

Jim's Journal

Showing God's Love to the Native People Groups of Russia with JESUS Film

Summer 2020 Edition

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The Calm Before & Through the (Next) Storm?

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." - John 16:33

Dear Faithful Friends and Family,

Greetings from Russia!

I hope and pray that each of you and your loved ones are staying safe and resting in the peace of our gracious Lord, even in these uncertain times. It seems like almost every week the world becomes aware of some new tragedy, that could easily tempt us to fall into despair- but Praise God, He promises his children that He is always near.



Neva River, St Petersburg

In July, my team at J-Film Project and I anxiously awaited news if cru's (CCC's US ministry) international travel ban would be lifted starting in August? Much to my surprise, the travel ban was extended to every country of the world (regardless of level of Coronavirus cases) until 2021! For many of my colleagues and myself, we struggle between the cautiousness and essentially shutting down ministry for 9-12 months - as per cru's leadership. Is this long term, across the board, caution "lack of faith" or is it being good stewards? This maybe something we are all wresting with in our local churches and ministries too? For me, some good news arrived a few days after cru's announcement to US staff based in the US. Due to Russia's lowering number of new cases and the government lifting many of the quarantine requirements, CCC's Russian leadership began allowing domestic travel to most regions. Since I am part of the Russian national team, I fall under their authority. Essentially, I was given permission to resume travel and allowed to do what I do, as long as I am not in a group larger than 5 people. At this time, I am the only JF Language Production Manager in the world allowed to travel again. So it is with excitement that I send greetings from the Ural region of Russia (1000 miles east of Moscow)!

My first journey in 5 months, was to travel and meet with a script translator and conduct a script translation review committee. Often people ask me, "How do you know what the scripts say, if you don't know the languages?" Put simply, I must find people that I trust and feel are most reliable and competent to give honest feedback and work together to agree upon a final translation. One of these important steps is for me to organize a group meeting of native speakers (from different backgrounds- believers, non-believers; professionals, non-professionals; urbanites, and village people) to read through the translation and discuss any areas that are unclear, or do not sound natural in their language and to use proper terms.

These past few days, I organized and conducted such a meeting and moved the script from translation to translation editing and final approval for future recording.

New side-effects of Coronavirus

Back in March, many foreigners returned to their home countries. Some had plan to do so, like my friends, the Millers, who went to the States to have their first baby, and others frantically left when they realized that borders would soon close. I don't think any of us suspected that six months later, they would still not be allowed to return to the Russian Federation. While Russia has recently reopened their borders to a select few nations (Great Britain, Turkey, and Switzerland) virtually all other nationalities are still banned from entry (with a few exceptions). Having a valid visa is irrelevant.

So far I have been safe, because I have remained in the country. Others also remained, but their visas or paperwork have expired and haven't been able to leave the country. The Russian government has extended twice a grace period for those "stuck" in country even if their documents have expired. My visa is valid through September 2022, but my visa also requires that I not stay longer than 183 days (6 months) without exiting and re-entering the country. My 183 days has since passed. The current grace period is until 15th September. As I said, this grace period has been extended several times already, the 15th September is now less than 3 weeks away. If I were to exit the country, I would not be allowed to return under the current emergency Covid-19 laws, plus there is nowhere that I can go to. Most countries will not allow US passport holders to enter. Currently there are no scheduled flights from Russia to the US on commercial airlines.



Yaroslav & Jim in St Petersburg



**Moscow's "Moscow City"
Office/Business Center**

I have been praying daily for about a month, that the grace period would be extended again till the end of the year (2020). ***Please join me in praying that the Russian government would soon extend this grace period at least through December.*** While Russia currently has the 4th highest number of official virus cases, those numbers are significantly lower than in the US. I feel safe here, and of course do not want to have to leave my home and my life for 6, 9, or 12+ months?

Yesterday I spoke with Russian migration police at the airport, and received news that I would not be required to leave since my visa is still valid. They didn't however, give me any kind of documentaion to prove this if a different border agent wants to interpret the situation differently. This is Russia, the law is almost always interpreted according to the policeman you are currently facing – not necessarily the meaning of the law. ***Please also join me in praying for clarity on this whole situation and that I indeed will not be required, legally to leave in September.***

The Power of Prayer:

Praises:

- 1) **Thank you to each one of you for your faithful support!** Thank you too, for those who are able to increase or are or have been able to give an additional financial gift in these challenging days.
- 2) I have been allowed to return to domestic travel and to accomplish goals and assist those locals with preparing for future film recordings, at least for the time being.
- 3) My visa is valid for two more years, so grateful not to be trying to get a new visa in these unprecedented times when embassies and consulates are all closed.
- 4) For good health for my family, loved ones, and ministry partners around the world.

Prayer Request:

- 1) Please join me in praying for my friends who have lost a parent recently: Eric Steen (his mom went home to the Lord in July); my Tatar friend, Damir, lost his mom (Nadya) last week; and for my friend, Pavel, suddenly lost his father in July; - and **for continued prayers** for: Max's mom, Vera, who suffered a stroke two weeks ago and for Ivan's mom, who accidentally fell down a flight of stairs last week (Both are now home from the hospital, but still have a long road to recovery)
- 2) **My current visa situation.** That I will be allowed to stay in country at least till Christmas. That restrictions will end soon and normal travel between Russia and US will be allowed to resume for healthy travelers.
- 3) I can be a good witness and encourager of God's love and hope to everyone I know, and especially among my Russian friends as the crisis has the potential to be very bad here.
- 4) If I can stay the autumn in Russia, that it may be a productive time and God would be glorified!
- 5) Prayer for the salvation of my numerous Russian friends including: Ivan, Max, Max (yes, two different Maxes), Edik, Edik (yes, two different Ediks), Sergei, Sergei (and of course, two different Sergeis) and Peter.
- 6) Continued physical, spiritual and mental health for me and my family and ministry partners!

With a Grateful Heart,
From Russia with His love,

Jim Howard
INSPIRATIONAL FILMS

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