

Final Wrap Up

A final chapter is always good. Perhaps you know by now that we returned safely to Grace Church on Monday night about 10:15pm. Our travel day was almost 24 hours long so you can be sure we were all tired and just wanted to get to that place called home.

I like at some point to take a deep breath and take a step back and see the whole experience. I can't speak for other great members of the team when I speak of what I will remember and what were the highlights. So, you will understand these are just my personal thoughts. Others must speak for themselves.

1. Russia is both mysterious and wonderful in my mind. It has a long and tragic history and it has made its people happy and sad at the same time. I truly enjoy the Russian people we met. Because we are not there as tourists, we met real people. Special to me were 2 conversations with teenagers at Light of Hope Church. We had a chance to sit and just talk (with interpreter Lena, of course).

2. The Russian countryside is vast, open and majestically beautiful. Of special delight are the birch trees which stand out in the green forests. The birches are everywhere. On our train rides, it was great to look out the window as we passed through the forests and the little villages of unpainted houses and outbuildings.

3. The staff with whom we worked are deeply committed and wonderful to work with. They bend over backwards to provide for us and support us while we are there. Their heart for the children is obvious.

4. Russian churches are filled with beauty and artistry but show little truth. The beauty of their artistry is almost indescribable. Mosaics, paintings and intricate architecture are almost standard fare. But the worshipers know little of personal peace and hope. Churches like Light of Hope are few.

5. The children we met were a delight. They were so glad for the attention they received. They listened to the stories which were shared, laughed and loved the games planned for them, and soaked up the attention they received. I will remember that. But the image of children sitting at the table eating will be the strongest of these memories. The staff were serving them food because they were

not part of families that could provide for them. And so the staff does. The staff served us lunch one day while I watched the cooking and saw that a lot was being prepared. I knew they would be feeding us and feared they expected us to eat it all or they were fixing our supper at the same time. I did not realize that they were not only cooking for us but for the children as well. Had the children not had this food, they would have none or have to scrounge.

I write this in the comfort of my office. I am glad to be here. Russia 2019 is over. Our schedule in Russia was full, long, and tiring. I have no regrets and am grateful that God gave the opportunity to go there.

