

The Russian Dispatch

The newsletter of John Zaitseff

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Introduction

It is almost hard to believe that time could fly so quickly! It seems as if it was only a short while ago that I came back from Russia, and here I am, about to go again. But as you may not know who I am, allow me to introduce myself...

A Little about Myself

My name is John Zaitseff, and I have lived in Sydney, Australia, for the whole of my 27 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, my home church since childhood.

These two groups of Christians—the ones in Students for Christ and the ones in my local church—have profoundly affected the way I live. I am thankful to God for their continuing positive influence on me to this day. As a result, I was soon involved in the leadership of both groups.

After I finished my degree at the 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 in answer to prayer... with my thesis supervisor! At the same time, I continued to be involved in my local church as an assistant Youth Leader.

I rate the three years that I worked with Students for Christ as some of the best that I have had to date. It has been astonishing to see God working through me in the lives of others... what a privilege! I was blessed as I saw the lives of many of those I disciplined change to become more like the Christ that they were (and are) following.

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.

I realise that I have a long way to go before I see this fulfilled in me (in fact, a lifetime's worth). However, it has been a real blessing to start to see it happen. May the Lord be the One to receive all 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, where I worked with some local churches in Novosibirsk. Although this period was quite difficult for me personally, my eyes were opened as I saw the reality of the spiritual war in which Christians are involved. But, praise God, our God is *all-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, the Lord revealed the next step to me while I was still in Russia: to finish working with Students for Christ and move on to Bible College.

All well and good, I thought, *but which one?* After all, many good colleges exist, even in Sydney. After investigating my options and praying, I settled on doing a Bachelor of Ministry degree at Tabor College, a Pentecostal/Charismatic multi-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. The subjects have stretched my mind and spurred my faith on in Jesus. In addition, the times of corporate worship and fellowship with students and staff have been simply excellent!

This is not to say that life has been easy. In fact, far from it! Disciplining myself to study has been difficult... and I have often felt spiritually "dry" and sometimes under spiritual attack. Yet I firmly believe that God is still in control and that *all* things work to the good of those who love God (Romans 8:28).

Much like the writer to the Hebrews (11:32), I do not have the time nor space to recount my entire spiritual journey, my work in the church, my time in Russia last year, a visit to Seattle...

Going to Russia

Enough of introductions! As you may (or may not) know, I believe 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, much as I did last year. 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: Bill and Keri Ivanoff, from Orange, NSW, Graham and Glenda Schuman, also from Orange, Alison Tucker, from Brisbane, QLD, and William Zaitseff, my brother. We will be going to “Zvyozdochka”, a camp that is approximately 70km north of St. Petersburg. Teams from Kids Outreach International have been visiting this particular camp for a number of years now, and we will be continuing the good work already started. We will have two weeks in the camp in which to do this.

Much of this type of ministry is new to me. Although I experienced some of it when I went to “Baltica” last year, each camp is different, each situation is different and each person is different... And I am not sure that working with children is my *forte!* So, as I say, “it has to be God” doing His work through me, as *I* can’t do anything by myself...

Further Travel

If all this was not enough of a challenge, I will be, Lord willing, travelling across the whole of Russia by train. From St. Petersburg, my brother and I will travel down to Moscow (650km), where we hope to spend a few days visiting some of the tourist attractions and some friends —a visit to the Kremlin, anyone? From here, my brother will be flying back to Sydney, while I will continue travelling by train.

The next stop will be Novosibirsk (3343km from Moscow), the city of some four million that I visited in 1998. I hope to visit a number of friends and churches here for at least a few days.

Irkutsk, a further 1849km along the railroad, will be my next stop. Although I do not know anyone in this area (yet!), the scenery around Lake Baikal is worth spending a few days to see... at least, that is what I have been told.

Khabarovsk, on the Amur River, is where I will stop next. I am not sure that there is anything to see in this city, some 3340km from Irkutsk, but I hope to visit people that are friends of some members in my local church.

My final stop, after a journey of almost 10,000 kilometres by train, will be in Vladivostok, the famous port on the Sea of Japan in the East.

This is where I will fly out on my journey back to Sydney via Seoul.

And so I fly out on **Saturday 30th June** at 8:30pm, flying Korean Airlines KE812 for the first leg of my trip to St. Petersburg via Seoul and Moscow. I will be returning on **Thursday 23rd August** at 6:55am, flying Korean Airlines KE811. I will actually be in “Zvyozdochka” from Wednesday 4th July to Thursday 19th 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 Russia, and
- Above all, that God would be glorified, full stop!

Contact Details

If you would like to receive news from me after I return, please do not hesitate to contact me! My e-mail address is **J.Zaitseff@zap.org.au**, and my postal address is 4 McCabe Close, Menai, NSW, 2234, Australia. You can also download a printable version of this newsletter from my Web site at <http://www.zap.org.au/~john/>.

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