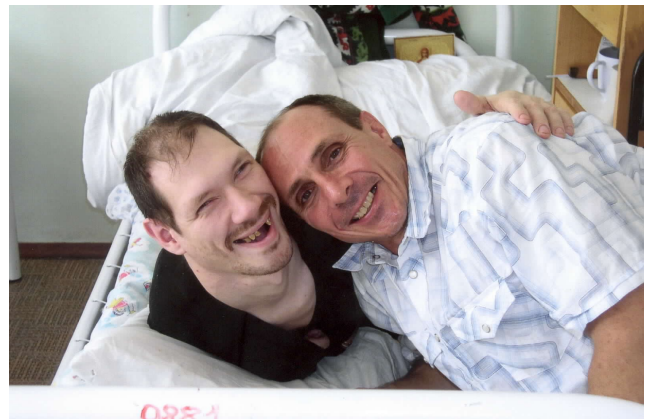
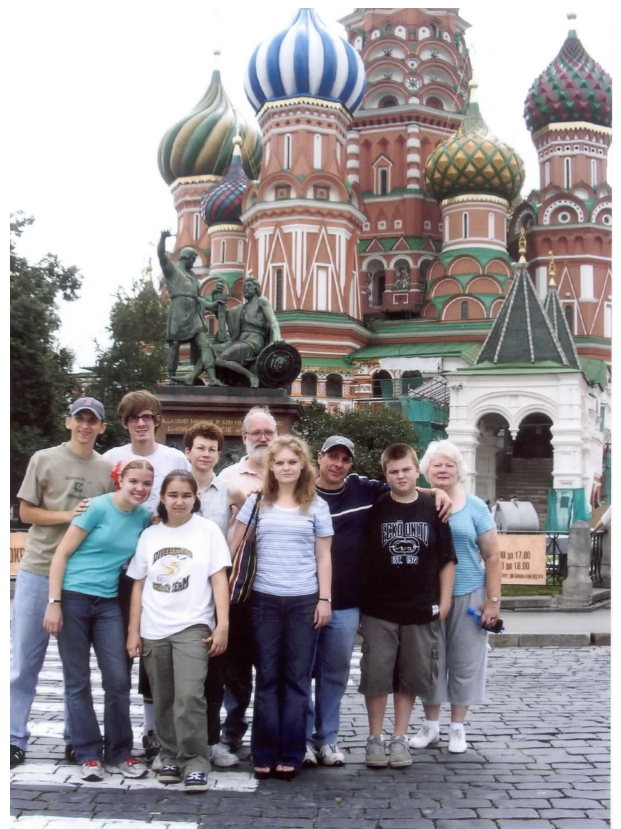


2005 SummerMission Report

Our mission team that worked in the orphanages and institutions for the disabled in Russia had an awesome two weeks of ministry this summer! Because we had team members coming from Texas, Ohio, Florida, and Massachusetts, it was impossible to have inclusive team meetings before the trip, but everyone came together for a common purpose once we arrived in St. Petersburg and we were blessed with a real spirit of unity. Though the pace was often exhausting and we were feasted upon nightly by hoards of mosquitos, everyone served joyfully and without complaint. In addition to our 9 American and 4 Russian teammates we were daily joined by others that included guest members from California, Massachusetts, and Nigeria as well as numerous local Russians. Our mini-bus was always packed.

We spent our first 3 mornings going to orphanage #2 for disabled children in Peterhoff and the afternoons at the neurological hospital for adults located just a few miles from the orphanage. Unusually hot days kept us outside with the children playing games, blowing bubbles, and working on Bible coloring books. While most of these children have limited conceptual skills, they display an abundance of joy and affection when given a little attention. The message we seek to communicate is that God loves them and they are very important to Him. They become so precious when one spends a little time with them.



The adult facility in Peterhoff has more than 1000 residents and it can be a bit overwhelming the first time one sees the sheer number of severely handicapped people in one place. We would pack groups into open areas in the hallways to sing and dance, although for many dancing meant rocking back and forth in wheelchairs or on scooterboards. Even though they were adults they were very enthusiastic about the Bible coloring books. Team members also made visits to the bed ridden and elderly who could not join the group activities. Some of these dear people received their first hugs in years. They and the staff assured us they are already waiting for a return visit.

The orphanage for handicapped children in Pavlovsk cares for more than 500 , and to my knowledge is the largest orphanage in Russia. We spent 4 days there working with groups of children that do not usually have an opportunity to see visitors. The mornings were more structured with music, Bible stories, and craft projects while in the afternoons we went outside to throw frisbees, do face painting, or just hang out with the kids and build relationships. We played soccer one afternoon and the Americans were convincingly defeated by some of the speedier and obviously more skilled residents. One of our favorite things to do was to take some of the non-ambulatory children, who don't normally get outdoors very often, for walks (and even races) in wheelchairs and strollers. Our last day there we were caught in a late afternoon downpour while strolling. Everyone got drenched, but the kids were delighted.



Our team also visited 2 more adult facilities, #10 and #7. Neurological hospital #7 has 850 residents and had never had a mission team visit before. The director and staff graciously received us and were eager to share their faith as Russian Orthodox Christians. Some Orthodox believers can be very territorial and at first we were wondering if they were sending a warning to our evangelical group, but it soon became apparent that they were very happy to have us. The tea and pastries they served were delicious. Our only disappointment was that the time here was too short, but we hope to return in the future. On our last day in St. Petersburg we also went to Fyoder, a facility for runaways and street children. All of the kids at Fyoder have sad stories and we wished for more time to do ministry in this place. Fortunately, a couple of our Russian teammates have made commitments to continue relationships with some of the children they met there. Encouraging and supporting Russian Christians to continue in these labors after we are gone is essential for our mission efforts to bear lasting fruit. Thanks to the generosity of our own supporters we were able to leave medicines, hygiene supplies, sports equipment, and craft supplies in most of the places we visited.

Moscow

If you have read this far, please don't stop now. On July 16 our team took a day train to Moscow and for 2 days did ministry among a group of refugees from Uzbekistan. When I was in Moscow last February I met Alexandra Kalashnikova who invited us to join her in the work she was doing with this needy group of people, made up mostly of children, who live in make-shift huts next to a garbage dump. Fleeing poverty and miserable conditions in Uzbekistan they have arrived in Russia to find more of what they left behind in their home county. The children provide income by begging on the streets and when they don't bring in enough they are beaten by the adults. Before food can be bought they must first pay a land owner for squatting on his property and the local police must be given fifty dollars a week to avoid harassment.





They were all incredibly friendly and open to us and we brought them Big Macs and cheeseburgers each day we came out which disappeared in a hurry. We did street dancing, chalk art on the sidewalks, skits, and the Bible coloring books. On the second day team leader, Nate Laughlin, presented the Gospel in a clear, easy to understand message that was attentively listened to by all the children. One teenage boy said he knew he was a sinner because he often hit his younger brothers. Though nominally Muslim, children and adults alike were eager to hear about God's love and forgiveness that come through Jesus and many of them prayed a prayer of repentance and then asked to receive Jesus as their Lord and saviour.

We met two mothers who had given birth to their babies in huts beside the dump. Their biggest complaint was about cold they were in the winter. We left funds with Alexandra to provide new shoes and socks for all the children and to purchase blankets for everyone. Alexandra would like to provide a shelter where these people could come to receive food and warmth in the winter and she could teach the children to read. They are bright and inquisitive, but most of them are totally illiterate. They also need to be discipled in their new faith. Alexandra has a vision for this ministry, but her resources are very limited at this time. This would be a great project for a church to partner in. Please contact me if you think the Lord may be leading you to help. If some of these children could be educated and discipled, they could return to Uzbekistan and have an impact on their nation.



I want to thank all who prayed and gave to make this trip possible and to provide for the many needs we encountered. You were an integral part of all we did, and you have blessed many. Thank you!
Louis Fry