

# MISSION NEWS

*Highlighting events in Russia, Armenia, and Central America*

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**June-July 2005**

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*“Opening the Bible”*

**MISSION FOR BIBLICAL LITERACY  
1580 PEACHTREE ST. NE  
ATLANTA, GA 30309-2435**

**Youth and Adults continue planning for their Mission trip to Russia.**

Meeting at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Fredrick Kuhn, team members gather around the dining room table to delegate out responsibilities as well as to receive a briefing for their long awaited trip to Russia. One more meeting awaits all before departure to Russia.

Rachel Gross shares the first half of the curriculum that will be used for the children at the Ekimovichi orphanage near Smolensk in western Russia. The curriculum, written by Missionary Donald Marsden, illustrated by Kathy Ames of Richmond, VA and translated into Russian by Galina Obrovets will focus on the theme, "He Calls us His Friends". Rachel will be on her fourth missionary journey to Russia. Rachel is the Youth Leader at Christ Church in Savannah.

Betsy Haun, local artist will be providing art lessons to the children. She will also continue to teach about famous artists such as Michael Angelo. She has arranged team members to dramatize through a short skit, each artist that is to be studied. This will be Betsy's fourth trip to Russia. Betsy is a member of the First Christian Church in Savannah.

Also returning for his third trip as a VBS teacher will be local businessman, Heyward Gignilliat. Heyward has worked with Sr. High level students and for the second time, he will have as his assistant, Pavel Solomine who is traveling from Khabarovsk in the Russian Far East to join him. (It takes eight hours of flying by jet air to reach Moscow) and Pavel will still have the other six hours of travel to Ekimovichi. Heyward has also visited Ekimovichi during a pre-planning trip with John Novikoff

Lea Reeves, another four-year veteran who has organized the crafts activities in the past, will focus more on teaching this year. Because of Lea's enthusiasm for the children of Russia, she has enlisted her brother Aiken to come along on this trip.

Carol Kuhn, herself an attorney, will be heading up the crafts projects as well as functioning as a teacher. This will be the first mission trip for her and her daughter Carolyn.

Sam Mikell will be on his second trip and this time, he will function as recreation leader. His mother, Dr. Julia Mikell has also made two short term trips in the past – one to Siberia and one to Ekimovichi.

Other first time team members are Emily Aimone and Ann Kingston



**Figure 1 I-R Rachel, John, Betsy discuss plans for teaching with team**



**Figure 2 L-R Ann Kingston, Rachel Gross**



**Figure 3 L-R Lea Reeves, Sam Mikell, Carolyn Kuhn, Ann Kingston, Emily Aimone**

Dear Partners,

The weather on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua is still very dry and hot. The trails to the comarcas (villages), which are in the mountains, are dusty and hard. But soon that will change. The rainy season will begin sometime about the middle of May and it will almost be as the monsoons are in Asia through June and part of July. After this it will still rain but not as hard until September and sometimes into October. During this time many of the comarcas will be unreachable because the creeks and rivers will be overflowing and the mud will be deep. This is the reason that we have to go in the dry season to reach many of the people who otherwise would not be reached.

One such place is Pueblo Nuevo. It is a comarca that is about 30 minutes by horse from the famous Mahogany Creek. To get to Pueblo Nuevo we crossed the Rio Escondido to San Augustine and took a small truck 22 kilometers to a comarca called Pavon. I call the truck the Chancho (ie: literally HOG) Express. You get packed in like carrying a load of livestock and you also carry everything from lumber to pigs. This trip takes over 2 hours. From there we mounted horses and rode through the mountains and rain forest for about 3 hours to reach a small school. It has one teacher, three grades, and about thirty students. After this we visited two more houses where people came from miles around to receive medicine, which opened the door to the gospel. At the end of the day we hung our hammocks and slept well. The next morning we worked until noon and then we mounted our horses for the ride out and the return trip on the Chancho Express.

These are places that receive very little if any help. They are so receptive to the gospel. We witness as we work giving medical help and also pray for the patients. These people are so genuine. What a please it is to do God's work.

Thank you so very much for your support for the work here on the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua. It is only because of your prayers and monetary giving that we can carry on the work to which God has called us. Your faithfulness is greatly appreciated by the people and me. I pray that



**Riding through the mountains to reach Pueblo Nuevo**



**The school with the teacher and students**

God repays you 100 fold. Please keep us in your prayers.

**As always I am:**

**Amazed by Him,**

**Thom**

## Annual Report for John Novikoff

1. This report will cover the calendar period of June 2004-June 2005. The intent of this report is to inform the MBL Board of work activities of the Project Minister for Russia and Armenia. The report also covers work among individuals and churches to raise awareness of World Mission opportunities and for individuals and churches to provide leadership and financial resources to accomplish the objectives of MBL.

2. For the twelve month period, a total of 1500 MBL Mission Newsletters were sent out to individuals and supporting churches. Likewise approximately 600 letters were sent out in order to raise funds.

3. June 9-19 The Mission trip to Russia recruited three Episcopal and one Disciples of Christ. The team was invited to work a VBS type program in the village of Ekimovichi, 60miles southeast of Smolensk. In this period, the team also visited the Desnagorsk Baptist Church in the nearby city of Desnagorsk. The team sang several songs in the Russian language. John Novikoff preached. Later, the team toured a home for children of alcoholics who were part of a feeding program.



**Figure 4 Laura Kinzie clowns with youngster**

August- Anna Nerkararyan conducts a VBS program in Varnadorz, Armenia. This was one of the first VBS programs for that orphanage. Anna received an invitation to return for 2005.

5. October 3 I helped lead a Missions Committee at Christ Church to conduct a World Missions Awareness Day. Several Missionaries were invited but only one on hand from Romania – Dave Cox who was also a cousin to a parishioner at Christ Church. The Russia Missions team took part in the

Sunday school presentation with other local missionaries while Novikoff preached the two morning services.

6. November Returned to Moscow. Continued on to Smolensk by train. Accompanied by Galina. Met Pavel Makarenko and stayed at his home overnight. Next day, continued on to Desnagorsk to provide a 12 step program to families concerned about their loved ones.



**Figure 5 John and Galina help Parishioners start a 12 step group**

The next day, the snow was very heavy and about 35 people attended the workshop. That evening, Pavel drove us back through the heavy snow to Smolensk in order for us to take the train back to Moscow.

7. December-January Much time given to planning a trip for Pavel Makarenko and Galina Obrovets to come to the United States at the invitation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Presbyterian Church of Richmond VA. After their service to the church, they were to come to Georgia to visit four disciple churches and two Episcopal churches. After securing air tickets for the pair, Makarenko was refused a visa by the US Consulate in Moscow on the basis that his salary was too low. A considerable amount of time was spent by me to redeem his air fare (a restricted fare).

8. Plans that had been made with Disciples Churches to receive Makarenko and Obrovets were changed. I covered the Glennville Disciples Men. I addressed the CMF at their morning breakfast, attended the Sunday school and shared partially in an adult class and preached the morning sermon.

9. Upon Galina's arrival, she spoke at the Peachtree Christian Church at the Wednesday night fellowship dinner. We traveled to Sandersville GA



**Figure 6 Gloria & Ray Dotson pose with Galina**

to provide a program for the Sandersville Christian Church. Since the church is located in the central district, the attempt was to make this a community service to other churches. Unfortunately, a few days earlier, there had been an ice storm and because of damage by ice, there was a low turn out of people. But Sandersville turned out to be a strong supportive church financially.

10. A few days later, we journeyed across the state to Columbus and held a program



**Figure 7 Galina shares her story at Columbus Ist**

for the Central Christian Church. On Sunday, Galina spoke during the Sunday School hour at Christ Church and on the following Monday, we both spoke at the First Christian Church in

Savannah. The following day, Galina departed to Richmond in order to catch her plane back to Moscow.

9. Attended a special called Regional Assembly in Macon to vote for the new Regional Minister, Ray Miles.

11. May 10-21.

A. Road trip to Little Rock AR to meet with Missionary Thom Walker. Just returned from Nicaragua. Purpose was to begin planning what needed to be done for organizing the booth at the General Assembly of Christian Churches in Portland, OR that meets in July. We agreed that we would bring digital projectors and also the necessary displays for the booth. In addition, Galina Obrovets will be coming from Moscow for the purpose of helping us man the booth and to rekindle the partnerships of some of the churches we have worked with in the initial startup of MBL.

B. Arrived at Hutchinson, KS to preach at the newly formed New Life Christian Church started by Rev. Dan Price. The congregation responded with a free will offering that morning. The next day I had a phone conversation with the interim minister of the First Christian Church, John Andrews. We discussed what could be done to restore MBL's relationship to the First Church since the Outreach Committee withdrew from supporting MBL. I will continue to contact the church and will offer to assist them.

C. Arrived at Edmond, OK. Visited with Pastor Christ Sharrow at the First Christian Church. Chris who is an acquaintance of mine welcomed me. He also introduced me to his associate minister who is also in church of outreach, Greg Bunton. Both Chris and Greg are very interested in short term mission projects and wish to work through MBL.

D. Arrived in Ada OK. Visited with Jim Caton. Jim sent regrets that he could not attend the annual meeting of MBL. Jim provided some excellent referrals and feels that he can assemble a group of Oklahoma clergyman for the purpose of meeting with an MBL representative like Thom or me. I also contacted at his request, Rev. Kevin Adams at the 1st Christian Church in Oklahoma City. Kevin wishes to pursue further discussion and

will visit us when we are at the booth in Portland.

- E. Arrived in Utica MS in time for the Wednesday night fellowship group. I owe a special note of thanks to **Sharon Kay Banks** (see Fig 10) who organized the event. Sharon Kay is a representative and serves as liaison for MBL at her church. Though the group was very small, we received very a warm welcome and stayed overnight at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Murray Griffin. The group provided a free will offering that evening to MBL.
- F. Continued on to Meridian MS where we had lunch with Rev. and Mrs. Lucian Lee and their son and grand daughter. Lucian has been the pastor of the Utica Christian Church and recently underwent heart surgery. He is convalescing until he takes on new responsibilities as an associate at the First Christian Church in Meridian.
- G. Passing through Columbus GA, I made a quick call to Rev Tom K. Stephenson to thank his congregation for recent love gift to MBL. Galina and I had visited his congregation back in February. (fig 7)



**Figure 8 Carol and Lucian Lee with their grand daughter Becky**



**Figure 9 Murray Griffin poses with Sophia, Lucky, and Sheba**



**Figure 10 Sharon Kay Banks, MBL Liaison**

***Something to think about:***

Proverbs 3:3-6

Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

## **ALERT! RUSSIAN CHURCHES IN TROUBLE**

Many of us were shocked but not surprised that there have been recent problems between growing protestant churches and the Russian government.

The Moscow Times, (anyone can access it on internet) reported that on June 2, 2005, members of the Emmanuel Church were in a lawful demonstration near the administrative office of the city of Moscow when police violently broke up the demonstration knocking down placards, manhandling some of the demonstrators and arresting their leader the Rev Alexander Purshaga, an Assembly of God pastor.

The purpose of the demonstration was to protest the government's cancellation of land granted to the congregation to build a church building for their 1000 plus members. It was also suggested that the Russian Orthodox Church was responsible for the turmoil though authorities denied that. Nevertheless, the Assembly of God Church is one of the fastest growing congregations in Russia and can be perceived as a competitive threat to the Orthodox Church. The Orthodox Church had been the national church for the last 1000 years (except during the Soviet period) and still exerts its influence as the "true faith" of Russia in my opinion.

Those of us who have been traveling to Russia over the past 15 years or so have noticed that it is becoming more difficult to secure multi-entry visas. The cost of the visas has also increased dramatically and the government now enforces the tracking of visitors who enter. In short, those of us who are in mission work, either short term or long term are beginning to experience the difficulty of getting around as we once did. We also noticed over the past 10 years that new or small congregations who want to rent a building or a theatre are often denied a rental contract because of the opposition of a local Priest.

I am reminded again by the scriptures that the sharing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not always an easy task. And Jesus even made it plain at the beginning that there will be obstacles and oppression but through all that, we are to be obedient to His words and make the Gospel happen!

### **MBL BOARD ELECTS THE NEW PRESIDENT FOR THE MISSION FOR BIBLICAL LITERACY**

**I have been holding off until now to let you all know that at the annual meeting of MBL this month the following decision was made by the MBL Board: I was elected to be the new President for the next two years. I am humbled to take on this position and honestly, I don't know how much more time I could provide than what I have these past 15 years. Of course, I will continue with the Russian and Armenian ministry.**

**As a volunteer, I have delighted in keeping the spirit and work of MBL alive and I am confident that the Lord is in this work or we would not have come this far. Why did I accept the position although I am still a volunteer? I was told that I needed a title that had some "clout"! OK! Let's see if that will do it!**

**You may remember that what started as the Institute for Biblical Literacy for domestic churches shifted to world mission work after Biblical Literacy work was introduced in Russia. It also continues this very day under the umbrella of the Center for Biblical Literacy in Moscow and is cranking out Christian literature that is making a difference in people's lives, Thanks to the vision of Galina Obrovets. But working with her is Anna Nerkararyan who now is heading up orphanage children's work in Armenia.**

**And of course, we have Thom Walker who has started a full time missionary ministry in Nicaragua. We have experienced a lot of growth. The generous help and encouragement of so many of you has also been evident that God intends to keep MBL alive. If not for the faithful support of so many, where would we be? What could we have done? As the new President, I will need a lot of input from many to accomplish the goals and objectives of the Mission for Biblical Literacy. MBL will always need funding resources to accomplish our important work. That is a given. But most of all, MBL will need your daily prayers. Can I count on you for those important ten minutes or more each day? Please say YES!**

**In Christ,**

**John M. Novikoff, Sr.**

## LET US MEET IN PORTLAND, OREGON AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

If you are one who will be attending the General Assembly of the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) that will be held in Portland, OR July 20-27<sup>th</sup>, you are invited to visit our booth in the convention center. Right now, we will know it as booth #604 but should be easily located through the Assembly's locator directory.

Expect to meet Galina Obrovets, Thom Walker and John Novikoff who will be attending the Assembly. For those of you who have not had the pleasure of meeting the field Mission staff, this is an excellent opportunity to meet them and get a first hand report on what is going on in Russia, Armenia and Nicaragua.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

**We are on the Georgia Website: Check us out at [www.gadisciples.org](http://www.gadisciples.org)  
MBL in Moscow Russia can be found on <http://sestra-m.ru>**

- 1 The expenditures for the Russian/Armenian Mission for 2005-2006 are estimated to cost \$65000. This is the cost of operating the Moscow Center for Biblical Literacy, production of the journal "Sestra" and staff. Volunteer workers have expenses paid when called to the field.**
- 2. The expenditures for the Nicaraguan Mission are estimated to cost \$ 60000. At present, Thom Walker is funding most of his work in Nicaragua through limited personal assets. MBL has only provided about 15% of what he needs to conduct his ministry.**

*My gift*

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**I am pleased to provide \$\_\_\_\_\_ to support the Mission for Biblical Literacy in (please check one or more). *All contributions are tax deductible.***

- \_\_\_\_\_ **Russia**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Armenia**
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