

# The Hearron Family Newsletter

## First Quarter 2017

### Missionaries to Russia

#### *Serving Since 1993*



#### Great Start to New Year

We had a great beginning to the New Year. We invited Sergey and Lena, the couple who watched our home during our furlough, and Bro Kosty from our church to a New Year celebration party. It was a great time of fellowship and praising the Lord for what He did for us in the past year and what we are eager to receive from Him in the new. Our table was spread with a feast fit for a king.



#### Final Verdict on Russia's Law Regulating Religion and Missionary Activity

The very thought that a government would have a law that outlines the do's and don'ts regarding the practice of anyone's religious preference is utterly foreign to Americans. However, in many parts of the world, governments have implemented laws that do just that. We are not the exception in Russia.

The religious law signed by President Yeltsin in 1997, however, was actually a sigh of relief after many repressive decades under Soviet rule. Unfortunately though, over the years we have seen freedoms envisioned in the original law slowly erode. In July 2016 under the guise to combat terrorism, Russia's law on religion took its greatest step backwards. The new law drastically restricts missionary activity, requires mandatory notification to government authorities by all religious groups of any size and prohibits religious gatherings of any kind in private homes.

Already, several Russian citizens and foreigners have been targeted by authorities and prosecuted under the new reading of the law. BIML missionary, Don Ossewaarde, who pastored in Oreol, Russia, was convicted and fined nearly \$700 dollars for holding a Bible study in his private residence with friends. His appeals to higher courts fell on deaf ears. This past February, Russia's Constitutional Court upheld all lower court rulings. This was a dark day in Russia and a severe blow to constitutionally guaranteed religious freedom. It really shows how weak the judicial system is in Russia.



Our family will have to make changes to the way we conduct our ministry. We are reviewing the need to inform authorities and how to make such notification. We have taken a less visible presence in our community since returning from furlough while waiting for the courts to strike down the changes made in the law. But this did not happen.

Now we will have to be even more vigilant. We are forbidden to pass out invitations, tracts and invite people to church. We will have to be even more careful with our verbal communication so that it does not fall within the definition of missionary activity as defined by the new law. If we are successful in our notification to authorities of our religious group status, we may then return to a more open witness, but will have to observe very strict authoritative guidelines regarding our missionary activity.

Needless to say we need your prayers. The new law gives the courts the right to convict, fine and even deport foreigners found in violation of the new law. We want to be law abiding residence here in Russia, but at the same time we want to be a witness for our Lord. We will have to navigate these new waters so that we find the right course to do both. We trust the Lord to help us in this mission.

#### God's Blessing in a Difficult Time

Our family is in awe of how the Lord gives the increase even during times of repression. Given the recent changes to Russia's religious law currently restricting our public ministry, we have seen a greater interest from our young neighbor kids, our daughters school friends and a family from the city that have been faithful to visit for a meal and a Gospel message.



In fact, one elderly neighbor man I have been inviting for several years to our church, finally walked through our gate and attended one of our gatherings. Victor lives just around the corner on the main road. He lost his leg a year ago and was only just recently able to get a prosthesis. Please pray for Victor to visit again and for further opportunities to witness and share the Gospel with him. What a victory it would be to see him confess Jesus Christ as Lord and be saved!



**Field Address:** C. Duane Hearron II, Pereulok Volkova 12, Pamyati 13 Bortsov, Russia, 663013 **Tel.** +7 (902) 924-2105  
**Sending Church:** Windsor Hills Baptist Church, 5517 NW 23rd Street, Oklahoma City, OK 73127 **Tel.** +1 (405) 943-3326  
**Mission Agency:** Baptist international Missions, Inc., P O BOX 9, Harrison, TN 37341 **Tel.** +1 (423) 344-5050 (Account #: 776)