

William Wood Missions To Russia



January-February 2009

REPORT FROM LIN CRAWFORD IN DON

Following is a report from Lin Crawford who traveled to Don last September with a doctor named Jim as part of the Agape Ministry. While in Don and the surrounding villages, they provided medical exams for over 300 people and gave away 254 pairs of glasses.

Dear All,

First, the 26 hour trip to Syktivkar, arriving on Tuesday, the 9th of September. William met us at the station and took us to dinner at the only known Christian restaurant in Russia! Then the 3+ hour trip to the village of Don, where William lives and teaches the Bible and shows others how to have a life for Christ. The first morning as we were having coffee, there was a loud knock and much loud talk followed. A woman had come to get William to haul a body to the morgue. The man had dropped dead after a bout of drinking. I went with William to the house of the dead man's mother. She insisted that we have tea, even as she cried. The whole family, including the mother, are alcoholics. William and I prayed with her and waited for the police to come and inspect the body, so it could then be moved. We waited about 3 hours and then walked back to William's to start the clinic. Simeon ended up taking the body to the morgue in the van. Once we started the clinic, we set up at two different locations. At each of those places we shared our testimony and led Bible study. We encouraged the believers to continue in the Faith and meeting together—to continue to study the Bible and help one another just as the Bible commands us to do.

We got up early on Thursday, September 11th around 5:00 AM, to start on the journey to the remote village of Ugedtoder. The first segment was by road—3 hours, then a stop for tea and to bundle up for the river trip. We had 3 Komi-speaking ladies with us, all believers, and they knew what the temperature would really be. We were supplied with extra coats, scarves, hats and boots. When they finished with me, I could barely move! I resembled a very colorful Pillsbury dough boy! But later I thanked the women many times as I would have been VERY cold! The trip was made in wooden canoes—homemade with little motors on the back. 6 hours later we arrived in Ugedtoder. These people had never seen an American. They had no electricity and everything is done by hand—the same way their parents and grandparents had done it. They had log houses and outdoor toilets. Water and fish came from the river and food was grown, hunted or gathered from the forest.

Friday, most of the men were hunting and only the invalids and women were in the village, so we began. The first person to come to see us for glasses was an older woman. She had some medical issues, but stated, "Nothing can be done for me." When we asked, "Are you a believer? Do you know Jesus?", she answered, "God has forgotten about us, everyone has." She left. Then she came back with someone else, and the Komi translators began singing Christian songs in the next room. This woman began to cry great tears. I went to her—put my arms around her then called William. He called Tamara and Nina, and they talked with her at length, and she prayed with them and accepted Christ. This woman then left again. When she came back later with someone else, I promise you her face was different, a visible difference. Peace? A joy? Something had happened. Three other women prayed that day and accepted Jesus. These people have so little, compared to anyone living in America. Yet they shared all that they had with us, expecting nothing in return. Some, after leaving, brought back candy, berries, flowers, and I even received a pair of new wool knitted socks. And hugs—many hugs! Such a blessing to be used by God for this trip. William had also brought a generator & gas so he could show the Jesus Film in the Komi language.

Then we had dinner, and it was decided that we should leave. Now we only had gas for one canoe. No problem! The drivers chained the boats together, loaded us and we started downstream. The trip took about 6 hours—going downstream, the current really helped. This may sound like a really fun trip, but when it got dark on that river, it was really dark and really cold. The river was swollen, had submerged trees and was really deep. I thank God we made it intact! The next morning, Jim and I were up & having coffee with William when he said, "I have to go and help someone dig potatoes before the rain." I volunteered our help. By 8 AM, we were crawling along or bending over digging potatoes

out of the cold, wet dirt. We finished at 1PM and went back to William's for a banya before packing and heading to Kortkers, the next stop on our trip.

I want all to know—it was a pleasure to serve with William in Komi. If at all possible, I would go back again. The people in this region are seeking and need to know Jesus. William has a true heart for our Lord and is a real servant.

Blessings,
Lin Crawford

NEW TEAM MEMBER JOINS WILLIAM WOOD MISSIONS TO RUSSIA!



Our mission team in Russia has added a new team member, Alexei Loginov. He has already proven to be an outstanding addition. In a recent phone conversation with William, he had this to say: “Alexei fills an important gap for us because he has no fear in going up to a complete stranger or entering an entirely new village and forcefully sharing the Gospel. He will talk to anyone, anytime about Jesus. And he’s good at it. He obviously has the gift of evangelism.”

So that sets up the mission team thusly: 1) Andrey will continue to man “headquarters” in Don while performing the bookkeeping and ledger reporting. He will also continue the very important role of pastoring the church in Don while participating in shorter distance outreaches into the closer

Alexei is addressing an audience at a meeting in the village of Anib. This is a village to which Alexei has been going to for some time and there is a fairly large group of Christians there now.

villages. 2) William & Simeon will continue to be the “bricklayers,” both literally and figuratively. If someone or an organization had a legitimate need that the mission can meet, then William & Simeon will be on the frontlines meeting those needs. 3) Alexei will accompany William & Simeon on the work projects, but his main focus will be sharing the Gospel with people connected to the work projects. In addition, Alexei will serve as a “traveling evangelist” by going out on his own to other villages to share the Gospel and hopefully start in-home Bible study groups & eventually new churches. This is a work that Alexei has already labored diligently at in northern Russia for quite some time and has already planted several Christian cellgroups in some of the other villages. With our support, he will be able to devote even more of his time to this important work.

This is an exciting development for WWMtoR! Our expansion comes at a time when the Orthodox church hierarchy in the Komi district has intensified its attacks against William and the mission team. You may remember that Simeon and Alexei were arrested last February while William and Andrey were here in America. Also, Antonena, who works for the local government, was recently warned by her bosses about her involvement in the mission. Yet we continue to hear about more and more people joining the good fight! We fully expect those numbers to grow even more by supporting Alexei in his evangelistic outreaches. Meanwhile, on our side of the ocean, we must be diligent in praying for both the mission team and the believers like Antonena who grow stronger in their faith yet are coming under more risk of severe persecution. We must also pray diligently for the new believers—that the Lord will keep them & protect them as they begin their growth in the Faith.

HOW ABOUT A GOOD CAR INSTEAD OF A NEW VAN?

As I mentioned in the story about Alexei, one of his roles will be to continue his work as a traveling evangelist and “scout” for the mission team. But Alexei’s current vehicle is a piece of junk. William has tried to help Alexei with his current car by putting on new tires and having different types of mechanical work done. However, that’s turned into a very inefficient and expensive drain. What Alexei needs is a solid vehicle that is dependable.

Secondly, we tried to raise \$20,000 for a new van. However, we've only got a little more than \$5,500 in pledges to date. In my recent phone visit with William, he was wondering if the people who had pledged to give towards the van would be willing to change their pledge to a vehicle for Alexei. A van remains an important need for the mission, but William thinks that equipping Alexei with a vehicle that he can depend on is a higher priority right now. I promised William that I would check with everyone who pledged to the van & see if they would be willing to change their pledge to the car for Alexei.

William says that a good used vehicle would cost in the neighborhood of \$7,000-8,000. The mission could probably cover that from the regular donations, but it would mean cutting back on some of the work projects for at least a year. However, if a few of you who pledged for the van would be willing to change your pledge to go towards Alexei's car, then that would mean less that we would need to cover from regular donations. If you are willing to do this, just let me know by calling me at (309) 627-2593 or at work: (309) 457-6220. Or you can just email me at cstonefinancial@juno.com or snail mail at Rt. 1, Box 110, Bigsville, IL 61418.

CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE HELD AT THE DON CHURCH

Put this down as one of those "I never dreamed we'd be supporting something like this!" events. I've said before that when we started WWMtoR, I never expected that we would see the actual birth of a church in Don. I know that sounds really silly as the whole purpose of mission work is to convert people to Christianity. It stands to reason then therefore that a church would grow from that work.

But I'm still amazed by it all. I just figured that William would be a sort of traveling gypsy who would do great services for people, share the gospel with them, lead them to Christ and then he would move on. But the Lord obviously has a better vision and grander purposes than I can imagine.

It was Alexei's idea and under Andrey's leadership, the little church in Don sponsored a Christian conference! It was titled **Spiritual Growth** and 40 adults and 10 children from the surrounding villages joined the Don church family for a one-day conference of fellowship, worship and Bible study. It was such a huge success that Andrey is planning to make area conferences a regular event! It just boggles my mind that we have this wonderful opportunity to now support a network of believers who yearn to gather together and seek growth and fellowship.



The speaker here is either Simeon or Alexei—I can't really tell. Some of the people you can recognize in the second picture. That's Anatoli sitting beside Andrey. Antonena is the blonde in the middle of the next to last row. Doesn't the new church room look great! Thank you for making it all possible!