

Update on what is happening in St. Petersburg area:

Family:

After the vacation at school and later in February we had to deal with some issues at school. Both Lisa and Margaret are in the elementary school and its program seems to be designed only to keep parents busy. Our girls both finished the first half of the academic year with A' and B' (In Russian it is 5s and 4s) which is good and we encourage them to do better. In addition to their school activities Lisa continues to learn art (and she draws and paint really well) and Margaret trains with a modern dancing group and has piano lessons. Lisa also started to draw patterns and sew things for her toys. Our children are still too small to move around by themselves and it means wherever they go – their parents go there too. It takes time but Katya and I are glad our children are interested.

As a family we have developed a good evening habit – we get together with our daughters and hug one another and pray. We remember something during the past day we can thank God for and think together what we can ask Him about for tomorrow. Each one of us is able to say something and after that I (Alex) close in a prayer.

One or two times a week we include reading the Bible or listening to its audio version. I am glad that I don't have to make kids participate – they do it willingly.

Some health issues:

February is one of the 'sickest' months. We didn't avoid having flu this year and Lisa was out of school for over two weeks. Katya and I and Margaret had it too but Lisa suffered the severest form with high fever and sleepless nights. Everyone seems to feel well now but the winter is still there and this year it is almost as cold as in Siberia.

Besides flu, Katya had some backaches and now she has to be very careful not to carry weighs. I usually am the 'mule' as we shop for groceries but these days I am more 'mule' than usual. Other than that Katya seems to be doing ok and I hope it stays that way. She takes good care of her health and rests whenever her body needs it.

It seems my being with my dad for weeks and having sleepless nights and all the terrible time have left their trace in my health. My heart and vessels went wild in January. Maybe it was because I finally got out of the stressful conditions or maybe it is time to pay more attention than usual to my health. I have been visiting a cardiologist and got some instructions which are not so easy to follow. I take new pills to reduce blood pressure and started to keep to a new diet. Hopefully, soon I will be able to resume some exercises. It is new to me to feel that way - some simple things require more efforts than usual and the body needs more rest than usual. I think that it is all the result of a complex of things and events I have experienced lately. I am blessed with my wife's attention not to her own health but mine too. These days she has been making sure I eat on time, take pills and

food supplements on time. I had a backache the last weekend and Katya found pills and ointment she had taken – I then slept like a baby.

Church of Christ on Neva:

The local congregation in Saint-Petersburg was established in early 90s and there was a bunch of missionaries who helped it. I know that late brother David Worley (I never met him) helped to get funds for the building where local members continue to meet.

Personally, I think I met only brother Charles (Chuck) Whittle who spend many year working with the congregation in St.Petersburg, Gatchina and Lomonosov. Bro. Joel Petty is one of those who came here years ago married a Russian (Yana) and stayed here. There was a time when there were two congregations but they later joined together and now it is COC on Neva (Neva is the name of the river flowing through the city).

The current schedule in the Church of Christ on Neva is the following:

- Sunday worship at 12pm followed by a lunch (which is prepared by family members (usually couples) in rotation) and fellowship. There are several age groups of children's classes (plus the babys' room – so children usually get together while the grown-ups listen to the sermon.

- Wednesday Bible class at 7pm – we currently study the book of Joshua, chapters 8 and 9. At present, it is Igor Egirev and Joel Petty taking the lead here but I also get to lead these classes.

Worships are arranged so that brethren rotate in their duties, so just like many other brethren I get to preach, lead singing (this one is more often), lead prayers before the Lord's Supper and collection and other prayers. When Ilusha Pekarev was in St.Petersburg for his routine treatment in January he also spoke before the Lord's Supper and a picture is attached hereto.

The Church of Christ on Neva had another loss – sister Maria Shelyakhovskaya who was one of the oldest members here. A faithful Christian, loving mother and grandmother, translator of Christian literature and organizer of many ladies' prayer groups and events. There also was a memorial meeting at the church building. Despite the sad events in late January and February, it is good to see and know that Christians here act as a family and do their best to encourage one another.

Gatchina:

On Sunday afternoon's after worshipping with the congregation on Neva, I then take a bus to the satellite town called Gatchina and I come back home after 10 pm. One of the first Lutheran Church buildings was built in Gatchina by Peter the Great. King Peter wanted to create good conditions for foreign masters and specialists who came to build the city (St.Petersburg). We get together at sister Elvira's place and it is only 10 minutes by foot from the bus stop. Elvira is a faithful Christian and a good friend. She is also a

student in Syktyvkar Correspondence Bible School. I go along with her in these studies and we just covered 1 and 2 Corinthians and are starting a new course which includes the books of Ephesians and Colossians.

While I was away and stayed with my dad she started to participate in a video conference with some ladies from other places. Now they are studying all women of the Bible and once a week one of them prepares for that. I helped Elvira with material about Ruth (she was preparing that topic) three weeks ago and I am glad she could use it. This group is being led by D'Anne Bloom who lives in Nashville. As far as I understand, she was among the first missionaries and this is how Elvira knows her so well. Our sister Nora moved to live in St. Petersburg and she now lives next to her daughter's family and takes care of her little granddaughter. Because of her age and some health problems she cannot move around the city so freely and we pray she has an opportunity to do it when the snow is gone.

Brother Daniel ('Daniyl' in Russian) continues to attend. He takes care of his mother and also of his father. His father lives separately but Daniel seems to be a good son. Daniel is about 50 and was never married. So, we pray that he finds a good wife (or she finds him). His mother asked me to pray about it several times. Both Elvira and I pray about his wisdom because he is now being influence by some 'friends' who are members of the Mormon Church which is very strong both in St. Petersburg and Gatchina. Your additional prayers are highly welcome. As we met together on numerous occasions, Daniel received all the information about who the Mormons are and what they are. The choice is his now but we shall continue to pray. Good news is that he continues to come and participate.

I am thankful that the Lord has use for me in His Kingdom in both congregation in this area and I pray that He allows me to do more.

Alex

"To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." (Jude 1:25)