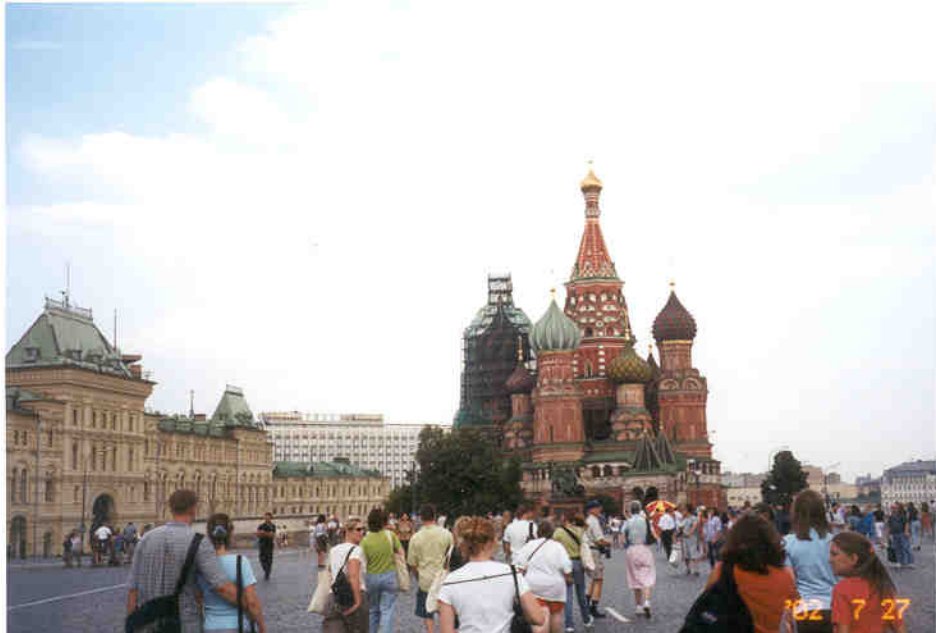


A Survival Guide for Mission Trips With Russian Christian Missions



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About the Authors

Anthony (Andy) Nelms was a software engineer for 34 years. He is now a driver for Uber.

As of January 2015, he has traveled to Russia fifteen times and spent a total of six months living there. He is a student of the Russian language, culture and history. The experience of extensive travel in Russia as well as the time spent living in Russia has given Mr. Nelms a wealth of information that he has shared with you in this booklet.

God gave Mr. Nelms a burden for the Russian people in 1992. As of 2015, God has not relented from this gift to Mr. Nelms. He continues to learn the Russian language, the Russian culture and he continues to share Jesus with the Russian people whenever he can.

Stephanie S. Nelms is the wife of Anthony Nelms and she too travels to Russia nearly as often as Mr. Nelms. She has a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Houston with a major in Computer Science. She works for NCR as a manager of software developers.

She has traveled to Russia eleven times and spent five months of her life there. She sees things from a different perspective, that of a woman, and has added greatly to this booklet with her wealth of information for women travelers to Russia.

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First, I thank Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior for having given me a burden for the Russian people on a Sunday evening in July of 1992, while listening to others testify about what God had done in Russia on their mission trip. Next, I thank Jesus for calling me to Himself so that I might be a joint heir with Him. I thank my dear wife, Stephanie, for all of the “talk about Russia” she has had to endure for so many years. I also thank Stephanie for participating in eleven of the fifteen trips. She has been my right arm.

Thanks to Sugar Creek Baptist Church, Sugar Creek, Texas, for their financial and prayer support on the 1995 and 1998 trips. Thanks to Northminster Baptist Church, Conyers, Georgia for their generous support on the 1998, 1999 and 2000 trips.

Thanks to Chestnut Mountain Church for their very generous financial support of the 2000, 2002, 2004, 2005, and 2006 trips. And I thank the staff and members of Chestnut Mountain Church for going on the 2002 trip. They were the feet and arms for Jesus on that trip.

We give a big thank you to Jo Ann Grossberndt who has been to Russia with us twice now, Pastor David Ling for three trips, William Gailey for three trips, Kelly and David Hickey for two trips, Chris and Angie Forrester for two trips and Joshua Peterson for two trips.

To the team of July 2002, we are especially thankful for all that they taught us. They were the largest team we have had, with 15 Americans and 12 Russian interpreters. The ministry of Russian Christian Missions was taken to the highest level ever in Russia and it was the Holy Spirit working through them that did it.

Thanks go to Emily Leet and Jo Ann Grossberndt for the thorough proof reading that they have done of this manuscript.

Thanks to all of the participants on all fifteen of the trips to Russia. You have all had an impact on the lives of many Russians in the towns of Kolchugino, Alexandrov, Vladimir, Karabanovo, Melenki, Kemerovo and Marinsk.

We give a very special thanks to Pastor Vladimir (Volodya) Kochelev and his wife Nadya Kocheleva and Pastor Sergei Akhmedzianov and his wife Marina Akhmedzianova for their kindness in allowing us to participate in their ministries in Russia. To this list we now add Pastor Vitaly Bak and his wife Anastasia.

And last, but certainly not least, I give special thanks to the late Pastor Rick Greene for all that he taught me during the short time I knew him. I also thank his wonderful wife Jeannie Greene (now Jeannie Smith) for allowing us to take her 14-year old daughter to Russia in 2000.

Finally I want to thank my dad, Wallace Nelms Sr. who gave every year for many years to support our work. I also want to thank my brother Randy Nelms for his generous gifts over the years.

Liability

Russian Christian Missions, Anthony and Stephanie Nelms and our partners are **NOT liable** for loss or theft of your belongings while traveling with us. Nor are we liable for any health problems that may arise from travel with us. We are not liable for any accidents involving loss of life or injury. We are not liable if you are kidnapped or get lost. ☺

You should have health insurance to cover any health problems that might arise while traveling with us. You might want to consider purchasing a term life insurance policy if you do not already have one. We are not liable for any doctor's fees you encounter while in Russia. See the section entitled "Travel Insurance".

We are not liable for airline flight changes or cancellations that might affect your travel to or from Russia or within Russia. If the airlines make changes to the flights for any reason that causes you to miss a connecting flight and there are fees associated with any changes of tickets we are not liable for that either. ☺



Tip!

Purchase life insurance if you do not have any. Purchase health insurance if you have none. Again see the section entitled "Travel Insurance".

Russian Christian Missions' OFFICIAL STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY

Russian Christian Missions and Anthony and Stephanie Nelms and/or their mission team leaders, in accepting your application for this mission trip, clearly stipulate that they are not liable for the faults or defaults of other companies and/or persons who may be used to carry out the mission trip services.

Neither are they liable for accidents; baggage losses; strikes; political unrest; riots; acts of God and war; nor for unsigned and/or invalid passports or failure by the passenger and/or governing Consulate office to provide or present valid documentation to enter a foreign country.

In the event it becomes necessary or advisable to alter the itinerary or arrangements for the comfort or well-being of the team members, or for any reason whatsoever, such alterations may be made without penalty to the operator. Additional expenses, if any, shall be borne by the team members.

The right is also reserved to withdraw any or all mission trips; also to decline to accept or retain any persons as members of the team. No refund can be made for absence from the mission trip unless arrangements are made at the time of booking. The airlines concerned are not to be held responsible for any act, omission or event during the time passengers (team members) are not on board their planes or conveyances. The passage contract in use by the airlines concerned when issued shall constitute the sole contract between the carrier and the passenger (team member) and/or purchaser of this mission trip. Services of any IATA or ARC carrier may be used. The mission trip price is based on tariffs and/or international monetary exchange rates listed at the time of printing and it is subject to change.

Now that everyone's lawyers are happy, let's have some fun...

First Things First

Welcome to the Great Adventure

Welcome to *Russian Christian Missions'* survival guide to Russia and the Great Adventure. Since you are reading this booklet, you must be considering a short-term mission trip to Russia with *Russian Christian Missions*, and for that we are extremely grateful. The first thing you should do to meet the requirements for a trip to Russia with us is to pray about the trip. If you have not done so, please stop and pray a simple prayer asking for wisdom and discernment as you read our survival guide.

One of the requirements for traveling with us to Russia is that you must read this survival guide. Naturally, you might be prompted to ask, “Why **MUST** I read this guide?” There are at least three reasons we can think of.

There are things you need to know **before** you make your decision to go. We have written about most of those things in this guide to help you understand what it is that you are undertaking.

There are things you need to know **after** you decide to go and before the trip occurs, so that you can properly prepare for the trip. This preparation comes in several forms. You must prepare spiritually, emotionally, financially and prayerfully.

Then there are things you need to know **while** you are in Russia. You will need to know about Russian customs, manners, money, apartments, food etc.

There is a wealth of information you need to know and we have tried to pack it all into this “little” survival guide. We cannot discuss all of these things in the information meetings we will hold. We will forget to mention something, you will forget something we say, or you will forget to ask a question. If you were taking a course in college or high school, you would be expected to read the course materials as well as attend the lectures. In some respects, mission trips are the same way. The mission trip itself is the test. This booklet and the informational meetings are the text and the lectures. The informational meetings are required for those that live in the Dacula, Georgia area and optional for those that do not.

So, some of you learn better visually. Ok, so picture this...you are in Russia and you find yourself in a very prickly situation and you didn't read our guide and the section on prickly situations. Now what are you going to do? I am laughing as I write this, so you should too. This trip will be fun; they all have been. To help you to have fun, read this guide. You don't have to memorize it, just read it. **Bring the travel guide to Russia with you** and it should answer 90% of your questions. The other 10% of your questions will be answered by the informational meetings or on training day.

Just because we wrote this travel guide does not mean we are discouraging questions, just the opposite. We encourage questions. We LOVE questions! If you simply read this guide and

decide to go to Russia with us and you don't have any questions, then you worry us. So please ask as many questions as you have and remember, there are NO dumb questions, except for the ones you DIDN'T ask. You should write down any questions that pop into your head while you are reading the guide. If we do not answer them here, then write or call and ask us those questions.

Let me add one final introductory note, if I may. As you read this document you will see that we have some very particular ways of doing things. We have led many mission trips and participated in one overseas mission trip which we did not lead. Through all of this experience we have learned, sometimes the hard way, how to do many of the things we do. We never do things in an arbitrary or capricious manner. We indeed do everything in a particular way for particular reasons.

While we are in the US, you may feel free to ask in our meetings or by phone or email why we do things the way we do. However, when the trip begins we would greatly appreciate it if you would come to us in private to ask why we are doing something in a particular way, because on the trip, your questions could be viewed by us or others as whining. Whining means the trip is all about you. But as you will read later, the first thing one needs to learn is that the trip is not about you, but rather it is all about you serving the Russian people..

So let's get started...in the Great Adventure.



When you see this icon **Tip!** It means that there is a tip immediately following the icon. The tips will help you to be successful on our trips, so please pay close attention to them.

Things to Do Before Deciding To Travel To Russia

Pray

The only way to know if God wants you to go to Russia is for you to pray about the trip and then to listen to what God has to say. So continually pray from now until the day we depart for Russia, asking God for wisdom and discernment about this trip. Begin even now to pray for those people with whom you will come into contact in Russia. Pray that their hearts will be made ready by the Holy Spirit to hear what He has given you to tell them. Pray that God will provide for your financial needs. Get ready because God may have some big surprises for you.

Right from the start let me say that we are praying for you. Whenever anyone expresses an interest in one of our trips, we pray for that person to have discernment and wisdom. We only want you to go to Russia with us, if God wants you to go. Sometimes He says no, but when He says yes, it always means you are about to be refined by the master refiner Himself.

Read This Booklet

Read this booklet. Read news articles about Russia. Read the book entitled *Becoming a Contagious Christian*, by Bill Hybels. Read your Bible. God will often show you the direction to go as you read.



Tip!

Read this entire guide.

The book entitled *Becoming a Contagious Christian* has a great deal of practical information that will help you to understand how to become an infectious and contagious Christian. No, the book is not about diseases, but rather it is all about how to witness and share your personal story with others.

There I go mentioning the “**W**” word. Well, if you don’t have a story to tell about how you came to know Jesus and about what He has done for you, why are you considering going to Russia with us on a mission trip? Remember the primary purpose of the trip is to tell others about Jesus. If the thought of witnessing frightens you, then you should stop reading this booklet and instead immediately read the book, *Becoming a Contagious Christian*. Just smile...it won’t hurt you.

And I might add, if you know you do not have a saving relationship with Jesus Christ please tell us now. If you are not in a saving relationship with Jesus Christ you cannot go with us on a mission trip because you have nothing positive to tell people who do not believe in Jesus. However, we would very much like to speak with you about Jesus so that by the time we take our next trip you might have decided to believe in Jesus and would be able to go.

Ok, now that everyone is on the same page...

What You Need To Know Before Deciding to Go To Russia

Our Partners in This Adventure

Hebron Baptist Church

Whenever we schedule a trip to Russia, it is always in partnership with the church where we are attending. As of July of 2011, we now attend Hebron Baptist Church in Dacula, Georgia. They are the official sponsors of this trip along with us, Stephanie and Andy Nelms. If you wish to contact the pastor, his name is Kevin Miller. His email address is kmiller@hebronchurch.org. The church web site is located at <http://www.hebronchurch.org>. If you have questions that you would like to put to the church about us or about the mission trip, please feel free to do so by contacting Pastor Kevin above. You may also contact Pastor David Ling at First Baptist Church in Hebron, North Dakota by email at dlpaling@westriv.com or call him at (701) 878-4015. He will be more than happy to answer any questions you might have. He has traveled to Russia with us, so he can speak about the trip as well as about us and our character.

You may also find other references at our web site on the Contact Us page. Look at the far right column of the web page for our references.



Tip!

If you did not know us prior to considering this trip, call our church to check us out.

Central Church, Kemerovo, Russia

The Central Baptist Church, in Kemerovo, Russia is where we served on the 2009, 2010 and 2012 mission trip and will again serve there on the 2015 mission trip. Pastor Vitali Bak has worked with us since 2009. He and his wife Anastasia were very kind and gracious and allowed us to visit their church and home and welcomed us into their community.

Pastor Bak is a man of integrity. When the VBS was over he came up to me and said that there was \$500 left over from the money we had given them for use in providing food and housing for the team. He wanted to know what he should do with the money.

Church of Christ the Savior, Karabanovo, Russia

The Church of Christ the Savior (a Baptist church) in Karabanovo, Russia is where we worked from 1998 to 2006. Pastor Vladimir (Volodya) Kochelev has worked with us since 1995 when he was a Sunday school director in the town of Kolchugino. He and his wife, Nadezhda (Nadya), are dedicated to bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to Karabanovo. Stephanie and I helped to plant that church in 1998. Volodya and Nadya are in their late '40s and they have three children, Vera, Ruth and Alexandra (Sasha).

First Baptist Church of Hebron, North Dakota

First Baptist Church of Hebron has been a partner for fifteen years. Pastor David Ling went with us in 1999, 2004 and 2005. In the summer of 2000, the children of his church put together packages of gifts for the school children in Russia. In the summer of 2002, Kristen Ling, Pastor Ling's daughter came along on the trip and helped to lead a VBS in Vladimir, Russia.

In the winter of 2009 Darlene Siewert, Stephanie's mother and Delores Martin, both members of First Baptist Hebron, went to Russia with us. This church has been working with our ministry since 1999.

Friends and Family

Many of our friends and members of our families from all corners of the country have given generously of their finances to help the Russian people over the years.

Mission Purpose

The three purposes of all of our mission trips are: **evangelism, discipleship, and financial support for the local church.** We believe these to be God's purposes for our ministry.

Evangelism is the most important aspect of our ministry. We work hard to present the Gospel story of Jesus Christ to the people of Russia so that some will believe and find salvation in Jesus Christ. We attempt to accomplish this through a VBS for children from ages 5-11, usually held in the mornings and through Bible studies in the evenings, and through sermons in the Sunday services. We also hold ESL classes which attract a large number of non-believers. We also visit people in their homes. We do all of these things in an attempt to evangelize.

Discipleship is the second most important work we do in Russia. We teach a teen and adult Bible study in the evenings to help disciple the Christians in the church wherever we travel. Hopefully, this work will help the local pastor's efforts at discipleship and inspire healthy discussions of many topics.

Discipleship is not just for the Russians however. You will be changed through a mission trip. You cannot go on a mission trip and not be changed spiritually. God will teach you something about yourself and about Himself.

Financial support is the last of our three purposes. I am not so sure that it is the least of our purposes, because without our financial support the church might not exist in Karabanovo. Please read the section entitled *Financial Disclosure* near the end of this booklet for more information relating to finances and tax deductibility of contributions made.

Requirements to Go On a Mission Trip

A Relationship with Jesus Christ

You must absolutely know that you have a relationship with Jesus Christ and that you have asked Him to be your Lord and Savior. If you are unsure of this then visit our web site and click on the topic “How Can I Be Saved” on the home page under “More Topics of Interest”.

Serve In Your Church

You must already be serving in your church in some capacity. You might be an usher, children’s worker, teacher, small group leader, choir member, kitchen helper or any of a number of other things. We must know that you already serve. Why would you go to Russia to serve, when you will not serve in your own church? If you are not serving at this time, then please find out where you can serve at your local church and get plugged in.

Theology

If asked the question “How do I go to heaven” or if you were standing at heaven’s gate and Jesus was standing there and he asked you “Why should I let you in”, you must have a clear and understandable answer which comes from an understanding of salvation as taught in the Bible. If you don’t know the answers to these questions, then talk with us about it. In five minutes, we can explain this to you.

We will ask you these questions and a few more to make sure you are prepared to give an account of what Jesus has done for you and what He can do for others to whom you speak. Please don’t let these requirements scare you. We can help you with all of them.

Length of Your Christian Life

You must have been a Christian for at least a year prior to the trip. The reason for this is that we want you to have some time to mature as a Christian before you have to do spiritual battle in a very spiritually hostile place. Russia is safe enough on a physical level, but it is a very dangerous place spiritually. We want to ensure that you are prepared.

Non-Baptists

If you are a member of another Christian denomination, you may still go with us, as long as you have a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. Since you will be working mostly with young children, there is little chance of theological differences coming to light.

There are two major theological points that can cause dissension between believers of differing Christian faiths. The first is the gift of tongues and the second is that salvation is free, undeserved, unmerited and cannot be earned.

We believe that the gift of tongues, is a valid and legitimate gift for today, but we also know that it is abused in some churches. To avoid causing dissension among the members of the team and, more importantly, the children with whom we work, we ask that you not teach about tongues nor use tongues in public while in Russia. We also ask that you not speak about tongues in the evening Bible Study classes in Russia.

We also believe that salvation is the free gift of the Holy Spirit and we can do nothing to obtain this gift and nothing to maintain this gift save accepting Jesus Christ as our Savior. Salvation comes by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. It is a free gift given by God to those whom He has chosen. If you believe that salvations is not a free gift, and that it can be earned or merited in some way then we need to discuss this in depth with you while you are deciding about whether to go with us on this mission trip. This is one of the very few tenets of the faith on which we must agree in order that we have fellowship. We will be glad to explain to you our belief and show you the scriptures that we believe support this position.

A few other beliefs are essential to the Christian faith as follows:

- Man is born into sin and deserves hell from birth.
- Jesus Christ was born of a virgin.
- Jesus Christ lived a sinless life.
- Jesus Christ is God.
- Jesus is not a created being, but has always existed with God the Father and the Holy Spirit throughout eternity.
- Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay for our sin.
- All we have to do to receive eternal life is accept Jesus' free offer of salvation by allowing Him to become the Lord of our lives.
- When you are saved, a change will be visible in your life.
- Mary was a righteous woman, but she is not to be worshipped nor is she to be prayed to.

Physical Condition

You must be able to walk for 15 minutes on uneven terrain (in snow and ice on winter trips). This means if you are an older person, that you should try walking in the grass on the side of a road for 300-400 feet. If you can handle that, then you should do quite well.

If you are 70 years of age or older we will make special arrangements for you, because we admire your courage and need your wisdom.

Smokers

Unfortunately if you smoke you will have to quit smoking before you go, but please let me explain. The Russian Christians see smoking as a sin. The Russian lost will see you smoke and say, "see there, the Americans are sinners just like us, why should we listen to them?" In other words, your smoking will kill your witness and the team's witness with them, making us ineffective. Do I think smoking is a sin? No, but it really doesn't matter what I think.

Remember what Paul said, I am all things to all people so that some might believe. If you smoke, you are welcome to go, but you **MUST** not smoke on the trip. This goes for chewing tobacco also.

Alcohol

Read the paragraph on smoking and substitute drinking alcohol for smoking tobacco.

Illegal Drugs

Have you lost your mind?

Strict Vegetarians

In this part of the world, nearly all main entrée's and side dishes have meat in them. You cannot avoid the meat. There is no polite way to put this so I will just blurt it out. Strict vegetarians may not go with us to Russia because you will either starve to death or whine about the meat the entire trip. There is no way to accommodate your needs. I am sorry that there is any group of people to whom I have to say, you may not go, because it is so difficult to get people to go with us to Russia.



Tip!

Strict vegetarians are not allowed on these mission trips. See above for an explanation.

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender

Because we are a conservative Christian organization working with even more conservative Christians in Russia we cannot allow gays, lesbians, bisexuals or transgendered individuals to go with us on these mission trips. While all of those mentioned are welcomed in church, or should be, Russia in general and Russian churches in particular reject the idea that you can be a Christian and be a member of the GLBT community.

Dates of Travel

We **USUALLY** travel on December 27th and **USUALLY** from Atlanta. This means you will need to fly into Atlanta on December 25th. Oh and although the trip price is all inclusive your round trip tickets to Atlanta are not included. The price is all inclusive from the point of origination, which is almost always Atlanta. The reason for the need for your arrival in Atlanta on the 25th is that we spend all day of the 26th packing and teaching you everything you need to know just before we depart.

If your trip is scheduled at any other time of the year then you will travel to Atlanta to meet us and on the next day we will have training day. If you live in the Atlanta, Georgia area you will be expected to attend the training meetings in the months before the trip. There would normally be four of these and they last about two hours each.

We will pick you up at the Atlanta airport on Christmas day or whichever day you are supposed to arrive. Yes, this is how we normally spend Christmas day. We will also provide a place for you to stay. It will be either in our home or the home of a fellow team member or a volunteer family from our church. We have a couple of families that volunteer their home each year.

We realize this is an EXTREME inconvenience to you, but just consider it as the first of many sacrifices you make on the trip for the team and for Jesus. On December 25, 2006 I was at the airport from around 2:00pm until 10:30pm meeting team members. It's actually kind of fun.

You will need to schedule your arrival for between 10:00am and 2:30pm. The reason for this is that we also provide a big dinner on Christmas night or whichever day is the arrival day for your trip. We figure this is the least we can do for you, since you were willing to travel on Christmas day. Dinner is served at approximately 6:00pm.

Team members from other countries are not required to fly to Atlanta. You will fly from your point of origination to Moscow. We will meet you in Moscow, assuming you and we are on time. We work out the details later about what to do if we are not on time.



Tip!

You are required to travel to Atlanta on Christmas day and to arrive before 2:30pm. Or if your trip is some other time of the year then you are required to travel to Atlanta on the day before training day for that trip.

Travel Constraints

One of the biggest potential problems a mission trip can have is with people on the trip originating from different cities. If people are originating from different cities and meeting us in our European gateway city and either flight is delayed for any reason, then it becomes a nightmare attempting to make sure everyone arrives safely at the final destination. Because of this, **we require that everyone travel together from Atlanta to Russia.** There are no exceptions. Ok, there is one exception. If you are originating from another country you will fly directly to Moscow.

In any given year, we may have people traveling to Russia from other countries. Obviously, we cannot expect them to travel first to the US and then to Russia. So if you are one of those people, you will need to coordinate your arrival time in Moscow with the rest of the team.

From time to time we lead groups to Russia whose members are all located in a city different from Atlanta. When this occurs Stephanie and I will fly to that city and travel with the team rather than the team traveling to Atlanta before starting the journey.

Finances

The funds you give are used to pay for all your expenses on the trip. It will cover the purchase of your airline ticket, your food while in Russia, your hotel expenses in Russia, a portion of the apartment we will rent, travel by van from and to the city of entry in Russia and it will pay for various other goods and services necessary to the trip.

We may also work with our partner organizations to raise money for the mission trips. We ask our friends and relatives to contribute money and we ask former team members.

Stephanie and I never personally benefit from any of the money given by other team members. The only benefit that Stephanie I derive is that some of our expenses for the trip are paid for by those who give to support us. Some of the money we all raise will go to help the local Russian church with whom we work. If money is left over on any given trip, that money is put back into the ministry checking account and may be used on the next trip to pay for expenses. None of the money that you raise will ever go to us personally.

The point to all of this is that we all work hard to raise money for the team and for the support of the church with whom we work in Russia. Your money will be used wisely, for the purposes of our ministry as stated in the section above entitled *Mission Purpose*. If you have any questions about our personal finances or the finances related to the mission trip, please ask us in private and we will answer any question you have. You may also ask us in the information meetings about our finances. Our finances are open.

Where God guides, God provides.

Our Experience

Andy has traveled to Russia a total of fifteen times over the last 20 years (as of January 2015). Andy was a 2nd year Russian major at the University of Georgia and speaks some Russian. In Russia, he has performed as a clown, Bible study teacher, preacher, worked in a medical clinic and has eaten a lot of borscht (just ask him about it.).

Stephanie has traveled to Russia eleven times and speaks some Russian. In Russia, she has performed as a clown, served as a VBS director, worked in a medical clinic, sung songs and eaten lard rolled in salt. Andy was smart enough to get out of the lard eating. Just ask Stephanie about it. He also avoided the liver pie that David Hickey was given in 2005. Just ask David about that little adventure.

Because we have traveled extensively in Russia, we have learned the practical things to do to have a safe and fun trip. We learned a lot on the trip in the summer of 2002 about how to get the team to bond. We are not ready to call ourselves “experts”, but we do have a good bit of experience now.

The summer 2002 trip involved 15 Americans and 12 Russian interpreters divided into two teams. We worked in two cities. Andy learned more about managing a team on this trip than on any other trip. From that experience we created this booklet, and the monthly meetings. **The monthly meetings are required for local team members only. If you live outside the Atlanta metro area you are not required to attend the local meetings.**

We want you to have a safe and fun trip where God's purposes are achieved in harmony and in love. That is why we stress prayer from the moment you begin to think about going on the trip. Prayer can help each of us to focus on what is important and put away the petty things.

In 1995, we led our first group to Russia. The trip lasted nearly a month. We were told not to go. "It is dangerous and you don't know what you are doing," they said. Yes, it was a little dangerous and we absolutely didn't know what we were doing, but Jesus did and He had directed us to go and He was there with us all the way. The trip was a blast, though we felt we had not done enough.

In December 1998, three years later, we returned amid the Russian economic crisis. We were again told not to go. We asked Pastor Volodya for some direction in regards to the economic crisis and its impact on us coming to Russia. He said that it was their economic crisis, not ours. He said since we Americans have money, we could buy anything we needed. It was only the poor Russians who could not buy anything because their money was worthless.

In December 1999, we returned and spent Y2K in Russia. We were once again told not to go because we might not be able to get a return flight from Russia. We went and we had no problems at all. Again, God blessed us and the Russians.

In 2004, we went to Russia after the Chechens bombed a school, blew up two airplanes and the metro in Moscow. Again we were warned. I guess we are just stubborn. We love God and He loves Russians and he tells us that we must go to Russia. Christ does the rest.

This year tensions are heightened over Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Still we will go.

The moral to this story is that when people tell you that it is dangerous or you shouldn't go, just remember this little story and ask Jesus what He thinks.

Living Conditions

The living conditions in Russia are not what you are used to. That is an understatement. **You may experience culture shock.** I can't say this enough, but **you will** have a hard time the first three or four days, because you may experience culture shock. Why is this true?

You will be leaving a great deal of wealth behind in the US. When you return to the US after the trip, and not until then, you will realize how wealthy we are. I don't care if you are a single school teacher thinking you are living like a church mouse, when you return to

America, you will realize that you live in extreme wealth in comparison to some parts of the world. But I promise you, you will adjust and you will be a better person for it.

The apartments are humble and crowded; there is no privacy; there is no hot water in the summer time; the cold water is very cold; we eat lots and lots of Russian food, some of which is quite different from your normal fare here in America. We buy bottled water, soda and fruit juices to drink.

The following sections should help to give you a sense of what it will be like to be in Russia on a short-term mission trip in the summer or winter.

Apartments

The living conditions vary from apartment to apartment. In the old days (prior to 2009), we stayed in very humble apartments that were to some degree depressing. In the city of Kemerovo, where we currently work the apartments are much more modern and quite comfortable. Most are not up to American standards, but then again, if they were we would not be in Russia.

The beds are all twin size beds. We live with host families. Usually each apartment will have a fold-out sofa and usually we give the bedrooms to couples. For those that sleep on the sofa, it is usually more comfortable than the beds. The sofa is in the main living area and there is no privacy there.

The bathrooms consist of a tub, with a very flimsy shower curtain, if a curtain is present at all. There is a handheld showerhead. During the winter we have plenty of heat provided by radiators filled with hot water. Therefore we have plenty of water for hot baths during the winter. **In the summer, depending on the building in which you live, you may have hot water every other day, or you may have no hot water.** The cold water, during the summer, is truly cold. If you spray it on you directly, as Clyde Self found out, it **WILL** make you moan and groan out loud. You do not sit in the tub. Sorry guys, no bubble baths.

Privacy

In the apartments there is precious little privacy and precious little space. There are two bedrooms, a living room, a bathroom and a kitchen. Whenever we are in the apartments, there is usually at least one person in each room and nowhere for you to run for privacy. For the time you are in Russia you must give up privacy. Since the 2009 trip to Siberia, we have stayed in people's homes. The conditions in each home were different, but pleasant.

White Nights

In the summer, the sun goes down sometime after 10:00pm and rises around 3:45am. Your first few nights will be tough for at least three reasons:

- sleep deprivation
- jet lag
- too much stupid sunlight

You will be irritable. This you will have to fight with prayer.

Gray Days

In the winter, the sun rises around 9:00am and sets at 4:00pm. The sun never gets up over the tree line in the distance. The cloud cover is thick making the days, dark and dreary. The roads and the ground are covered with snow and ice. The temperature is between 9°-32°F (those are the highs) and those are the temperatures in the Moscow area. In Siberia, the temperatures could be as low as -40° F. But remember, except on play day (several hours in the snow) you are inside in the warmth. There is no play day in Siberia, at least not outside.

Your first few nights will be tough for at least three reasons:

- sleep deprivation
- jet lag
- too little precious sunlight

Ok so Andy is never satisfied.

Whining

Whining on a mission trip is absolutely forbidden. Here is why! When you whine about something it says you want to be treated differently or treated in some special way. It ain't happening. Whining about things on the trip only serve to irritate the leaders and cause dissension in the ranks. This cannot be tolerated, because unity must be maintained in order for us to serve the Russians. Whining says that the trip is about you. If you learn nothing else from this booklet then please learn this. **THE TRIP IS NOT ABOUT YOU!** It is about the Russians and presenting the Gospel of Jesus Christ to them. They must see Jesus in us if we are to be credible in their eyes.

The only way I know to handle whining is to just call it what it is in front of everyone. I know this seems harsh, but unless you have a better idea, then this is what will happen. Please believe me when I say I hate having to do this, but if someone begins to whine about something I will say "You are whining. This trip is not about you!" If you have a better way to handle whining let me know. This does not mean I don't want to know if you are having problems, I do. Just don't expect to be treated differently unless you have some sort of medical problem.

Just remember, when you are asking me to allow you some comfort that no one else is having then you are being self-centered. Always place others before yourself. Don't take the best chair in the room, my mother used to say. Allow others to benefit from everything before yourself.

A Team Member's Reponse

I asked the 2009 team members about their fears or worries prior to going on the trip. Here is what Kristen Parks had to say about the living conditions.

Well the only thing I was worried about had to deal with the conditions. I figured I would be hit pretty hard by culture shock due to the living situations and the harshness of Russia compared to home. But while things were definitely different in Russia, and a lot more humble, I was not hit by the feeling that I couldn't make it through. The hosts and the church shared everything they had and I walked away with the feeling that they had so much more than we do in America. It was odd-God completely changed my heart to see what things are truly important!

Thanks so much for letting me go with you on the trip! I loved every second of it and God has blessed me with a love for the people we met! Thank you for giving me the opportunity to step out of my comfort zone, to step out in faith, and to open my heart to the people that God loves with His whole heart!

Kristen Parks, 2009 Team Member

Summary

Don't let these conditions change your mind about going to Russia, unless of course, one of the above problems hits a hot button with you. If you think you are going to be just totally miserable without your privacy, or your pillow you have had for 25 years, or whatever, then please don't go. The reason for this is that if one of these problems really freaks you out, then you are going to be totally miserable and you will make everyone else miserable. But, if you think you can survive 12 days in the wilderness with us and not make everyone else around you totally miserable, please come and find out what Jesus has in store for you on the *Great Adventure*.

These are tough topics to write about, but because in Russia the living conditions are tough I would be remiss if I failed to inform you. If you are going to be there and doing work for Jesus, then it is important that you know what to expect so that you can mentally and spiritually prepare for the conditions. If you are praying about going and have a desire to go, then do not let these living conditions depress you or cause you to change your mind. I want you to know what you are getting into **before** you decide to go, but ...

Where God guides, God provides.

Things to Do After Deciding to Go To Russia

Pray

Continue to pray that God will prepare you for the trip. Pray that the Holy Spirit will anoint you for some special purpose while in Russia. Pray that you will be kept away from temptations. Continue to pray for those with whom you will come into contact in Russia. Pray for the others on the team. Pray that the pastor and his wife will be kept strong and healthy and that God will fill them with courage to continue on when life is so very difficult. Pray that God will open your eyes so that you can see what He is attempting to teach you on this trip. Pray for Stephanie and me as we prepare for the trip, because we both undergo a tremendously stressful time prior to the trip departure.



Tip!

Please pray all year long about this trip as directed above.

Commit Your Time

Commit your time, energy and priority to the needs of trip preparation. Commit to reading your Bible. Commit to praying for the mission and its needs. Commit to making yourself available to the meetings we will hold each month (**for Atlanta metro team members only**). Remember, these meetings will only take up about 2-3 hours of your time each month over a 6-month period. Please make these meetings a priority in your schedule. For those of you who live out of town, of course we don't expect you to attend these meetings unless you are in the area. We will speak with you or email you monthly to let you know what has happened in the meetings.

The purpose of the meetings is not only to inform, but also to help the team to bond. In the meetings we will eat lunch, discuss the trip and pray for one another. One of the things that the local team members will be instructed to do is to make sure the non-local team members feel included once you have joined the group on the first day of travel. We do not have or allow cliques to form. Stephanie and I do everything we can to make sure you know even we are accessible. Stephanie and I try not to spend a lot of time with each other on the trip, including not sitting together at group meals, so that you treat us like any other team member.

Read About Russia

Continue reading news articles about Russia. Some books I recommend are:

“Tortured for Christ”, by Richard Wormbrand (you will cry over and over again)

“Steeltown, USSR”, by Stephen Kotkin

“Eternal Russia”, by Jonathan Steele

“Memoirs”, by Mikhail Gorbachev

“Peter the Great”, by Robert Morris (absolutely readable and interesting)

“The Human Tradition in Modern Russia”, by William B. Husband

“The Compromise”, by Sergei Dovlatov (Funny and sad)
“Village Life in Late Tsarist Russia”, by Olga Semyonova Tian-Shanskaia (Tragic)
“A Week Like Any Other” by Natalya Baranskaya (this book I have not completed yet)
“Russian Stories” by Gleb Struve (this is a collection of fictional works)

Only Richard Wormbrand’s book is Christian so be forewarned. I have read all of these books as part of my studies of Russia. I still recommend them in order for you to understand Russia and its people. If you only read Russian Christian literature you would have very little understanding of the people you wish to evangelize. If you choose to read Gorbachev’s book, remember that even today he is a communist and remember that we all make ourselves look better than we are.

Read the book entitled *Becoming a Contagious Christian*. Continue reading your Bible. Read the book entitled *Know What You Believe*, by Paul Little. God will prepare your heart through prayer and meditation, but also through reading His Word.



Tip!

Read at least one if not more of the books above.

Attend the Informational Meetings

Starting sometime in February, we will have mandatory monthly informational meetings, **for those that live in the Atlanta area**. We will, as a group, decide how often to have these meetings, however we will have at least one per month up to the time of our departure. These meetings are provided to give you information **you need** in order to prepare for the trip and in order for you to survive on the trip. This information is provided for your benefit. It has been collected from the many trips we have taken in the past and it will give you a very good idea of what to expect on the trip.

For those of you who are not local to the Atlanta area, obviously you will be forgiven the sin of non-attendance. Ok, so I jest. We will do our best to keep you abreast of the details of the trip by email.

Once you have decided to go to Russia, you will be expected to attend all of the information meetings **if you live in the Atlanta Georgia area**. We cannot personally tell each of you, in one-on-one conversations, everything you need to know about this trip. We want you to be happy and functional while you are in Russia. We don’t want there to be any surprises for which we could have prepared you. This can only happen if you attend all of these meetings **(again local Atlanta metro team members only)**. Bring all of your questions and concerns to these meetings. The only way for you to know all of the information is to both read this entire booklet and to attend all of the meetings. **These meetings are a prerequisite to going on the trip, for those that live in the Atlanta metro area**. For others who live in distant locations, you will want to discuss with us each month what we discussed in the meetings.

For those team members who are among groups whose members are all located in a city distant from Atlanta, Stephanie and I will travel to your city in order to hold these meetings. You are then required to attend those local meetings in order to go with us to Russia.



Tip!

Attend the information meetings if you are local to the Atlanta, Georgia area.

Obtaining Your Passport

If You Already Have a Passport

If you already have a passport then you need to check the passport to make sure you have signed it and to make sure it expires at least 6 months after your return to the US from the mission trip.

Your passport must expire at least 6 months after the return date of the trip.

Before you send your passport to us you must sign the passport.

If you have not signed the passport then sign it before you send it to us. If it expires less than 6 months after your return to the US from our trip, then you must apply for a new passport. If the passport expires less than six months after the mission trip return date then you will not be approved by the Russian government for a visa and therefore would not be allowed to enter Russia. You will also not be allowed on the flight from the US to Russia.



Tip!

If you already have a passport then you need to check the passport to **make sure you have signed it** and to **make sure it expires at least 6 months after your return to the US from the mission trip.**

If You DO NOT Already Have a Passport

Please apply for your passport at least 6 months before the trip. If you are inside the 5 month window from departure then you will need to pay extra to have your passport application expedited.

You will need a birth certificate with the raised (embossed) seal of the governmental organization or hospital that issued the birth certificate. Please note that your parent(s) name(s) must be present on the birth certificate.



Tip!

Your parent(s) name must be present on the birth certificate with a raised (embossed) seal.

You will need two passport photographs for submission with the passport application, but we need two passport photographs to submit with your Russian visa application **so please get all four photographs at the same time.** Do not make copies of your photographs for use with either the passport application or the visa application as they will not be accepted by the Russian or US government.



Tip!

Get four passport size photographs. Two for the passport application and two for the visa application.

Go to <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english.html>, to obtain a passport application. Complete the application and pay the \$110 passport fee and the \$25 processing fee. Do not sign your application until told to do so. You must sign your passport application **in person** at the location where you are applying for your passport. **DO NOT SIGN YOUR APPLICATION UNTIL TOLD TO DO SO.**

Minors must apply in person and they must sign their own application at the office where your application is accepted, but not until told to do so.

You can submit your application at most large post offices. A list of locations where you can submit your passport application can be found by clicking on the above link.

Once your passport arrives please sign the passport on the page above your photograph at the front of the passport. **The passport is not valid until signed by you.**



Tip!

If you do not already have a passport you will need to have four passport sized photographs. You will need two for the passport application and two for the two Russian visa applications.



Tip!

Apply for your passport 6 months in advance. On most of our trips that means apply for the passport by July 1. Do not sign your passport until you are in front of the agent who will accept your application.

Obtaining Your Russian Visa

We will obtain your visa for you, but we do need your passport to apply for the visa. So as soon as you have your passport, give it to us at an information meeting or at church or mail it to

Russian Christian Missions
930 Charles Hall Drive

Dacula, GA 30019

Your airline tickets will be e-tickets. You will have access to them online once we make the reservations. Your passports will be held from around three months prior to the departure date until you arrive in Atlanta. We do this for three reasons:

- 1) we must have your passport to obtain your Russian visa and
- 2) we can't order the visa until we are 45 days from departure. Your Russian visa will be affixed to your passport and your passport will be returned to us from the Russian embassy around Thanksgiving.
- 3) By holding on to your passport between Thanksgiving and Christmas we both can be assured that nothing happens to prevent you from going to Russia. A lost passport or visa will kill the trip for you.

[Writing Your Support Letter](#)

You can download our example letter from the web which we lovingly call our “begging letter” from which you may glean details to put into your own support letter. Go to the home page at www.russianchristianmissions.org and click on “Apply to Go”. We send our letter to every friend and family member including cousins, aunts, uncles, grandmothers, grand aunts etc. If they are in a nursing home they still get a letter. Why is that? So that when they choose to give, they can be blessed by God. We send out nearly two hundred letters and we do so at least two times a year.

If you are not willing to ask people to help you to do God's work then pride is getting in your way. Every team member needs help and everyone has money they can give. We have had gifts as small as \$5 come in and as large as \$3000. Now, I know that all of your friends have at least \$5 they can give. Please don't let pride get in your way. If you think you can do this on your own, then you are fooling yourself into thinking that what you have is yours in the first place. It is not. Everything you have is God's and He has only allowed you to borrow it for a while.



Tip!

Send over a 100 letters out asking for support to go on the trip! Send them out no later than by May, or as soon as you decide to go if later in the year than May. Send letters multiple times during the year. May we suggest a schedule such as this:

March: Send your initial letter explaining your desire to go and asking for help saying how much is needed. Use our example letter from the web site.

June: Send an update letter explaining your desire to go and telling people how much is needed in total, how much you have received and how much remains to be collected.

September: Send a final letter asking for help explaining your desire to go, how much you have collected and how much you need overall and how much is remaining.

November: This letter should not be necessary, but if it is then don't be afraid to ask in desperation. Pour your heart out asking for God's help through your family and friends.

[Your Airline Ticket](#)

We will purchase your ticket for you from the funds you raise. We use a very good travel agent who has contracts with various airlines that get us great group rates. The deadline for the full ticket price is 3.5 months before the departure date. In 2009, we allowed some team members to join late in the year and their ticket prices were as high as \$500 more than those of us who purchased our tickets in August.

The base cost of the trip is planned with a cost of the two airline tickets (Atlanta to Moscow and Moscow to Kemerovo) in mind. When we purchase the tickets in August for all who have signed up, we then set the base cost of the trip as the currently advertised price minus the cost of the airline tickets. Then when others come along later in the year the total cost of the trip for them is the base cost mentioned above plus the cost of their airline tickets. In early September, the prices will already have risen, so please get your money in to us as soon as possible.

The sooner we purchase your ticket the sooner you can make your seat assignments. The longer you wait the less likely you will be able to sit with another team member on the plane. We are going to purchase our tickets 3.5 months in advance of the trip. I suggest you do the same by raising your funds early.



Tip!

Raise your funds early in the year so that we can pay for your airline ticket and get you a good seat!

[Fund Raising Deadlines](#)

I hate deadlines, but for us to properly schedule the trip and purchase airline and train tickets we must enforce deadlines. Below you will find a set of typical deadlines. The actual deadlines are posted on the website. Go to the "Future Mission Trips" page and click "Deadlines".

| Purpose | Amount | Due Date |
|------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Initial Deposit | \$300 | Feb 1 |
| First Deposit | \$500 | Mar 1 |
| Second Deposit | \$1000 | Mar 31 |
| Third Deposit | \$1000 | April 30 |
| Balance of Funds | \$1000 | May 17 |

You can see that we expect you to hit the ground running early on. So to help you in that regard, please see the section above entitled “Writing Your Support Letter”.

What You Need to Know After Deciding to Go to Russia

Finances

You will want to begin your campaign to raise financial support as soon as you have decided to go to Russia with us. You should write a letter explaining the following points:

- You have been called by God to go on a mission trip (assuming that is true)
- Details of our trip (when, where, who, why)
- State the purpose of our trip (to hold a VBS for children, a Bible study for teens and adults, in home visitations, ESL workshops).

See our example as mentioned above in “Writing Your Support Letter”. Please include the following instructions in your letter:

Make checks payable to: **Hebron Baptist Church**

Write in the memo field: **Mission Support**

Have them mail the checks to you.

Then you should mail the checks to us every two weeks at the below address:

Russian Christian Missions
930 Charles Hall Drive
Dacula, Georgia 30019

Also if they forget to write the correct information in the memo field, would you please do so?

Tell them **NOT TO PUT YOUR NAME IN THE MEMO FIELD.**



Tip!

The memo field cannot have your name in it, per IRS rules. If it does, we will have to ask the donor to write a second check. Avoid the hassle and explain in your “begging letter”.

Donations by others are tax deductible since the funds are going to a church. Any funds you send in for yourself are not tax deductible Please keep in mind that we are not attorneys nor are we financial advisors or accountants.

Pursuant to Internal Revenue Service guidance, be advised that any federal tax advice in this communication, including any attachments or enclosures, was not intended or written to be used, and it cannot be used, by any person or entity for the purpose of avoiding penalties imposed under the Internal Revenue Code.

Other Considerations

If you are married and considering going without your spouse please pray about having your spouse go with you. You will be much happier even if you are leaving little children behind. Parents and friends can be a great resource to take care of children while you go on a mission trip.

In particular, if you are a married woman, please ask your husband to go. The Russian children need to see the example of a happy couple, something they do not see in Russia and in particular a Christian man who can love on children. Most of the children with whom we work, come from homes that are either minus a dad or has one who ignores his children or beats them when he is drunk. Dad, come and show these kids an example of a Christian dad, one who loves children.



Tip!

Recruit men to go to Russia with us.

Packing for the Trip to Russia

Luggage

When we travel to Russia we need to minimize the number of pieces of luggage we take, but at the same time maximize the amount of space in the luggage. This is a wonderful calculus problem. We do not take traditional luggage. We use Rubbermaid containers called Action Packers, which are the maximum size the airlines will allow on European travel. We pack our clothes on top of the supplies we take in each container. Each person will be responsible for one container. The first container is checked by the airlines \$25. If the need arises that we must have a second container for anyone then you are responsible for the excess baggage fee of \$285 (as of 11/24/3014). ***Russian Christian Missions*** will only pay the fee if the need arises because of our supplies that we ask you to pack in your container..

Our goal is to take one piece of checked luggage per person on the trip and no more, because of the tremendous expense of a second piece. Remember, in Russia there is no craft store like Michaels, so we must take everything we need for VBS. We also take some snacks for the hungry Americans to eat, as well as candy and supplies for ESL.

Your responsibilities for the luggage are to simply travel with the luggage assigned to you. If the luggage is lost you are **not** responsible for reimbursing ***Russian Christian Missions*** for

the contents. We will have people in Atlanta and Moscow to help with the luggage. This is usually true, but on longer trips to Siberia the team as a whole will be expected to move the luggage when necessary.

You might be asking, "Why not just ship the stuff ahead of time?" Well, we tried that in 1995. The problem was that the Russian government can, and will hold up separate shipments in Customs for periods as long as one year. They held ours up for about 2 weeks. Josh McDowell had a shipment held up for a year. Fortunately we were scheduled to be there for a month, so we were still able to use and distribute those goods. To avoid this problem, we take everything we will need with us on the airplane.

To give you an idea of how many containers we carry, consider the December 2002 trip. We had 12 Americans departing from Atlanta. We took a total of 27 containers. Don't think that wasn't a logistical nightmare at baggage check-in! In 2005, we had 32 pieces of luggage not including carryon luggage and in 2006 we had 18 team members and 47 containers. However, we have now minimized the luggage and in 2012 we had 1 piece of checked luggage per team member departing from Atlanta.

Packing

You may pack two normal-sized suitcases to bring to our home to pack for the trip on the following day, before we leave for Russia. If we cannot fit all of your lovely items into the luggage, please be prepared to sacrifice. We will all do so if necessary. You may also have one carryon item. Purses and camera bags are not counted as carryon items. On the day before the trip, you will transfer the contents of your suitcases into the containers and the remaining space will be used to pack the containers with the medical supplies, candy, etc. Once the containers are packed with the contents of your luggage, we will seal the containers for transport to the airport.

We pack the containers with everything we need. We do this by putting a little of everything in each container. That way if a container is lost we only lose a little of something and not all of something.

Clothing and Jewelry

Do not bring brightly colored clothes, expensive or expensive-looking jewelry. This will make you stand out as a foreigner. Do not wear large earrings. Women, who have diamond rings, please leave them in America. I know this can be an emotional issue, but you are putting yourself and the team at risk for theft by attracting thieves to the team. Again, put others before yourself.

For clothing, try to pick muted colors. Both men and women should bring a pair of hiking boots (in the winter or summer) or tennis shoes (in the summer). Since we have no facilities for washing clothes, save a bathtub, bring enough clothes to last the entire trip. However, please do not bring your entire wardrobe we have limited space in the containers. Sweaters are generally bulky so bring no more than two. One per day is too many. Don't worry; you

won't be the only one who smells. For things like underwear, socks and t-shirts we bring enough for 14 days. That gives us 2 extra just in case.

Summer Trips

Men and women may wear short pants when we travel to Moscow to site see, but please no short-shorts, no tank tops. Please be as conservative as you would be around your great-grandmother. Also, if you wish to go inside any of the Russian Orthodox Cathedrals, you will need to wear long pants – shorts are not allowed in the Cathedrals (men and women). Women, of course, may wear skirts if they wish. This last requirement is of the Russian Orthodox Church, not *Russia Christian Missions*.

Winter Trips

When we travel to Moscow to site see, you will need hiking boots, the same hiking boots you have worn on the entire trip. Long coats are more comfortable than short ones, for keeping the legs warm. You will need thick down coats, preferably long ones. Burlington Coat Factory has plenty of long down filled jackets at reasonable prices.

If you are traveling with us to Siberia in the winter time I have a couple of things to say. First, have you lost your mind? Second, thank you. You are one of the few, the proud, the blessed. Now let me get serious.

It will be very cold. Kemerovo is typically around -25°-40° F during the winter. Note to self: It reached -40°F on January 6th, 2010.

On the December 2009 trip to Kemerovo Andy and others wore a good pair of hiking boots that were slightly large and we wore two pairs of socks for warmth. No one complained that their feet were cold.



Tip!

Burlington Coat Factory has long coats at reasonable prices. **Everyone is expected to bring and wear hiking boots on winter trips.**

Clothing for Women

Women must wear ankle-length skirts on Sunday when we are in church. The wearing of skirts is a Russian custom that we must honor in order to avoid offending the non-believers as well as the believers. Non-believers watch foreign Christians and judge them based on their own Russian culture. A plain black or dark colored wrap skirt works well, for example. Bring jeans, slacks or short-pants (in the summer) to wear while working in the Vacation Bible School (VBS). Do not bring sleeveless blouses or shirts. Women please do not wear low necklines. On winter trips please bring several (3 or more) pairs of long underwear. The long underwear is absolutely required in Siberia on winter trips.

Pack enough panties, bras and other underclothing to have clean items to change into each day of the trip. Then pack 2 additional just in case. You only need two sweaters. Bring one heavy coat, preferably a long coat. Bring two pairs of gloves in the event one pair is lost or stolen. Bring a warm hat and two warm winter scarves. Also if you are married, bring a head (hair) scarf to cover your head while in church. This is an absolute must for married women. This is necessary for church services: Sunday morning, Christmas morning and New Year's Eve. Sorry, this is a Russian custom. Remember we are there to serve them.



Tip!

Bring plenty of long underwear, a hat, two scarves and two pairs of gloves.

Clothing for Men

Bring jeans or dark slacks. Corduroy works great in Russian winters. Do not bring khaki slacks (in the winter), as these will make you stand out and in the winter you will freeze. Bring T-shirts or other casual short sleeve shirts (polo or button down) in the summers and possibly in the winter to help with layering. Bring long sleeved heavy cotton shirts in the winter. A suit is not required. Short-pants are acceptable in Moscow and while working in VBS (on summer trips). You will need long underwear (on winter trips) and is absolutely required on winter trips to Siberia.

Men, I know you are tough and virile etc., but on these winter Russian trips is not the time to show it. It is very cold and very windy and it AIN'T GEORGIA. You will not be able to function in shorts and T-shirts, not to mention the fact that your sanity will be questioned. Let's at least try to make the Russian's **think** we know how to dress for the winter.

Summer Trips

The summer 2015 trip will be our second summer trip to Russia and our first summer trip to Siberia. We have been told that the highs will be in the low 70's. I would imagine the lows will be in the 50's. So watch the weather forecasts on the weather channel in the last two weeks before we depart and plan accordingly.



Tip!

T-shirts are for wearing under your shirts on winter trips. You will freeze without thick long sleeve shirts.

Additional Items to Pack in Luggage

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Passport | Digital camera | this Survival Guide |
| Security belt or Neck passport holder | Extra battery for camera | Bible |
| Antiseptic hand wipes | Extra camera memory chip | Soap, shampoo, razors |
| Battery alarm clock | shaving cream | |
| Feminine hygiene products | Slippers (required) | 2 towels |
| Extra batteries for camera | Long underwear | 2 Wash cloths |

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Extra batteries for alarm clock | Canvas bag for shopping | 3-4 face cloths |
| T-shirts for lowest layer of clothes | Smart-wool socks | |

Additional Items to Pack in Carryon

| | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Bible | Snacks | Neck pillow |
| Hat | Gloves | Scarves (winter) |
| Eye mask (for sleeping on plane) | Tylenol/Advil | Prescriptions |
| Cold medicine | Hand sanitizer | |

The slippers are required because once you enter an apartment, shoes come off and apartment floors are cold. This is a cultural requirement. Carry your slippers with you when you visit other people’s homes. Otherwise you will be offered slippers so old they were worn by the czars.

Please bring any clothing that you can both wear and feel free to give away, if you are so inclined. Your clothing is valuable to the Russians. During the trip, it is quite likely that you will come across someone who could use an extra skirt or shirt.

Electrical appliances made in America do not usually have a converter with them that would allow them to plug into the 220V outlets in Russia. Therefore, if you take appliances that you cannot live without (blow dryer, curling iron, electric shaver, etc), keep in mind that you will need a converter. Electricity in Russia is 220V 50-cycle. In America, we use 120V 60-cycle electricity. Unless your appliance works with 220V electricity and has an adaptor to change the plug to a Russian 220V plug, do not bother bringing it. You can purchase them in Russia on the first day there in the stores for about \$15-\$20. *Russian Christian Missions* is not responsible for any lost, stolen or damaged personal property.

Things Not To Pack

Electric appliances (unless it can work with 220V electricity and Russian style outlets)
 Sleeveless blouses or shirts
 Short-shorts (except on summer trips)
 Pillows or Blankets
 Your favorite comforter A lot of snacks

You might be asking, “Why shouldn’t I pack a lot of snacks?” We will have at least one full container of snacks from which all of the team (Americans and Russians) will obtain their snacks.

Health Insurance

Check with your health insurance carrier to determine, if your insurance will pay for charges overseas. In any event, **you may pay for trip insurance** (health insurance is part of that coverage). You may purchase insurance through any reputable insurance company. One such is

Insurance Services of America
1757 E. Baseline Rd. #126
Gilbert, AZ 85233
1-800-647-4589 (North America)
1-480-821-9052 (Worldwide)
1-480-821-9297 (Fax)

The Last Week before the Trip

Commitments

We will be packing the containers the day before departure and it takes 8 hours to do that. We need for you to be present from 9:00am onwards on the day before departure, while we pack. Your packing at home should be done slowly over several hours to make sure you don't leave anything behind.

This means you need to plan your packing a week in advance so you have a list of things to take with you. This also means that you cannot commit to a lot of family gatherings that take away all of your time so that you cannot spend time preparing for the trip. For those of you traveling with us on our December 27th trips this means that you should think before committing to Christmas activities this year.

Stephanie and I pack most everything we need for the trip a week in advance so that as the week goes by and we remember something we forgot, we can then add it to the piles in the luggage.



Tip!

Pack a week in advance so that you have time to remember what you forgot to pack. Don't forget that December 26th is a packing day and your presence is required on that day from 9:00am until 9:00pm. On trips at other times of the year, packing day is the day before we depart.

Things to Do on the Day We Travel To Russia

Last Minute Packing

We always leave one or two containers open from the packing the night before, so if there is some small item you forgot to pack, please feel free to bring it on the day of departure and we will try to accommodate you.

Travel to the Airport

We will travel as a group in transportation provided by Russian Christian Missions. Everyone is expected to ride in our busses or vans. Family members may ride on the van or bus with us if there is room available. If not, they may follow the van to the airport. In any event, if you are going to Russia we expect you to be on the bus or van when it leaves our home.

There is a very simple reason for this. If you follow along in a car and your car gets separated from the group by taking a wrong turn or becoming involved in an accident or whatever, then we have a major problem. Remember that there are 1 or 2 containers with your name on them that cannot go to Russia unless you do. We cannot wait for you. If we did, we would all have to pay \$250 each to change our tickets to another flight on the NEXT day. So, to prevent any possibility of separation, we **insist** that you ride with us. And you cannot ask “Are we there yet?” If you do, you will get a whoopin’. Ok, SMILE.

Lunch at the Airport

A part of the *Russian Christian Missions’* tradition requires that we eat lunch as a group in Houlihan’s upstairs in the main room of the restaurant in the Atlanta airport. Unfortunately Houlihan’s is no more, so we will eat at the Atlanta Chop House or other restaurant as you see fit. This provides some time to relax after the stress of packing and getting all of us and the containers to the airport and fully checked in with the airlines. Check-in is definitely a Chinese fire drill.

Your friends and family are welcome to join us for lunch. This lunch will cost you anywhere from \$10-\$30 depending on what you order. Andy always orders the steak as his “last meal in America”. This meal takes about one-and-a-half hours. In the past we have had about an hour after the lunch to shop in the airport or just relax.

If our flight is scheduled to depart around noon, as it was for the December 2005 trip, then we will not have time to eat lunch as a group. Sorry! You will have to scrounge up some food at other eateries located on the concourse.

Travel Day Itinerary for the December 27th Trips (tentative)

December 26

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 9:00am | Meet at The Nelms’ home to pack the containers. |
| 12:00pm | Break up into small groups and go get lunch. |
| 1:10pm | Continue packing. |
| 3:00pm | Discuss procedures for entering Russia through passport control and customs. |
| 5:00pm | Cook and eat dinner at The Nelms’ home |
| 7:00pm | We will then have a brief time of prayer and possibly have our pastor speak to us. |
| 8:00pm | We complete the packing of the containers and seal them. |

December 27

07:00am Meet at the Nelms' home. Load vans with containers.
07:30am Depart for Atlanta airport
08:45am Check in at Delta Desk
10:00am Eat in the main terminal building.
Normally:
 Sit down to lunch at Atlanta Chop House in Atlanta Airport. Say goodbye to all that came to airport with us. Because of new security restrictions those not traveling with us must say goodbye before we go through security.

11:00am Walk to gate.
12:00pm Board plane for Russia
12:21pm Depart for Russia.

December 28

10:10am Arrive in Moscow.
10:30am Go through Russian passport control.
11:00am Gather luggage and go to Russian customs GREEN lanes.
11:00am Walk to Terminal D to wait for our flight to Kemerovo.
09:10pm Check in with Aeroflot. Note to Andy this is when we have to pay for excess weight. As of 1/12/2010 the fee was \$4/kilo over 20 kilos/person.

Arrival in Russia

Sheremetyevo Airport

Sheremetyevo II airport is one of two airports in Moscow that accept foreign flights. I have never arrived in any other airport other than Sheremetyevo II. It is very busy and very crowded. Do not stray from the group. We will have a buddy system and once you are assigned to a buddy, your buddy must know where you are at all times, so you both must keep each other informed of your location at all times.

Passport Control

When we deplane please be quiet and serious. Once we deplane we will walk for a ways until we reach some steps that lead down into Passport Control. You may use the restroom at Passport Control, but you MUST let your buddy know that you are doing so.

At Passport Control there is a red line beyond which you must not proceed until it is your turn to go through Passport Control. Unless you have a child traveling with you, you must go through Passport Control alone. Husbands and wives are not allowed to go through together. While waiting to go through Passport Control please be quiet and pray. DO NOT TALK loudly to one another or make jokes etc.

Andy will go through Passport Control first and begin the process of obtaining our baggage. You will find free baggage carts available. Each team member is responsible for obtaining a cart.

Russian Customs

Once we have our luggage, we will then proceed together through customs. Again remain silent and pray for Andy to have wisdom and discernment. If we are delayed because we have a lost piece of luggage then please sit down and wait quietly for everything to be resolved. You may go to the restroom if we are delayed, but wait until you see that we are delayed before doing so.

When Sheremetyevo Terminal and Moscow is Our Final Destination

If Moscow is our final flight destination, then once we have passed through Customs we will be in a large terminal looking for our Russian friends. Usually there will be a pastor there along with one or two interpreters. We will spend a few minutes greeting them and then we will move outside of the terminal and very quickly load up the trucks or vans with our luggage and ourselves.

DO NOT LEAVE THE GROUP FOR ANY REASON.

We will go from Russian Customs to the vans in less than 10 minutes, because the vans cannot wait outside the terminal for any length of time. This is not the time to exchange money or go to the restroom.

When Sheremetyevo Terminal and Moscow is Not Our Final Destination

If Moscow is not our final flight destination, then once we have passed through Customs we will be in a large terminal looking for our Russian friends. Usually there will be four or five interpreters. We will spend a few minutes greeting them and then we will go get some money exchanged, but don't exchange a lot of it, because you can usually get a better rate in Kemerovo.

At this point we will find the elevators and have lunch in the terminal workers cafeteria. This will be your first introduction to Russian food. It will be fun, though it can be somewhat intimidating.

After we finish eating we will walk through Terminal F, where we arrived, and continue to Terminal D where we will depart on our next flight. This will be a 5-8 minute walk.

DO NOT LEAVE THE GROUP FOR ANY REASON.

When we arrive in Terminal D we will find seats where we can all sit together and put all of our baggage carts together for safety. At that time you are free to roam around in Terminal D as we will be there for 10 hours or so.

Arrival at our Apartments or Hotel

One of the very first things we must do is to sort the containers to bring together all of the VBS materials, food and medicines if we bring medicines. There will be lots of cookies and candy in the containers. Please DO NOT GRAB the COOKIES or CANDY and start “chowing down” on it the first moment we arrive.

In the end you will consume all of the cookies and candy, but we must pace ourselves and not eat it all the first night.

What You Need to Know While In Russia

Money in Russia

The “rouble” is the national currency of Russia and it is illegal to use US dollars or any other currency in Russia. When you exchange dollars for roubles, the exchange rate is different if your money is written on, creased, folded, torn, marked in any way or has bank stamps on it. When we were in Russia in January of 2000, the official exchange rate was 27-28 rubles to the dollar. However, if we had attempted to exchange old dollars that were soiled in some way, we would have only received about 22 rubles for each dollar.

Why is this? In the U.S., dollars are dollars, but in Russia, a dirty dollar is worth less than a clean one. The reason for this is that if a naive tourist travels to Russia with "dirty" money and attempts to exchange it, the money exchangers can make more profit by refusing to give the full exchange rate. In other words, there is no legitimate reason for lowering the exchange rate, except for greed on the part of the exchangers.

With that in mind, only take with you the new type of \$20, \$50 and \$100 dollar bills. \$1, \$5, and \$10 bills are useless in Russia and are not exchangeable. Make absolutely sure there are no pen or pencil marks on the money. Make sure there are no bank stamps or anything else on the money. When looking at the money please examine the back of the bills as well as the front. Also look for little tears on the money. You may want to make a special request at your local bank to get clean money ahead of time. Sometimes it is difficult even for them to get perfectly clean money, so don't wait until the last minute.

For those of you traveling from other countries, if your national government has changed the format of its currency lately make sure you only take the new formatted bills. The discussion of clean money holds true for you too.

Do not exchange your money in America nor at the airport in Moscow you will be severely disappointed when I tell you what exchange rate I received when I exchanged my money in the local province which is our destination.



Tip!

Bring clean money with no marks of any kind, no stains and no worn spots in the middle where the bills have been folded. Make sure the bills are not torn or damaged in any way. When checking the money, make sure to look at the front and the back of the bills.

Credit Cards in Russia

Do not assume you will be able to use credit cards. While in Moscow, you may be able to use a credit card at a hotel, if you are a guest. We will stay in a hotel in Kemerovo on our first night and at that point you can use the money machines in the lobby of the hotel to exchange your money. You may want to take one credit card with you for possible use in Moscow. If you have an ATM/Debit card, those can be used in Moscow to obtain money. Again, Russian Christian Missions is not responsible for loss or theft of money, credit cards or personal affects.



Tip!

Sorry, but we cannot be responsible for your personal loss of money, credit cards or personal property.

Lunch Each Afternoon

Rented Apartments

When we live in rented apartments without Russian families living in them, each afternoon we will gather together in the largest apartment and have lunch together as a team. We will also use this time to share and get to know one another. Each day different people will cook the lunch meal so that no one is stuck doing it every day. The same goes for cleanup.

After every meal the entire team needs to participate in the cleanup. If we are staying in a hotel and we have lots of team members in the lobby playing games or whatever at night: clean up the area. We are Christians and we are supposed to be different so that people will ask what makes us different. If we don't act any differently than the rest of society, then why would anyone care to ask us anything? Leave the hotel lobby and the apartments in better condition than when you found them.



Tip!

Volunteer to cook and cleanup. You will be someone's hero.

Living with Russian Families

In Kemerovo, we will be staying with families who attend the local church where we will work. Since we will be in small groups in these homes we will come together early in the morning at the church to have team time. During that time we will pray, discuss Bible passages and share about the trip . You are all expected and encouraged to participate.

The church will feed us lunch and sometimes dinner also. We will then need to schedule two hours a day, usually at the beginning of the day where we will come together for Bible study and secret pals. In Kemerovo, this is how we will live.

Tobacco and Alcohol

While we are in Russia we are watched very closely by both the Christians and the non-Christians. The non-Christians watch to see if we are any different from them. If we smoke and drink, which nearly every non-Christian Russian does, then we are no different from them and they see no reason to have a relationship with Jesus Christ. Think about it, you are sitting there telling them how wonderful your life is and how Jesus has changed you and yet in their Russian eyes your life is no different than theirs.

So with that said: there is no smoking or drinking of alcohol while in Russia. What you do in the US is your business, but what you do in Russia could cause someone to not want to follow Jesus so we have to be extra careful there. If you are a smoker and cannot give up cigarettes for the duration of the trip please do not come on our trip. If you smoke or drink on the trip you will be sent home on the next flight at your expense.

Romance in Russia

During the course of a mission trip American men may especially feel attracted to Russian women, because in general you will meet Russian women that are first and foremost Christians and second they are doing everything they can to make us feel at home. A certain amount of bonding will occur. However, you did not come to Russia for romance and if you did then shame on you. You are here to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost population.

This mission trip is not a vacation; it is a mission of mercy for the purpose of taking the Gospel to Russia. If you feel attracted to a Russian woman then wait until you are at home and have had a chance to cool off and think about what you are doing. Then if you think you want to pursue a relationship, by all means do so.

Russian women in comparison to American women have only themselves to offer. They come from humble backgrounds and many of them are young. When they see a man of such wealth (many of them see us as wealthy) naturally they are attracted. If you are single, halfway good looking and you have money (in their eyes) then you are superior to any Russian man. I am not saying that you are, but I am saying that they are tempted to believe that you are. At the very least you have a leg up on men of similar position in Russia.

So here we have men and women both looking at each other thinking that the other is by far better than what he/she is used to and a romance can begin to blossom. The problem is that the romance has started from the wrong place. Both are deceiving themselves that the other is better than the rest of his contemporaries, and both are idealizing the other.

My point? Men don't flirt with the Russian women.

My other point? I come back to Russia year after year and I must work with my Russian friends long after you leave and so must either endure the negative results or enjoy the relationships that you helped to establish and build.

Some other don'ts are:

- Don't flirt with Russian women!
- Don't make jokes about marrying a Russian woman!
- Don't walk arm in arm with a Russian woman!

I am sorry if this section seems a bit harsh, but after having seen this problem on a previous trip I must put my thoughts into writing and make a statement about the issue. Again if you are going to Russia for a woman, you have come to the wrong place on the wrong trip.

Walking In Russia

When the afternoon meal and related activities are completed, the team may in small groups or one large group go for a walk. Whenever you leave the apartments for whatever reason **always take an interpreter with you.** There are hooligans everywhere, both in America and Russia. The problem in Russia is that you don't know how to tell them to go away or how to yell for help. What would you yell, "Help?" Sorry, Russians would not understand that, even if they were inclined to help you.



Tip!

Never go anywhere, without an interpreter!

Topics of Conversation

Our Russian Christian friends are much more conservative than we in our manner of speech. While we see commercials on TV about everything and we feel free to speak about those things here in the US, our Russian friends do not feel the same way. Think of them as if they were from 1950's. In other words, the following topics are a small sample of what NOT to speak about in public or in mixed gender situations:

sex, underwear, pregnancy or other topics that were sensitive to your grandparents.

We get knocked for this on every trip.



Tip!

Be sensitive to the fact that you are in a conservative culture and do not tell off-color jokes or speak about gender related or sexually related topics. See the list above.

Personal Space

Our Russian friends have a smaller personal space requirement than we do. Americans do not feel comfortable when a conversation is taking place and the other person is less than 24 inches from them. Russians do not have this requirement and for the most part they are not aware of your requirement for personal space. So since we are there for them instead of backing up, just suck it up and speak to them. They stand close to you to show you that they are comfortable with you. The fact that this makes you uncomfortable is lost upon them.

However, do not let this closeness let you think that you can touch a Russian woman. Men, DO NOT touch Russian women! You will offend them and make them feel very uncomfortable. So do not stand really close to a Russian woman, allow her to approach you when she is comfortable. Also do not reach for and touch a woman unless she initiates (and she will not). This includes not hugging a woman unless she initiates. For instance, if you notice a pretty necklace on a young lady DO NOT reach for it and look at it so closely that your actions cause the young lady discomfort.

Hugging

Almost in direct contradiction to the above, hugging is acceptable. Hugging is more prevalent in Russian culture than in American culture. So when you greet a Russian woman or man whom you have met before, hugging is acceptable. On first greeting a Russian man he may very well hug you. This is normal, though not as prevalent in younger Russians.



Tip!

Do not touch Russian women unless they initiate the touch.

Posture During a Meeting

Americans are laid back in most everything we do. However, when in a meeting such as a Bible study or a meeting with a local official, do not lean back in the chair or cross your legs or put your arms behind your head folded on your neck. Sit up straight in your chair and even lean forward slightly so that you are not tempted to lean back in the chair and slouch.

Communication with America While In Russia

E-Mail

E-mail can be sent to America from Russia by visiting the local public telephone and email shop or your host family may have internet access. It is not always convenient or possible due to time constraints. Keep in mind, however, that the daily schedule is usually very full, so you will likely not have time to email regularly.

If you use web mail, then you can receive email when computers and email is available, but it is not always available and not on all trips.

Siberian Note: When we travel to Siberia, there is at least a 4 day window at the beginning of the trip where we are incommunicado. We are on planes, trains and automobiles and we do not have the ability to let anyone know we arrived safely.

Telephones

In years past and sometimes now we rent apartments that have phones in them. You are NOT ALLOWED to make outgoing calls, but once we know the number of the phone in the apartment, your family can call the apartment when we are there. Please make sure your friends and family know to dial the number exactly as shown.

It is **less expensive** to have your friends and family call you, than for you to call them. The Eastern US is 8 hours behind Moscow and 11 hours behind Kemerovo. So if it is 1:00pm EST in America it is 9:00pm in Moscow and 12:00am the next day in Kemerovo. We are usually home by 9:00pm Moscow time, 1:00pm EST when in Moscow. That would be 9:00pm Kemerovo time and 8:00am EST. Keep in mind too, that telephone technology in Russia is very unstable and they will likely not get through without some patience and persistence.

If your family and friends are going to call you in Russia, they should contact their long distance carrier before you leave for Russia and ask their carrier to give them a special rate for calling to Russia. This is a normal procedure for the telephone companies. This will cost about \$2.00-\$5.00 per month to have this feature in their calling plan, so they will want to remove it after you return from Russia. Without this feature they could pay from \$5-\$11 per minute to talk to you. Now I know your friends and family think you are “so precious”, but I don’t think they would think so any longer, if you didn’t tell them about this plan. With the plan, the rates are approximately \$0.20/minute. Contact your long distance carrier for precise rates. This is true of cell phones and land lines.

This little note is for Andy’s poor old memory. To dial the US from the apartments in Russia you must dial 8-10-1 and the rest of the US number. The final 1 in the number is the 1 that indicates it is a long distance number to the US.

For electrical requirements for recharging your phone see the section below.

If you want, you may purchase a phone in Russia for \$50. You then pay as you go. You add money to the phone at one of many kiosks throughout the city where we work. You can then either call or text message back to the States.

I will have a phone with me when we arrive in Russia. This phone is useless now, because it can only be charged using 220v 50 cycle electricity, which is available in Russia. When we arrive I will purchase a SIM card and charge the phone in the airport. I will eventually be able to text a message back to the US and then have that message put into my Blog on the web site, so the worriers in the US can know what the warriors in Russia are doing.



Tip!

Have your friends and family call their long distance provider to request a special rate for Russia. This will save them lots of money.

International Calling Cards

Whatever you have been told by your long distance carrier, even if they give you a phone number to dial in Russia, forget it. We have found only one long distance carrier that works in Russia for calls back to America and unfortunately we have not been able to contact the person whose card actually worked in 2002, therefore we cannot tell you the name of the one carrier whose card actually worked.

Phone calls from Russia to the US are expensive and unpredictable. In 2006, several people made repeated attempts for several days before finally getting through to family. For those of you, who travel with us at Christmas, remember that many people will be calling back and forth between America and Russia. Expect much difficulty with communication to the states and inform friends and family ahead of time that they should assume you are fine unless they hear otherwise, even if you don't call for 3-5 days.

If you are planning to use an 800 number from Russia forget it. 800 numbers are for use in the US only.

If you have any hope of using a calling card you must obtain the number to dial in Russia that will allow you to reach the US. If that number is an 800 number it "ain't a gonna work."



Tip!

International calling cards do not generally work from Russia.

Cell Phones

I will have a cell phone in Russia on all trips after January 2008. Your family and friends can reach you on that number in an emergency. From year to year I have to purchase a new SIM card for my Russian phone, because I don't use the phone all year long and they give my number away after a 6 month absence. I will have the phone number posted on the blog after we arrive in Russia so that those in the US can use it in an emergency. You are

encouraged to bring your own cell phone and purchase a SIM card in Russia for your phone. The phone you use must have GSM as well as the correct frequencies. If your phone was purchased after January 2006 and has at least 4 frequencies it will probably work.

Some cell phone companies are now providing roaming in Russia. Contact your company to have your plan modified while in Russia. Even if you do not want to use your phone in Russia you might want to take your phone with you so that you have it available when we return to the US and we are in the New York or Atlanta airport. We ask that your cell phone be turned off, most of the time while you are on the trip so that you can function effectively.

Example Plan Costs with *Cingular World Discount*

There are two features:

Calling to Russia which costs \$3.99/mo

Calling from Russia which costs \$4.99/mo

Calls to Moscow from the US are:

\$0.23/minute to a cell phone in Russia.

\$0.20/minute to a land line in Russia.

Undiscounted prices with Cingular are \$3.99/min.

Calls in Russia on the cell phone are \$1.29/minute to other phones in Russia or to US with this plan. Without the plan the prices are much, much higher.

Option 1

You could have your family and friends get the first plan for \$3.99/mo so that they could call you in Russia at a discount and you would get the second plan for \$5.99/mo so that you could make calls while in Russia.

Option 2 (Recommended)

Purchase a SIM card in Russia and put money into your Russian account, made available by the Russian SIM card. Then let your family in America know your phone number with a text message. Have your family get the Russia discount on their plan and then you are in business. You can text them for pennies and they can call you for \$0.20/minute or so based on their carrier's plan.

In order to do any of this your phone must be GSM capable and must have all four frequency capabilities. Just being GSM capable is insufficient. And it must be unlocked by your cell phone company.



Tip!

Cell phones must be GSM capable and have all four frequencies to work in Russia. Call your cell phone provider to determine if your phone will work in Russia.

Odds and Ends

Financial Disclosure

Each year there are six sources of funds made available for our mission trip as follows:

- Contributions by Andy & Stephanie Nelms
- Contributions by friends and family of Andy & Stephanie Nelms
- Deposits made by you, the short-term missionary traveling with us
- Deposits made on your behalf by your friends and family
- Funds from events sponsored by our partners
- Funds given directly from our church

Contributions made by Andy & Stephanie Nelms go towards the expenses of the team, just like everyone else on the trip. Andy & Stephanie Nelms give additional funds that go directly to support the host church in Russia where we work. Sometimes we also give additional funds to help others with travel expenses. We have not written this to garner glory for us, but to simply explain as truthfully and openly as we can where our money goes. If we are ever able to give any money for the team or to support the Russian church, it is only because Jesus has given us the money in the first place.

We may from time to time not use all of the support money we have collected. This can occur if estimates are off or if the local Russian church provides housing or transportation for us like what happened in 2009 in Kemerovo. So we may use some of the money to give to the local Russian church for a project or we may bring some of the money home and redeposit it in the missions account for use on the next mission trip..

Donations made by those of you who go on the mission trip are used for the team's travel and living expenses. We attempt to estimate the cost of the trip as carefully as we can, but sometimes expenses occur that we did not anticipate and sometimes expenses are less than we anticipated. Therefore, any funds remaining from your deposits are given to the local Russian church with whom we work.

Donations made by your friends and family are treated the same as if you gave them and they are used in the same way.

Funds from events sponsored by our church are used to pay for the team expenses. If these funds are not needed by the team or there are extra funds they go to the local Russian church.

Funds given from our church that are not associated with any given event are usually given to the local Russian church for some project they are planning the next year but could also be used to pay for team expenses if necessary.

Andy and Stephanie will discuss with the Russian host pastor to determine how he and his church will use the funds. Then the Russian host pastor gives Andy a receipt for the money stipulating how the money will be used. This receipt and all other receipts from the trip are

then collected and used to reconcile the Russian Christian Missions accounting and the Hebron Baptist Church accounting. Our books are open to our local church and to you if you request it.

We are not accountants and we do not have any accounting training. Further, we are not offering financial or accounting advice. We present this information for your use with a trained accountant or financial advisor. Any contributions to your local church made by your family and friends are generally tax deductible to them, because their gifts are charitable donations to a church. Your own personal money given for the trip expenses are generally not tax deductible to you because you received tickets and other items of value for your donations. Again, please contact a trained accountant or financial advisor before using this information.



Tip!

Generally any money you give to pay for your expenses on the trip is not deductible to you because you are benefiting from the funds. Contact a professional tax advisor.

Social Welfare

Social welfare is **not** one of our purposes. We are not attempting to feed or cloth the poor of Russia. We do not have the resources to do that. We cannot cure the world's poverty. We can, however, teach men, women and children about Jesus. We can teach them about His love and show them the way to salvation. If we give clothes to poor children in Russia, we have changed their material lives for some short duration. We may have endangered their lives by giving them something new when only a handful have been helped and so many have needs. It is possible that this child would then be robbed or beaten. It is more likely though, the alcoholic parent of the child will take what you have given and sell it and purchase alcohol.

Two of the problems in attempting to take clothing to Russia to give away are **space** and **weight**. Any clothing we take would, of necessity, be carried in extra pieces of luggage. Each extra piece of luggage costs \$250 to check with the airlines. That \$250 could have been used to help pay the rent on the church building or do any of a number of things to help the church to grow. Luggage is a big issue. Please see the section entitled *Packing for the Trip to Russia*.

Weight is a problem because of Russian Customs in Moscow. When we depart from Moscow to Kemerovo all of our containers will be weighed and we are assessed overweight fees to the tune of about \$4/kilo over 22 kilos per person. This can be very expensive. Each year without carrying extra clothing we pay between \$400-\$1000.

If we lead a child to Jesus, when he or she dies they will go to heaven to be with Jesus. If we are only a social ministry and do not teach these children and adults about Jesus Christ, we cannot affect their eternal destination.

If our lack of social ministry in some way seems wrong or offensive to you, then please speak to us about this. We don't want there to be any misunderstandings about our mission purposes.

Criticism

As with any organization or group of people, we may have differing opinions about how things should be done. We welcome any suggestions about how to do things differently for the betterment of the Russians or ourselves. However, please come to us one on one and discuss these things. Please do not stir up discontent with others and complain about how we are doing things without giving us the chance to discuss it with you first. This is called gossiping and backstabbing and it can ruin the trip for us all and ruin our reputations with the Russians. We may very well have a reason for our doing things a certain way and that reason may not be immediately apparent to you. Please talk to us about it. Also, please be especially careful not to talk negatively about others on the team. We make you a promise that we will attempt to do the same. We must all remember that God will call us all to an accounting of our actions at the Bema seat judgment.

Whining

Whining on a mission trip is absolutely forbidden. Here is why! When you whine about something it says you want to be treated differently or treated in some special way. It ain't happening. Whining about things on the trip only serve to irritate the leaders and cause dissension in the ranks. This cannot be tolerated, because unity must be maintained in order for us to serve the Russians. Whining says that the trip is about you. If you learn nothing else from this booklet then please learn this. **THE TRIP IS NOT ABOUT YOU!** It is about the Russians and presenting the Gospel of Jesus Christ to them. They must see Jesus in us if we are to be credible in their eyes.

The only way I know to handle whining is to just call it what it is in front of everyone. I know this seems harsh, but unless you have a better idea this is what will happen. Please believe me when I say I hate having to do this, but if someone begins to whine about something I will say "You are whining. This trip is not about you!" If you have a better way to handle whining let me know.

Returning Home

Why Did I Come Home to This Mundane Life?

While we are working in Russia, we all have only one thing on our mind: doing what God wants us to do to serve Him on the trip. We will do just that and we will build a family and we will build new relationships. The family and relationships will continue, but after the trip we will return to the everyday world, separated from one another and doing the mundane things of our lives.

The trick will be, to not allow yourselves to believe that our lives in the US are worth less than they were while we served in Russia. In our day to day lives, there are people all around us who need to hear the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and you and I are the instruments God has chosen to deliver that message. Think of your everyday lives and the times you witness for Jesus as practice for the next trip, when the family will be back together again.

Each day between mission trips is just as important as the days on the mission trips. Each day we should be striving in small ways to achieve what we achieved in Russia. We should invite people to our homes to build relationships and not isolate our families from one another. In this way we will accomplish in our day to day lives the things we achieved on the mission trip.

Why is it that we are able to feel like a family in Russia? It is because we don't watch TV, but instead every day we invest ourselves in the people of Russia and into the lives of the interpreters and they invest themselves into our lives. We talk about real stuff. We talk about how God is moving in our lives. We talk about how the day went, we tease each other and we play games together.

When we come home we mourn the loss of those relationships and yet we can have the same thing here in the US. Make an effort to invite people into your lives and discuss with them the kinds of things we discussed and really get to know them. Play games with these people and love on them the way you did the team and the people of Russia and you will experience the life that God wants us to experience every day, instead of only two weeks while in Russia.

I added this section after the December 2005 trip, because Pastor David Ling and I spoke about this issue and the fact that it is a real concern. I, more than anyone else, experience this feeling because I have spent the last 20 years building relationships in Russia and I am always torn when it is time to come home. When I am at home my mind is always on the Russian people in general and my Russian friends in particular. By Jesus' grace and mercy I am allowed to return to my humble life in America and He helps me to recognize that I have work here to do for Him, until that next Great Adventure begins. Thank you Jesus for giving me all of the opportunities to serve you and I beg and plead with you for many more.

Will you join us in the greatest adventure of a lifetime? Will you join us in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

Andy's Story

How It All Started

Let me state from the outset that this ministry is not about the Nelms family. This ministry is about bringing people to Jesus Christ and allowing Him, through the Holy Spirit, to show His love to the Russian people and to bring them to a saving knowledge of Himself. The fact that we get to help a little along the way is a blessing for us. Since you are contemplating joining us on this little adventure of ours, I felt it only fair that you know how the ministry came to be.

I was attending a Sunday morning service at Sugar Creek Baptist Church, in Sugar Land, Texas, in the summer of 1992. It was on a July morning that Pastor Fenton Moorhead mentioned that in the evening service he and others who had just returned from Russia would be speaking about what God had done while they were in Russia. At that time, I had no knowledge of Russian history, Russian culture nor for that matter any knowledge about mission work. I was not the least bit interested in hearing about the mission trip to Russia, because I had no interest in Russia. However, since I was in the habit of attending both the Sunday morning service and the Sunday evening service, I would be there to hear about the mission trip.

That evening, Pastor Moorhead introduced several people who had been on the mission trip. They spoke about the work they had done and they spoke about the Russian people, but most importantly they spoke about how God had done amazing things while they were in Russia. I was in tears over some of the things I heard that evening. I went home that evening and prayed about going to Russia. God touched my heart that evening in such a way that I knew I would be going to Russia. I didn't know when or how, but I knew that I was going and I knew that it was God's will that I go.

The next day I spoke with one of our pastors, Pastor Perry Duggar and he put me in touch with the ministry organization that had led that group to Russia. That ministry was preparing to take another team in November and I felt that the Holy Spirit was leading me to go. Not wanting to be the ugly American, I signed up for a Russian language course at a local community college in Houston. When I left for Russia in November of 1992, I could barely introduce myself and say, "Please" and "Thank you."

The trip consisted of 4 days in Moscow, one day in Hungary and 4 days in Romania. We handed out around 250,000 Bibles and tracts. There were 33 of us on the trip. We preached in many churches, handed out Bibles and shared the Gospel of Jesus when we could. When I departed for Russia on that trip I thought that I would go to Russia once and that would be it. Jesus had other ideas though.

After three years of complaining that I didn't have enough money to go, I returned to Russia in 1995 with Stephanie in tow. When I went in 1992, Stephanie and I didn't know each other. Then we married in 1994, and a year and a half later we went to Russia together. Stephanie was very apprehensive. Since it was the first trip that I had organized, I was a bit apprehensive also.

On our first trip together we had two other people with us. We did a lot of skits and played with the kids in the schools. But when we returned home I felt like there was more for us to do. I felt like there was more to do in the sense of quantity and also more in the sense of quality. And there was. We have, as of January of 2012, taken a total of twelve trips to Russia and we have led eleven of those trips.

Where will all of this lead? I honestly do not know. God has not seen fit to let me know, yet. Wherever He leads, I will follow.

The Results

And for those of you who must know statistics. We have estimated that somewhere between 80-95 people have accepted Christ in Russia through the work we have done. But again we do not want any glory. No one comes to Christ without conviction of the heart by the Holy Spirit. We have nothing to do with that. We simply present the Gospel as best we know how and wait for the Holy Spirit.

Excluding Andy's first trip, which he did not organize, we have taken 89 people on the fourteen trips. Eleven of those people have returned with us for a subsequent trip. Each of those people will tell you that the mission trip experience had a positive impact on their lives.

One Final Note

Prayer

You may have noticed that we have mentioned prayer many times throughout this document. We have said that we pray about this trip all of the time, all during the year. I have asked you to pray about specific things regarding the trip. I have friends, family members, past mission trip team members, church members and others praying about this trip. Prayer is the most important thing we can do to accomplish God's goals for this trip. We as individual Christians and even as a team cannot do anything for God that is pleasing to God on our own. If God is not in this trip with us, the trip has no eternal value.

As your brother in Jesus Christ, I beg you to please pray daily about this trip. Once you have decided to go you might be tempted to believe you no longer need to pray, but that is when you should pray even more often for wisdom, for enlightenment as to your gifts of the Holy Spirit. Pray that God will use His power through you to win souls for Him.

May God bless you through His Son Jesus Christ and may He come quickly.
Andy Nelms 11/24/2014