



BAPTIST INTERNATIONAL EVANGELISTIC MINISTRIES

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Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. II Timothy 3:12

Dear Pastors and Friends,

Warm greetings from St. Petersburg Russia where despite the cold blowing snow our hearts are warmed by the fellowship of our brethren we have been able to fellowship with in the Moscow area and now here in St. Petersburg. Our hearts are also warmed by the knowledge that we have many friends and partners in ministry like you who faithfully pray for and support this ministry.

It was a blessing to see the church construction in Shahovskaya, Russia and spend some time with the church planter there brother Andrei Udinseva who was recruited for this ministry by Pastor Peter Rumachik who has spearheaded this church planting project. Our video update this month contains both of these men giving a word of testimony about this exciting work in the community with over 200,000 with no Gospel witness. If you are not receiving our monthly video updates which we send out by e-mail and would like to receive them, please let us know. Also our summer camp report is also available upon request. Praise God for 2500 children and teens in attendance with 494 salvation decisions!

We were very interested to hear from our brethren concerning the new anti-religious laws that were passed this summer in Russia. These new laws forbid evangelism outside the church by witnessing or handing out literature and forbid foreigners from participating in any religious activity even inside the church. Fines for violating these laws can be as high as \$780 for an individual and \$15,500 for a church or organization. Following are some thoughts, information and concerns that we have gathered from Russian pastors and national missionaries we have met with.

1. These new laws are a serious matter that signifies a negative position of the Russian government towards any religious activity except for that conducted by the Russian Orthodox Church, which is exempt from the new restrictions.
2. Our brethren are not surprised by these developments. They have always expected that persecution would return. One pastor said, "This whole matter smells like the old Soviet Union".
3. The authorities are not well informed concerning the details of these laws and have shown a propensity to go beyond the laws. For example two Americans were arrested and fined. The one was charged with violating the law by simply giving a greeting in a church service. The other American was charged with the same offense even though all he did was sit in the service. The arresting officers said that he was guilty for simply being with the offending party even though the offense was simply a public greeting done by a foreigner. Our understanding is that both Americans paid the fines.
4. Out of the 16 cases which have been prosecuted by the government thus far, only one case resulted in an acquittal. This single acquittal was a case involving Hare Krishna church members. The other 15 are in appeal.
5. There is little hope that constitutional challenges will succeed. One pastor said, "The Russian courts interpret their constitution the way they want to."
6. It seems that the main target right now is foreigners. This may change later.
7. Attorneys advising Christian's are saying it will take a year to understand the results of these laws.

Please earnestly pray for believers in Russia these days. May God bless you all!

The Slobodians

Church Planting • Evangelism • Bibles & Literature • Training Nationals

"...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel." Mark 16:15