

REACHING RUSSIA FOR CHRIST



Photography and Story: Tom Price, CCMM staff



From left to right: Pastor John Aydelott (from Seattle, WA), Vlad Oplev, Mikhail Andronov, and Pastor Wade Freshour. Vlad Oplev and Mikhail Andronov, from the town of Nizhny Novgorod, are having hands laid upon them in order to ordain them as senior pastor (Oplev) and assisting pastor (Andronov) for Nizhny. Pastor Wade is turning the leadership over to Vlad and Mikhail. Praise the Lord, He has done great things!

The 1990s saw incredible changes in the former Soviet Union. Years of harsh Communist rule gave way to a struggling democracy. As restrictions against religion lifted, many Russians sought a more personal faith - a faith they could not find in the formal Orthodox Church. Calvary Chapel missionaries entered that void to share the good news about an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. Despite the recent NATO bombing of the former Soviet satellite Serbia, the doors and the peoples' hearts have remained open in Russia....



The Harvest is Plentiful

Total darkness enveloped the rickety subway train as



Above: Russian soldiers march in a ceremony at the eternal flame memorial close to Red Square in the capital city of Moscow.

Left: Russian girls prepare to demonstrate folk dances as Moscow celebrates its birthday.

it raced under the streets of Moscow and came to an abrupt halt. Red Square, a powerful symbol of the former Soviet Union, was directly overhead.

Calvary Chapel Pastor Roger Stahlhut, from Anaheim, California, was thrown forward and nearly fell over Olga, a Russian woman he had engaged in conversation.

They laughed as the lights flickered back on. Olga was conditioned to the metro's sudden stops, as well as the crush of humanity aboard the evening train.

She was interested in the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. She wanted to hear more, but realized that this was her stop. Politely thanking the missionary, she disappeared into the mass of people and was swept out the door.

Pastor Roger, who was leading a two-week mission trip to Russia with Calvary Chapel Church Planting Mission (CCCPM), clutched the Russian-language Bible he had intended to give her. Realizing his mistake, he grabbed the arm of his translator and they jumped off the train together. The doors slammed shut behind them. A dozen members of Roger's mission team watched curiously out the window. As the

train pulled away from the platform, they saw their pastor racing through the crowd, shouting the woman's name.

Pastor Roger's deep voice echoed through the cavernous metro stop. He marched his large frame at a steady pace as the translator ran to keep up with him.

The noisy shuffling of travelers moving past statues of Soviet heroes hushed as the American called out.

"Here I am!" Olga yelled back in English. She walked back through the evening crowd.

"It seems your work with me is not yet complete!" Olga said with a smile.

The three prayed together as the young woman received Jesus Christ as her personal Savior.



Andronov is congratulated after the ceremony..

Church Planting

Since the fall of Communism, George Bryson has flown more than a hundred times to what Ronald Reagan formerly called the "Evil Empire." Since George began his ministry with CCCPM, nearly 40 churches, five in Moscow alone, have flourished in Russia. He has brought thousands of team members to Russian cities and introduced the inhabitants to the message of Jesus Christ. Unlike some other outreaches, CCCPM plants churches and raises leaders from the local populations.

George Bryson is the director of CCCPM in the former Soviet Union. A long-time Calvary Chapel member, he has personally witnessed almost



Pastor Roger Stahlhut, CC Open Door in Anaheim, Ca., witnesses to a young man on the metro in Moscow.



George Bryson's 4-year-old granddaughter, Hannah DeWitt, offers a tract to a passerby on a Russian outreach.

every mission team. His daughter and son-in-law, Esther and Matt DeWitt, run the CCCPM office in Vista, California. Both travel to Russia several times a year. Chris Wheatley, a former missionary to Russia, rounds out the team as missions coordinator. Debbi Bryson, George's wife, is a favorite speaker at the Russian women's outreaches. He has even taken his grandchildren, ages two and four, with him. Four-year-old Hannah bravely hands out tracts on street outreaches.

Bryson rented space earlier this year in a high-rise to house the long-term missionaries and their Russian interpreters in northwestern Moscow. The new dorm will be the site of Calvary Chapel Bible College in Moscow. Guy Tokunaga, a missionary from Hawaii, spent several months overseeing the project. More than a year ago, unavoidable circumstances forced CCCPM to move out of a Russian dorm.

Daily worship services, Bible study, and evangelism classes prepare the missionaries for outreaches in the community. The Americans are supported by their home churches or raise their own support.



Left: George Bryson, CCCPM director, greets and guesses student's names. Wearing his trademark hat and cowboy boots, Bryson leads the teams and acts as MC. He has been to Russia more than 100 times. Since he began CCCPM in the early 90's, nearly 40 Calvary Chapels have flourished in the former Soviet Union. Bryson, a pastor himself, was first introduced to the Lord in 1968 while hitchhiking. He was picked up by Pastor Chuck Smith, who took him to a Christian house ministry. He accepted Christ soon after.



Heather Kirtley(left), wife of Pastor Joel Kirtley, CC St.Petersburg, with Lena Korepanova, from St. Petersburg, after the Moscow Pastors' Conference.

When a group of short-term evangelists arrive from the United States, they will stay in the new facility in Moscow. The long-term missionaries often cook for the entire group, which could be as large as 50 members. The apartments will also act as a safe haven for the new Russian believers—a place where they can be with other strong Christians and study God's word. Missionary Celeste Romero, from Calvary Chapel Albuquerque, coordinates the team activities for CCCPM in Moscow. Brenda Ross, from CC Tuscon, and Morgan Hess, wife of Pastor Chris Hess, run the women's ministry.

The long-term missionaries look forward to the mission groups coming from various Calvaries in America. The impact of their street outreaches brings new believers into their churches.

The mission groups minister in jails and the overcrowded orphanages as well. Many of the children have parents who simply can't afford to raise them. They receive care in the orphanages but miss the intimacy that comes from a parent. It is particularly bittersweet when Americans spend time with the little ones who crave affection and a human touch. Missionaries delight in showering them with the love of Jesus.

The Gospel goes to jails and schools

Calvary Chapel missionary Dale Tweedy leads a vibrant prison ministry. The missionary from

Minnesota, an early convert of the CC/Jesus movement, reaches foreign prisoners. Grown men crowded into tiny cells, wait patiently for their turn to touch the hand of visiting Christians through a tiny, waist-high window, 8 inches tall by 10 inches wide. Despite the outbreak of tuberculosis among prisoners, hands grasp hands. Inmates cling to every word of personal testimony shared by believers. A missionary visit brings the light of Christ to the darkness of day-to-day incarceration.



George Bryson is hoisted aloft by Moscow Pastor Chris Hess to the delight of Russian middle school students. In the skit, Bryson portrayed a regular guy that thought he didn't need the saving grace of Jesus until Satan (portrayed by Hess) bound him and carried him off.

Most prisoners say that, despite their desperate conditions, they praise God for their confinement. They admit that, because of their imprisonment, in many ways God has shown His love in an extraordinarily intimate way. Many of the inmates face years of prison, but a visitor would not often find them discouraged. They express with joy that, although their lives are currently bound, they look forward to eternal freedom with their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Visitors are forever humbled by the experience. The inmates minister to the missionaries!



The mission teams have many outreaches in the schools....Yes, public schools! Americans have been astounded that Russians allow Calvary Chapel missionaries in the classrooms. “Often we are invited in as a cultural exchange,” Bryson said. “When the kids find out we are Christians, they have so many questions about our faith. The teachers often encourage us to share our faith with the students.” Missionaries perform pantomime skits, play live Christian music, and talk to the students. All leave with a Russian language New Testament and an invitation to a concert.

Behind every successful missionary, there’s a faithful church

Many churches elect to support and send a missionary pastor and his family to a specific Russian town, where there are no churches planted. This past autumn, City Calvary Chapel in Seattle, sent missionaries to Smolensk, which is 300 miles directly west of Moscow. Over 500 attended the free concerts nightly. Out of that group many began attending church regularly. A follow-up outreach in January brought others. Pastor John Adelytt, with the guidance of CCCPM, led the mission both times. Michael Bryan pastors the Calvary Chapel in Smolensk, eight hours west of Moscow.

A recent church planting is in Sochi, a Russian resort town on the Black Sea. Ken and Debby Scheller and their two teenagers felt God’s calling. Leaving Moscow in February, they are hoping teams will come help the ministry. CCBCE student Marina Marinushkina, working with CCCPM, is there to interpret, lead worship, and to help where needed.

While the openness of the Russian people is encouraging, Bryson is aware that anything could happen in Russian at any time. “If anyone tells you that they know what will happen next in the former Soviet Union, they’re lying,” Bryson

“All I know for sure” he added, “is that *right now* there is a wide open door for the Gospel in Russia.”

George Bryson, Director CCCPM, speaking on Russia



Guy Tokunaga, a Calvary missionary in Moscow, playfully chases a young girl during a visit from a mission team. Guy is from Hawaii.

Missionaries from CC Chino Hills shower the children with love and affection at the orphanage in St. Petersburg. While some children want to play, others just want to experience God’s love and affection with hugs and kisses. Many of the children’s parents cannot afford to care for them, and must surrender them to the institutions. Sadly, adoption is an emotionally and financially draining venture for most Americans in Russia.





above- CC Chino Hills Pastor Jack Hibbs(in red) leads an 'in-reach' for new believers at CC St. Petersburg north. Chino Hills has been very active in mission outreaches in St.Petersburg and in Germany as well.
left-Pastor Jack greets new believers in CC St. Petersburg Central after a service on Sunday morning.

Calvary Chapel, St. Petersburg

Eight hours north of Moscow by train, St. Petersburg, Russia, is considered one of Europe’s loveliest cities. It presides over a cultural and tourist mecca. Calvary Chapel Chino Hills has taken a special interest in the churches planted there. Pastor Jack Hibbs has brought several teams to St. Petersburg as well as other European cities. A special bond has developed between the American and St. Petersburg churches. Russian interpreters are brought over to Chino Hills regularly to further their Christian study, with the desire to be stronger witnesses for Christ back in Russia. Pastor Jack mentors young missionary pastors in their faith.

CC St.Petersburg Central, pastored by Joel Kirtley, is an outreach ministry of Calvary Fellowship of Seattle, under Wayne Taylor. CC North, pastored by Ildar(Paul) Karamov, is an outreach of CC Spokane, under Ken Ortize.



At CC St. Petersburg north, Sasha Ramanov, wearing a baseball hat, fights back the tears. He is comforted by Frank Kagawa, an American missionary from Chino Hills. Kagawa had been instrumental in leading the young Russian to Jesus and was leaving to return to the United States.

Ramanov, a former gang member who accepted Christ at a concert, wondered how he would deal with the absence of the man he had come to know as his spiritual father. The American had spent two weeks discipling Ramonov.

Sasha Ramanov fights back tears as American missionary Frank Kagawa returns home.

Prayer for the prodigal

That afternoon, a Calvary Chapel prayer meeting began in St. Petersburg. The vigil continued even as the remaining flickers of daylight bathed the small sanctuary with an orange glow. Candles eventually became the only source of light. Russians, no longer new to the faith, ran the prayer meeting.

Dmitry Budnik lightly stroked his guitar and sang Christian songs as he led worship. He had accepted Jesus Christ four years ago at a street outreach. Women raised their hands in praise. Eyes were closed.

Budnik felt God laying a tremendous burden for a distant country on him.

“Please,” he implored, “I would ask that everyone pray for a great nation that is turning its back on God, the very thing that made it so very strong in the first place.”

“Please,” he said, “We all need to lift up and continue to pray for the United States of America.”



“I would ask that everyone pray for a great nation that is turning its back on God...”

Dmitry Budnik.....Russian worship leader, praying for America.



"It's harder to witness to a person in Russia because they don't speak the language, and you're trying to tell them life-changing things," commented Henschel. However what was frustrating for Henschel was a positive reinforcement for Prior.

"The language wasn't really a barrier," said Joe. "It made it less intimidating to share Jesus."

Language problems might have hindered the sharing for some, but they had other options as well. Most students invited the Russians to church or to a concert as their personal guests. Many of the people who were saved that week came to hear the gospel through this approach.

"There's so many people throughout the world who are destroying themselves in sin. We have the key, and it is selfish of us not to share it," said Noakes.

The missionary group had trouble adjusting to the country's standard of living. Most of the citizens lived in small apartments in buildings which stood ten to twenty stories high throughout the city.

"Because they didn't have as much as we do, they were more open (to the gospel). They had nothing to be proudful about," said Henschel.

There are five Calvary Chapel Churches planted in the Moscow area of Russia, a crusade which was lead by George Bryson, who is in charge of the church planting.

While witnessing at the church or simply on the streets, Prior realized, "The Russians were more receptive to the gospel than Americans, because they hadn't heard it as often."



CC Vista youth pastor Mike Brown(left), skater Matt Noakes, and their Russian interpreter, Dennis, share the gospel with teenagers.

Not only did the people of Moscow listen to the gospel, but many of them were interested in learning more about this man who was God's Son.

"It was a culture shock to a lot of these guys," he said, "To see how little these people have, and how simple they lived. They were equally blessed."

Their stay in Russia was an experience the group will not soon forget. Whether it was acting, worshipping, or skateboarding, Noakes, Henschel, Prior and the rest of the missionaries gave of themselves to share their love and hope in Christ with the people of Russia. Calvary Chapel Vista is planning a second trip sometime in the next year, and all of the boys have expressed interest in returning to the country in which they showed the citizens more than a skateboard trick-they showed them a giving heart.

Writer Beth DeRiggi recently graduated from Chancellor High School and will attend Mary Washington College. She also writes for the local newspaper.



Skaters jump over 14-year-old missionary Brandon Carringer, from Vista, to the amazement of the Russian teens. The Americans took the opportunity to share Jesus Christ to the crowds.

CCCPCM EVENTS

Calvary Chapel Church Planting Mission

1999 Schedule

George Bryson-Director, Matt Dewitt-Assistant Director, Chris Wheatley-Missions Coordinator

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Summer Intern Program	Moscow	June 13 to Aug. 31,	1999
Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa, CA	Moscow	July 20 - 31	1999
Peace Officers for Christ, Intl.	Nizhny Novgorod	July 21 to Aug. 1	1999
Calvary Chapel Spokane, WA	Moscow	August 10 - 22	1999
Calvary Chapel St. Petersburg, FL	St. Petersburg	August 17-27	1999
High Desert Church, CA	Moscow	Sept. 23 to Oct. 4	1999
City Calvary Chapel, Seattle & Calvary Chapel Modesto, CA	Smolensk	October 14 - 25	1999
Calvary Fellowship Seattle, WA	Novosibirsk	Nov. 29- Dec. 9	1999
Moscow Pastors' Conference-2000	Moscow	Jan. 27 - Feb. 7	2000
Calvary Chapel San Jose, CA	Moscow	Feb. 14- 24	2000
Calvary Chapel Vista, CA	Moscow	Feb. 21-March 2	2000
Calvary Chapel Spokane	Sochi [on Black Sea]	March 6-16	2000
Calvary Chapel High Desert	Moscow	May 1-11	2000

CCCPCM is always praying for Calvary Chapels to join them on mission trips to either help plant new churches or minister to ones already in place.

Please call to work out arrangements to join other mission teams. A Calvary Chapel Bible College will begin in September at the new dorm in Moscow.

Share the exciting missionary work your youth group is doing by contacting us at cmm@calvarychapel.com