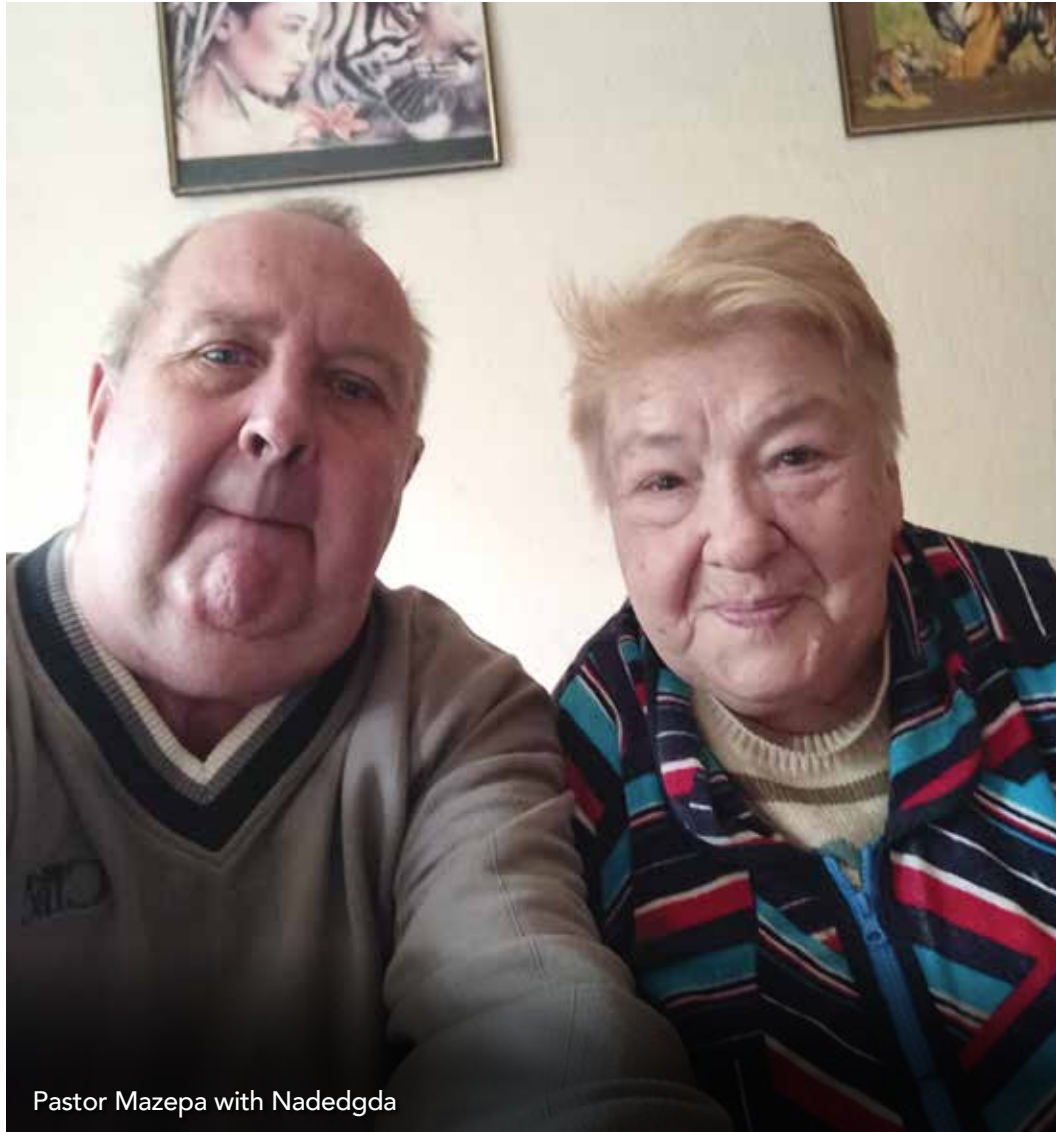
Outreach from Prison

By Greg Slingerland

Meet Nadedgda Georgievna.

Nadedgda was born in 1945 in Kyiv, Ukraine. After getting married and having a son and a daughter, Nadedgda worked in different factories throughout the city. When her daughter turned 36 years old she passed away. Shortly after, her husband died. The next blow came when her son Vadim was arrested and given a long prison sentence. Nadedgda was alone and desperately worried about her son and the future. She was raised in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church but didn't know anything about Jesus Christ.

Pastor Mazepa is a prison chaplain who has partnered with Come Over & Help for many years. While visiting the prison in Bila Tserkva, he met Nadedgda's son Vadim. Vadim became a Christian and faithfully attended Pastor Mazepa's Bible studies. After one of these lessons, Vadim asked Pastor Mazepa to visit his elderly mother. He was worried about how she was making ends meet and that she didn't know Jesus.



Pastor Mazepa with Nadedgda



WinterHelp food for Nadedgda

Pastor Mazepa visited Nadedgda soon after and shared the gospel with her. Pastor Mazepa told Nadedgda how Vadim had confessed his sins and had become a Christian, attends Bible study, and was praying for her.

Nadedgda came to repentance and confessed that Jesus Christ is her Lord and Saviour. She is no longer filled with despair and sadness.

Her life is still difficult. An injury to her knee she suffered as a young woman now means walking is impossible. Stretching her small pension to cover medicines, food and other expenses is very difficult. One of her desires is that God would let her live long enough to see her son again and to be able to go to church with him. Pastor Mazepa promised to visit her once a month, and through WinterHelp funds, Nadedgda will be given food and care.

PLEASE PRAY FOR NADEDGDA AND VADIM!

Your support will help Nadedgda and many other Christians like her, and is a great encouragement to struggling Christians, providing an avenue to bring the gospel to those in need.

Report from Eastern Ukraine

By **Andrey Malov**

Andrey Malov, from *Light of Resurrection in Ukraine*, recently returned from a visit to Eastern Ukraine, a region that has suffered under constant conflict with pro-Russian separatists. Here are some of the people he met along the way.

Nastya

We have known her for several years. She has grown up and is now 15. She lives with her grandmother. Her parents died when a shell fell in their yard. More precisely, Nastya's father died immediately, and her mother died soon after that. It is not easy for Nastya to cope with her grief. Today, she is a reserved, shy girl. She is very gifted in drawing. In her paintings, there is a dream of travel, of a peaceful life. Nastya and her grandmother have few means. The main concern in winter is how to heat their house. Coal is expensive, and the pension is not enough to buy as much as is needed. They can't do without outside help.

Lyubov Grigorievna

A widow and refugee from Donetsk. She could not get far away from the war. Lyubov found herself in the front-line in Galitsinovka – the village where she grew up. Here she began to attend church and didn't miss a single service. But last year Lyubov got Covid and became seriously ill. This summer, Lyubov was preparing to be baptized, but the consequences of her illness delayed the baptism. During my visit, Lyubov was baptized at her home. It was a very joyful, long-awaited event for her. Lyubov lives rather poorly. There is not enough pension for the basic necessities. Especially now, when almost all the money is spent on medicines. The church takes care of her, but the capabilities of the small front-line church are very modest.



Lyubov Grigorievna, a widow and refugee



Lyubov's baptism—
A very joyful and long-awaited event!

Raisa and Sergey

Mother and son, Raisa and Sergey, are refugees. Raisa's elderly mother, a paralyzed, bedridden elderly woman, also lives with them. They recently moved to Nedrigailov, Sumy region. This is their second move since the war. They did not manage to take root where they lived before. The main reason was that there was no church nearby. And the living conditions were very modest. Raisa and Sergey were invited to Nedrigailov by Zhenya Skumatov, a missionary in this town; he himself is also a refugee. Zhenya always "takes under his wing" those who need support. They bought an old house here. The church helped make some minor repairs. Raisa and Sergey are hardworking people. They have a farm – goats, pigs, all kinds of poultry. Sergey is busy with the apiary. By the way, they moved to Nedrigailov together with their animals. They laugh, talking about their adventures of the move – Sergey transported all their animals with his old car. A policeman stopped him. A goat's face suddenly appeared in the half-open window. And in the trunk, pigs grunted. The policeman was surprised to see such passengers. The house needs the boiler replaced and the heating system repaired; some pipes are leaky. Raisa and Sergey cannot afford such expenses on their own. They need help purchasing a boiler. The church will help install the boiler and put the heating system in order.



Raisa and Sergey



Raisa with her mother



Sergey and one of his
beloved animals

Friends, thank you for not getting tired of Ukraine. Please, do not forget about the war that is here. Pray for peace. Take to heart the needs of those who have a hard time surviving. I want to assure you that this is important. Together we are doing a good deed. We remind people that they are not forgotten or abandoned – neither by other people, nor by God. **With prayers for you,**
Andrey Malov and the staff of the Light of Resurrection mission

Russia

By Raymond Roth

Area:	17,098,246 km² or 6,601,670 miles²
Population:	144,000,000 (declining)
Official Language:	Russian
Capital:	Moscow
Ethnic Groups:	80.9% Russian/3.9% Tatar/1.4% Ukrainian/ 13.8% Other (Bashkir, Chuvash, Chechen etc.)
GDP Per Capita:	\$11,654 USD



History

Russia is a land of superlatives. It is the world's largest country by a wide margin, features a tremendous variety of climates, landforms and resources, has been a major player on the world stage for centuries, and continues to



Moscow

make headlines in the news, for good or for ill. However, the beginnings of this mighty nation were modest and unassuming.

The ancestors of modern Russians are the Slavic tribes, who over time assimilated the native Finnic people. The Kievan Rus, founded in the 9th century and ruled by Oleg of Novgorod, became the first major Slavic state. His successors Vladimir the Great and Yaroslav the Wise presided over the Golden Age of Kievan rule. The following centuries saw regular incursions by Turkic nomadic tribes, who pushed the Slavs northward to safer ground. The Kievan Rus ultimately disintegrated with the

invading Mongols, later known as Tatars, who destroyed both Kiev and Moscow.

Around the turn of the 15th century, Ivan the Great finally was able to subdue the Mongols and consolidate central and northern Russia under Moscow's hegemony and took on the title of 'Grand Duke of all Rus'. Under Ivan the Terrible, the first Tsar (Czar), Russia pushed eastwards, nearly doubling its size. However, a long time of instability and diminished power ensued due to the long Livonian War with a coalition of Denmark, Lithuania, Norway, Poland and Sweden. Following this was the period known as the 'Time of Troubles' of the early 17th century; however, the Romanov accession to the throne ushered in a period of renewal and territorial expansion.

Under Peter the Great, Russia became a major power, while under Catherine the Great (1762-96), Russia continued its economic, cultural and territorial progress. In 1812, Napoleon's drive for world domination was halted at Moscow, the bitter

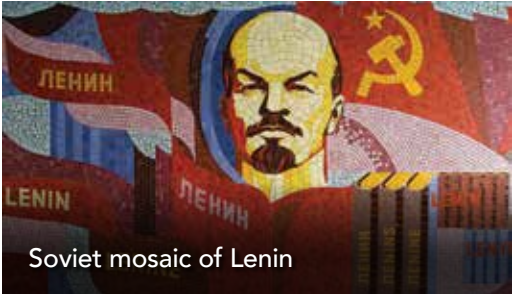


Napoleon's disastrous retreat from Russia in 1812

Russian winter conditions proving to be the breaking point for Bonaparte's

La Grande Armée. The last Russian emperor was Nicholas II, who was forced by circumstances to give major concessions to the Russian people, that of freedoms of speech and assembly, and a democratically elected State Duma.

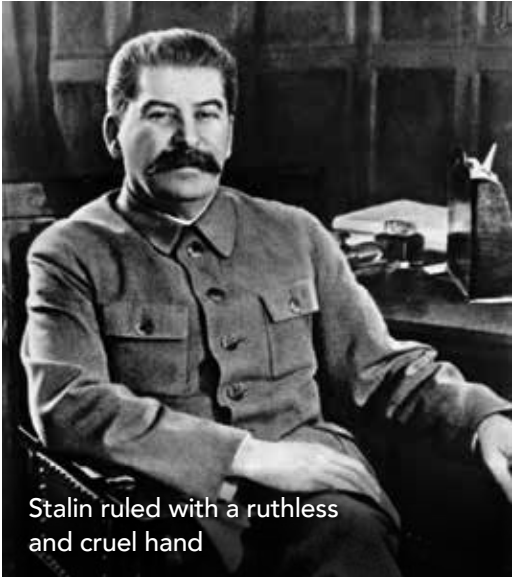
Russia joined World War I as an ally of Serbia and member of the Triple Entente against Austria-Hungary. However, the casualties, cost, and corruption that attended the war led to the Russian Revolution of 1917, where the monarchy was executed, and the Russian Republic formed. The leadership of this new Provisional Government was overthrown in short order in the October Revolution by Vladimir Lenin and his Bolshevik



Soviet mosaic of Lenin

lackies, leading eventually to the creation of a fully socialist state, the Soviet Union.

Following Lenin, Stalin ruled the country with viciousness and force, as he attempted to transform the country from an agrarian society to an industrial one. When Hitler broke



Stalin ruled with a ruthless and cruel hand

the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in 1941 by turning against their former allies, Russia was ill-prepared for war. However, as the Russian war machine gained steam, throwing what seemed to be unlimited manpower and resources to the war effort, the German army was inexorably driven back all the way to Berlin. About one third of all World War II casualties were Russian, and the country was in shambles by the end of the war; nonetheless, Russia emerged as a world superpower.

After the war, in accordance with the Potsdam Conference, Eastern and Central Europe were occupied by the Red Army; these states became dependent communist satellites of Russia. The Cold War, so-called because it never came to direct warfare between Russia and the United States (i.e., hot war), ensued as Russia became a nuclear power. During these tense decades, Russia was de-Stalinized under Nikita Khrushchev (1953-1964). The country stagnated economically over these decades, as the promises of Communism were not realized. From 1985, under Mikhail Gorbachev, policies of glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring) were introduced, setting the stage for the secession from the Soviet Union of the Baltic nations in 1991. By the end of the year, the USSR had dissolved and morphed into a democracy of sorts, with the election of Boris Yeltsin as president.

The privatization of Russia's enterprises led to the rise of the infamous oligarchs, business people with the right connections, who took control of former state enterprises, becoming immensely wealthy and powerful in the process. The 1990s in Russia was characterized by political crises, economic depression, increased corruption, collapse of social services, and rampant inflation and lawlessness. In 1999, Yeltsin unexpectedly resigned, handing the post to Vladimir Putin. Under his watch, a measure of stability and economic expansion has been

experienced, in conjunction with a restored strong central authority. Over the past decades, variously holding the post of President and Prime Minister, Putin has dominated the political scene in Russia. Today, Russia continues its adversarial relationship with the West, largely by creating instability through ongoing territorial disputes (Crimea, eastern Ukraine), cyber-terrorism, and the like.

Russia has given the world some wonderfully gifted writers and musicians: Tchaikovsky, Solzhenitsyn, Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky to name a few.

Religious Context

The church in Russia suffered much in the last century. Under communism, up to 20 million people died in the infamous gulags, many of whom were Christians. The church was driven underground by relentless pressure and persecution. Today, freedom of religion is written into the constitution; however, as is the case in much of Eastern Europe, the Orthodox church has political and economic clout not afforded to Protestants. The state laws governing the registration and operation of churches are ambiguous and complex, allowing discrimination against non-Orthodox religious groups, including evangelicals.

The Reformed church community is small and fragmented. Presbyterian and Reformed churches number around 20 congregations, with centres of growth in St. Petersburg and Tyumen. There are also many independent Reformed Baptist congregations who are Calvinist and dispensational; in addition, some Baptist Union churches are sympathetic to Reformed theology. The Reformed church community has been afflicted with Federal Vision theology, which has made some inroads. A challenge for the Reformed church will be to cast off a survivalist and insular mentality, and assume a forward-thinking and unified front, while remaining biblically faithful.

Come Over & Help's Role in Russia

Association of Christians of Evangelical Churches (ACEC)

Located in the expansive eastern oblast (province) of Yakutia, these evangelical churches were originally planted by Ukrainian missionaries, and consist of both Slavic and Yakut (or Sakha) people.

We partner with ACEC on the following:

- **Sakha National Ministry** – Outreach amongst the Sakha peoples of Yakutia. Many live in small, inaccessible villages, some having but 1 or 2 believers!
- **Church Support** – We assist 19 small churches and pastors with regular supplementary financial support that allows the pastors to devote more time to ministry and evangelism.
- **Children Support** – Assistance to Christian families who have adopted orphans.
- **WinterHelp** – Assistance to Christian families for the extra expenses of winter – firewood, warm clothes, essential home improvements. Assistance may also be given to unchurched families in conjunction with evangelism.



WinterHelp in Russia



Firewood being chopped and stacked by local church members in Yakutia

- **Vehicle Support** – Funds to maintain and repair the ACEC vehicles used for ministry and evangelism.
- **Summer Youth Camps** – Evangelistic youth camps are held in several villages.

Tyumen Reformed Baptist Church

Come Over & Help is assisting the operations of a small local Bible school in the south-central city of Tyumen (population of ~750,000). Led by Pastor Alexander Khitrov and several other local pastors, the various



Board member Pastor Procee (centre) visiting with Christians in Yakutia

courses are taught from a Reformed perspective, which is new to many of the participants. We are also helping this church on a declining scale with their rent payments.

Holy Trinity Bible School

Also located in Tyumen, this is one of only a couple of truly Reformed seminaries in Russia. We assist our partner in various ways, including making book purchases for their library, and connecting them to Western instructors to teach their courses – for example, Come Over & Help board member Dr. G. R. Procee and Dr. H. Selderhuis of the Theological University of Apeldoorn.

Please pray for Russia and for Come Over & Help as we seek to see thriving, biblically faithful churches be established, rooted and flourishing across this vast land. Please pray:

- For the theological training in Tyumen, both at Holy Trinity Bible

School as well as the Bible school led by Pastor Khitrov.



Pastor Khitrov visiting with an elderly member

- That the sharp divisions amongst the various Evangelical and Reformed churches would be healed by the work of the Spirit of truth and grace, and that the gospel of sovereign grace would be sounded clearly and winsomely across Russia.
- For the ministry and witness of the Association of Churches of Evangelical Christians, particularly the evangelism efforts amongst the far-flung and remote villages of Yakutia.



Pastor Riko takes to the sky to preach to the small churches scattered all over Yakutia

- That the believers in remote villages who are only visited a few times each year by evangelists would remain strong in the faith, and that many more would be added to their number!
- That Come Over & Help would be given wisdom and continued provision to be a blessing to the Reformed church community in Russia.
- That the gospel would prevail in this great nation.



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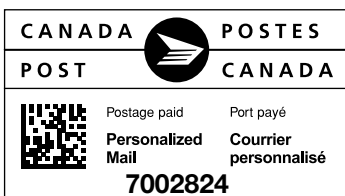


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