

# The Russian Dispatch

*The newsletter of John Zaitseff*

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## Introduction

Well, the moment has almost arrived... the time of departure is near... and a new faith-stretching experience is about to begin! But as you may not know who I am, allow me to introduce myself...

My name is John Zaitseff, and I have lived in Sydney, Australia, for the whole of my 26 years. I was born into a Christian family, but it wasn't until Year 12 in High School that I made a commitment to follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. I went to the University of New South Wales and completed a four-year degree in Computer Engineering. While there, I joined a Christian group called Students for Christ. At the same time, I continued to attend the Slavic Pentecostal Church in Lidcombe. These two groups of Christians (the ones at my local church and the ones in Students for Christ) have profoundly affected the way I live my life... it has been amazing to see how God has used them to help me grow to know Him more. And in a short time, I was involved in the leadership of both my church and in Students for Christ.

After I finished my degree at University, the Lord called me to work part-time with Students for Christ and part-time as an electronics design engineer, also at the University. In fact, He was the One who provided the job for me... with my thesis supervisor! At the same time, I continued to be involved in my local church as an assistant Youth Leader.

I worked for a total of three years with Students for Christ, and I rate those years as some of the best that I have had so far. It has been astonishing to see God use me in the lives of others... what a privilege! I have been blessed as I have seen the lives of some of those around me change to become more like the Christ that they are following. In particular, I have had the honour of disciplining many students, some of who have gone on to become leaders in the Kingdom of God.

It was during this time that the Lord showed that He had called me...

*To see people's lives changed, for them to live according to the Word of God.*

Although I realise that I have a long way to go before I see this fully fulfilled in me (in fact, a

life-time's worth), it is a real blessing to start to see it happen. May the Lord be the One to receive the glory!

University study, ministry and work are not the whole story, of course. After much prayer, I travelled to Russia for three months in 1998. During this time, I worked with some of the local churches in Moscow and Novosibirsk (in the centre of Siberia). Although this period was quite difficult, personally speaking, my eyes were opened as I saw the reality of the spiritual war in which Christians are involved. Satan and his demons are real and powerful. But, praise God, our God is also very real and far more powerful!

As a Christian, I want to continually "delight myself in the Lord" (Psalm 37:4), especially by doing what God wants. In line with this, one of the items that I was praying for whilst in Russia was guidance for the future. And this He did... by guiding me to finish working with Students for Christ and to move on to Bible College.

*All very well and good*, I thought, *but which one?* After all, many good colleges exist, even in and around Sydney. After investigating my options and after prayer, I settled on doing a Bachelor of Ministry degree at Tabor College, a Pentecostal / Charismatic non-denominational Bible College. And so I went back to being a student in mid-1999.

Tabor College is proving to be quite challenging for me, academically and spiritually speaking. The subjects I have done so far range from Creative Living (living with your full potential for God) to Christian History to Ministry of the Holy Spirit to the mentally-demanding Exegesis 1. These subjects (and others) have stretched my mind and spurred my faith in Jesus. In addition, the times of corporate worship and the fellowship with students and staff have been simply excellent!

This is not to say that life has been easy (is it ever?). In fact, far from it! Disciplining myself to study has not been easy... and I have often felt spiritually "dry" and sometimes under spiritual attack. I am beginning to realise, however, that *all* things work to the good of those that love God (Romans 8:28). Even my "fiery trials" will, in the long run, help me to be more like the One I am called to follow.

## Going to Russia

Enough of introductions! As you may (or may not) know, I believe that the Lord wants me to go to Russia again. In particular, I will be going to one of the summer camps around St. Petersburg as a camp-counsellor. These camps used to be a significant part of the communist training system. With the collapse of communism (at least for the moment...), many of these old "Pioneer Camps" have remained as "Health/Rest Camps", some privately owned, others remaining under their original ownership by factories, unions and institutions.

Kids Outreach International, an outgrowth of the Finnish Free Foreign Mission, started reaching out to some of these camps in 1992. Ever since, teams of Christians from all over the world have been going to a number of these camps (there are over 300 in St. Petersburg alone!), living with the children and camp-counsellors, and simply (and genuinely) loving them. This is an example of "relational evangelism" at its best... allowing people to experience the love of God through contact with Christians and trusting the Holy Spirit to open hearts to know Jesus. And it works!

This, then, is the organisation that I will be joining. In particular, I will be joining a diverse group of Australians: Claudia van Duyn from Paraburdoo in Western Australia, Claudia's brother Rodger from Longreach in Queensland, Katy Morgan from Alice Springs, Robyn Reakes from Tumut in NSW and Kyleigh Russell from Perth. We will be going to "Baltica", a camp that is approximately 50km north of St. Petersburg, for just over two weeks. Although Claudia has visited this camp twice already (in 1998 and 1999), it will be the first time for me!

And, indeed, the whole of this is quite new to me: a new outreach, a new team, none of whom I have met, a new experience... I haven't even worked much with children! So, as I say, "it has to be God" doing His work through me, as *I* can't do anything by myself...

And so I fly out on **Monday 26th June** at 11:45am, flying Singapore Airlines SQ232 for the first leg of my trip to St. Petersburg via Singapore, Bangkok and Helsinki. After a brief holiday in Europe, I will be returning on **Sunday 30th July** at 9:15am, flying Singapore Airlines SQ231. I will actually be in "Baltica" from Wednesday 28th June to Thursday 13th July.

## Prayer Points

I would very much appreciate if you could keep me in prayer before, during and after the time I will be away from Australia. *You* have an important part to play in this outreach! Often God only moves when we pray and intercede for people and for His work. Please pray for:

- God's Name to be glorified wherever I go... that my actions, words, attitudes and thoughts will praise and bring praise to His Name,
- That people's lives will be profoundly impacted through what I say and do, and that they would come to know the Lord Jesus Christ in a real and living way,
- That the Lord will meld all of us who are going into a team that has real unity and genuine love, especially for those to whom we will serve,
- That the Lord will protect us physically (especially from theft and sickness), emotionally, mentally and spiritually,
- For wisdom and skills to know what to say and do in every situation as we depend on our Lord,
- That those I leave behind (at home, in my local church, at Tabor College and so on) would be blessed and would prosper in the Lord,
- That I would be physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually refreshed while I travel around Europe, and
- Above all, that God would be glorified, full stop!

May the Lord bless you! I look forward to sharing the amazing things that the Lord will do!