



May Your Christmas Be a Joyful Celebration of our King's Incarnation!



Dear family and friends,

As this year comes to an end, we praise God for blessing us with so many faithful friends.



MOPS Leaders with Linda and Jo

Report from Linda

Long-time friend and supporter, Jo Owens, and I returned a few weeks ago from an encouraging week in Russia. We are thrilled with our new director for the Krasnodar area:

Natasha Knyazeva, shown in this picture of our MOPS team.

• Natasha is quickly gathering women from many churches, as well as unbelievers, into a close relationship with the BLTC. She will accomplish this in various ways such as holding Entrust Classes (formerly BEE and re-written especially for the needs of women).

• In addition, she is **working closely with the pastors and male leadership** in some of the larger denominational churches in the region to involve them in utilizing women to reach their communities.

- In Krasnodar, the Open Door Bible Church has **started the first MOPS group in Krasnodar**. We want to encourage this group to **become a model for many, many more MOPS groups**.
- **Leah Alieva, E/W Coordinator for Russian MOPS**, is so excited about working with Natasha, that she wants to bring women together from **all over Russia to the Krasnodar area this summer for MOPS exposure and training**.

I also had a great meeting in Moscow with **Olga Shibaeva**, E/W coordinator for Women's Ministries in Central Russia and North Ossetia. She plans to provide:

- **Seminars for women's ministry leaders and pastors' wives**: Courses will first be taught in seminars and then multiplied, as all of the women will be expected to teach the materials to women in their churches.
- **Ongoing training through correspondence for these women**
- **Marriage Conferences**: She plans to **encourage strong families** through couples' conferences. We are convinced that the strengthening of marriages will greatly enhance the effectiveness of church planters and pastors.

I have never been more encouraged as when I see these **young Russian women** so intent on reaching out to their own people and helping them grow strong Christian families and reach out to the lost.



Olga Shibaeva

Developments in the Former Soviet Union

We are often asked for an update on developments in the former Soviet Union. Here are a few observations:

The window for Western missionary activity in Russia and Central Asia is rapidly closing.

- Soon after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, dozens of mission agencies began working in the 15 former Soviet Republics.
- But times have changed. Russia now issues very few visas to long term missionaries, and this year more than 50 different Christian agencies were closed down by the government.
- The Five Central Asian Muslim Republics (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan) are stepping up restrictions on and persecution of evangelical churches and organizations. More and more of the churches are being forced underground.



The provinces of southern Russia between the Black and Caspian Seas (also known as the Northern Caucasus region), populated by more than 40 different ethnic groups, mostly Muslim, continue to be plagued with terrible strife:

- War has destroyed much of Chechnya
- North Ossetia was the scene of the Beslan school siege in 2004, when pro-Chechen militants seized schoolchildren and teachers. It ended with more than 300 people dead after a bungled assault by Russian troops.
- Neighboring Ingushetia suffers almost daily shoot-outs and explosions.
- In October 2005, Muslim militants staged a large-scale, armed assault on government buildings in Nalchik, the capital of the Russian Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria.

The Republics of the Southern Caucasus (nominally Orthodox Christian Georgia and Armenia and Muslim Azerbaijan, which borders Iran)

- In Azerbaijan local leaders defy their own constitution and continue to harass and imprison religious leaders.
- Iran has passed a law that threatens death to anyone converting from Islam to Christianity.
- Georgia continues to suffer with a terrible economy and the wars involving the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, where the Russians now maintain thousands of troops.

But God is still at work in the region in wonderful ways:

- **This past year East West related Russian staff exposed more than 100,000 to the gospel, trained more than 3500 and planted dozens of churches.**
- **Capable, grace-oriented and visionary leadership is emerging.**
- **Central Asian underground churches continue to multiply.**
- **Azeri evangelists continue to courageously evangelize and start new groups in Azerbaijan and Iran. Even government officials in Iran are troubled by the growth of the underground church there, fearing that there are millions of young Iranians who are fed up with the Mullah's rule and trusting in Christ and meeting secretly all across the nation.**

PRAYER REQUESTS

Praise God that Joe's gall bladder surgery went well and the ministry in the former Soviet Union continues to develop into more effective, nationally led ministries. Thanks for praying.

Please continue to pray for. . .

1. The growth of the very effective evangelistic ministry of MOPS in Russia.
2. Protection for the national evangelists and church planters in the region
3. Funding to complete the construction project in Azerbaijan where we house our training center
4. Our support during the economic downturn.