

Greetings from Russia.

Amidst the cold, snow, and uncertainty of all that is happening, our Lord Jesus is as always our hope and stay. There is a line from a Christian song the Russian youth like to sing (translated from Finnish) which has a line (when I figure out how to make all the verses rhyme in English this song is on my list of songs to translate into English):

“Heavy Sorrow comes, and fills our hearts with pain,
but then prayer strengthens our faith again.
In the fight and in the burden, amidst the sorrow and the darkness
what never changes is that our Lord is near us.”

Times are what they are, and there are many things that might cause us anxiety, but the truth as Christians is our Lord Jesus is truly with us, never abandons us. Those around us who have lost their faith in Christ or have yet to believe do not have this hope, this assurance, that even when we forget, we still have. Now is especially the time to share it.

'Once again I want to remind you that I have been having trouble sending out my usual prayer letter. Mailchimp cancelled my account and blocked my access to all my contacts--in support of the Ukraine. I am trying a new program and hope it works. I am also trying to figure out a way that people can subscribe--if, for instance, those of you who receive this missive would forward it to others who might be interested. If I did this properly, I have set up a QR code that should lead you to a link that allows you to subscribe. Unsubscribing is easier--just click on the button below.





убежище: Оо-BEZH-ish-eh--refuge

Psalm 91:2 I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust."

Back in September my aunt invited me to an LVML rally in Iowa to be held on the 24th, and I didn't think I could attend--the only way to fly out of Russia is through Turkey and tickets were expensive. On the 15th, however, a Finnish colleague told me I could ride with him across the border to Helsinki on the 18th and fly from there. Seeing in this possible divine intervention, I agreed, and then flew to the States for what was supposed to be a sort visit--a month. On the way, however, I contracted COVID and so had to quarantine instead of visit my aunt. Given what was going on, then, here is Russia at the end of September and the mess at the borders, even our Bishop recommended that I extend my stay in the US. Extending my stay allowed me not only to visit some US parishes, spend Thanksgiving with my family, but also take a trip to visit parishes in Canada. My visit there just happened to be during hunting season, and one of the pastors I visited was rather frustrated because he couldn't get a deer--even though the deer were around (shooting in town is a no-no). Seems the deer know better than most humans where to find true shelter during tough times. Of course the Church is more than a shelter from the storms of life, the growing darkness, and uncertainty and anxiety, but it should also be such a refuge for the weary--a refuge where they can meet their Savior, receive food for their journey of faith in Jesus, and be thus strengthened to go back out to live a life of witness to those around them.

A Few Highlights of My Trip

Romans 1:11 For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established -- that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

Before I talk about coming back to Russia, I thought I would share a few highlights of my trip. Unfortunately, I didn't take pictures of many of the places I visited--it is only when people took pictures of me that I managed to talk them into sending me a copy. So my visits to Texas, North Carolina, Iowa, Virginia, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Illinois, although also full of highlights, are not pictured.



Visiting with Pastor emeritus Jim Dimitroff and Pastor Jim Fritsche in Edmonton. Jim Dimitroff was my supervisor when I first came as a volunteer missionary to Russia in 1995



Visiting with Pastor Bart Erickson in Calgary. Bart came as part of a mission group several years ago, and since then his congregation has made several visits to Russia to help with English Camps



Then I preached for the first time at a congregation in Toronto--a congregation made up largely of Immigrants from Africa and South America. Found out my English was too good for them to understand.



I flew from Canada to the US and then the next day flew to Finland, where I also met an old acquaintance from my days as a volunteer, Perti, now a retired pastor.



Of course, being in Finland I had a very important meeting--I had to pass on my list of who was naughty and nice before I returned to Russia on Dec 17th.

Back to Russia

Acts 8:25 ¶ So when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

While in the States and Canada there were many people wondering why I would return to Russia under the current circumstances. In truth there were many temptations to stay. Staying or returning was not an easy decision, but like all decisions, what is important is putting our wills and desires on hold and trying to sincerely and without prejudice discern God's will. Prayer full consideration led me to understand 1) my wife was still in Russia, 2) my call is here, and regardless of the inconvenience and uncertainty of the situation, I can still fulfill my call in relative safety and without any real interference. 3) there is a greater need here, especially now, not only for me to be here to encourage those who can't flee, but also to do what I have been called to do--teach, mentor, pastor, evangelize and now to some degree help administrate.



Leading Worship--this is
Christmas Eve



Teaching



Working with the Students
at our Seminary

Prayer Requests

Of course, please send me your prayer requests so that I might include them in our prayers here in Russia, but I ask your prayers for the following: first, of course, for peace, but as regards me, the Church here and ministry: pray for our new seminary rector, Konstantin Subbotin (Kostya for short) as we will now be working to strengthen the teaching in our various programs; for our Bishop Ivan Laptev as he continues to lead the church during these tough times; for the possibility of opening a Lutheran School (we have begun to seriously investigate this possibility--like I said during my presentations these last few months: full speed ahead), for my son Karl who has applied to seminary, for the families of those who have been drafted, and for myself, as usual, for more wisdom, faith and strength.

Hymn verse:

Jesus, refuge of the weary, blest Redeemer Whom we love,
Fountain in life's desert dreary, Savior from the World above:
Often have Your eyes, offended, gazed upon the sinner's fall;
Yet upon the cross extended, You have borne the pain of all.
LSB 423 v, 1

Blessings in Christ,
Pastor Missionary Leif R. Camp
Serving the Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia

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you are receiving this because at one of my presentations you signed up to receive my prayerletter or you contacted me directly. If not, then a friend may have forwarded you this letter. Russian Contact addresses Feedback, questions, whatever are most welcome.

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