

The Hearron Family Newsletter

Fourth Quarter 2016

Missionaries to Russia

Serving Since 1993



Furlough Success

Boarding our plane, November 8, in Dallas, TX, marked the end of our 175 day furlough to the States. During that time we visited over 30 churches and received promises of support from 21 new churches, many of which, have since begun supporting our ministry in Russia. As you recall, this was the focus of our furlough. Our family is humbled by how the Lord provided for us through the generosity of His people, protected us on US highways while traveling over 20,000 miles and gave healing during my week long hospital stay for a life threatening case of Cellulitis.

Our family made many new friends in the churches we visited. We look forward to continued correspondence with these dear people and are encouraged by their promises to pray for our work here in Siberia. Bonnie and I were especially blessed to see our girls have opportunities to fellowship with other young girls their ages. At each new church our girls showed an enthusiasm about being able to attend Sunday school or pre-teen activities. I want to thank each of you for your kindness showed to our family.

Because we are still below the support level recommended for our family and field of service, we are leaving open the option to furlough again in May of 2018, as earlier planned. You will remember that difficulties in our ministry, increase in our family size, and travel limitations imposed by our Russian immigration status all played a role in our inability to take regular furloughs. That is why until this last furlough, our family had been to the USA only four months in the previous eleven years of ministry.

Back in Siberia

Although it was nice to see family and friends, visit new churches, and share America with our children, our family is so glad to be back home! As you recall, all our children were born in Russia. So, for them they were ecstatic to get back to the only life they know. For Bonnie and I, it too was nice to get back home with a refreshed zeal for the ministry to which the Lord has called us.

Sergey and Lena, our Christian friends in the village, did a great job watching our home and taking care of our dogs. In the pantry were many jars of preserves and a few sacks of potatoes, the fruit of their summers labor in our garden. There is great peace of mind from knowing that your home is in good hands. Please pray for them as they desire to begin building their own home in our village and for the Lord to provide the funds for this to happen.

New Opposition to Religious Freedom

While on furlough, Russia's government made serious changes to the law regulating religious freedom. Beginning July 20, there are major restrictions affecting both Russians and foreigners residing legally in Russia. Although these changes to the law were said to combat terrorism, their more sinister design and implications have already affected several people and religious groups in Russia. In fact, like several Russian individuals of faith and a few church groups, one Baptist church planting missionary in Oryol, Russia was found in violation of the new law, fined \$700, and is now appealing his case in Moscow to the last two highest courts of appeal in Russia, after having lost two appeals in Oryol. In short, the changes are as follows:

- Although Russian nationals and foreigners can freely witness to whomever they want about their personal faith on a one-on-one basis, they are prohibited from inviting people to their church of worship.
- Evangelistic outreach (passing out literature or holding meetings in public areas) on behalf of a state registered religious organization or registered religious group is permitted only IF you have a letter from that organization (church) or group (church) stating that you are acting on its behalf.
- Although Religious Groups in the past required no state registration, they are now forced to register and follow strict guidelines regarding evangelization. Detailed reporting on group membership is now required of the authorities. They face similar requirements and fines as organizations for violations of the law.
- Houses and apartments can no longer be used as venues for evangelistic outreach, but is said to be allowed for gatherings and Bible studies by the members of either a registered organization or group. However, regional authorities have already arbitrarily prosecuted individuals and religious groups for doing this even though the law allows such gatherings.
- Fines for violating the new laws vary for registered organizations and groups as well as for citizens. They range from \$800 to several thousands of dollars. Foreigners found in violation are held to the same fines and, in addition, may be exposed to deportation.

Prayer Needed

I know that many may think that our time in Russia may be over. However, I would suggest that there are far more precarious places to be a missionary. I think of one missionary's recent forced deportation from China and others in Africa serving under real threats of civil unrest and war. Although these changes to Russian law are grievous and present significant obstacles to the spread of the Gospel in Russia, it is not yet a closed door. Our family will have to be smarter and more cautious in our desire to fulfill God's great commission.

In the mean time, we are praying that the several cases waiting adjudication by Russian courts will find these new provisions of the law to be unconstitutional and therefore unenforceable. But this will require the prayers of faithful Christians around the world. I would ask that you daily make it a matter of fervent prayer that God will guide the heart of the judiciary here in Russia and have these obstacles to his Gospel removed. And would ask that you pray for our family to have wisdom and courage to continue in the good fight.

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)