

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

December 2019

And Happy New Year! *И С Новым Годом!*

It was late on a Friday night, and I was exhausted. It was the end of a long and full week and I just had one more meeting before I could go home and crash. I was struggling to keep my eyes open as I waited for the friend I was supposed to meet. I kept wondering why I didn't cancel this meeting or put it off until the new year—my exhaustion seemed more pressing and I was thinking about the preparations for my upcoming trip to Europe. I had packing to do, cleaning to do, emails to write, an expense report to fill out, and here I was, sitting at the Burger King near the metro station, waiting for a friend who was late. I sighed and planned my exit: once she arrived I would explain I didn't have much time, leave early, and get back to my apartment and warm bed.

She finally arrived, about twenty minutes late, and profusely apologized. And then, as our conversation progressed, I understood why God wanted us to meet today. I've

known this friend, Tatiana, for over a year now. We met almost by accident when she stumbled into an English class I was teaching and she asked for my contact information. I started tutoring one of her family members and we've met, on a semi-regular basis, since then. During the tutoring sessions, which she sits in on, we've discussed family, hobbies, vacations and, of course, religion. She shared enough for me to know that she was struggling with her faith, even to the point of questioning the very identity of God. Her life has not been an easy one, and I can't even imagine coping with the many struggles she has gone through or that she deals with in her family. As we got to know each other better, I asked myself, as a missionary sent to this part of the world and, I believe, sent to her, "what should my role be in this situation?"

God answered my prayer. Not at once, but slowly over the weeks and months. My role is to pray, for her and her family. My role

Prayer Requests

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."
Isaiah 9:6 (ESV)

- Pray for Tatiana and her continued journey of faith
- Pray for the newly elected bishop, that God would guide him to be a faithful servant leader of the church
- Pray for diligence, strength, and enthusiasm for the students at the seminary
- Pray for me as I set ministry priorities and continue with language learning



was to speak the truth that I know from the Bible. My role was to be a consistent friend and compassionate listener. My role was to express the joy that I find in Christ. My role is not to *be* the Holy Spirit, but to let Him work.

which will later bring the fruit of salvation.

Sarah and I also hosted a small Christmas party for many of the girls we've gotten to know over the past few months. This was a chance for us to foster a sense of community between believers and those seeking God, to celebrate together the Christmas season and hopefully build friendships which will last long after the Christmas trees are taken down.

As we talked that Friday night, I realized He had been working. Tatiana explained how her faith has been growing, slowly but surely. She spoke of her journey, how she has felt God calling her back to Himself. She is still full of questions, but finally she is free to ask the God who is strong enough to respond to her doubts, instead of blindly following a religion that she didn't really believe would withstand an onslaught of reality. Her questions and doubts, instead of driving her away from faith, are strengthening it as she finds the answers.

This is one of the many reasons I'm rejoicing this Christmas season. Jesus was born as our Savior thousands of years ago (that's such a joyful event by itself!) but the hope that He brings is real for us today. God is

working in lives and hearts to woo us to Himself, and I love getting to see him work in St. Petersburg.

News...

December has been a busy end to this busy year. For the first half of the month I finished classes for the semester and also had a few one-on-one meetings with students and friends, such as Tatiana. I pray before each meeting that the Holy Spirit would guide me—I know these meetings are more than just friendly discussions, they are opportunities to talk about what really matters in life—Jesus Christ. I pray that the words I use encourage and uplift and plant seeds

In the middle of December I said *da svedanya* to Russia and headed to Europe for a conference for LCMS missionaries who work with short-term teams. We discussed plans, problems and solutions with people who do similar work around the globe. I learned a lot—and I'm full of ideas for the English Bible Camp we'll be hosting next summer! I'm so grateful for everyone who came and planned for this event!

Now we're facing the new year, and with a grateful heart that God has seen us safely through 2019, I look forward in faith and anticipation to what He has planned in 2020!



Meeting with a friend—besides the cheesecake, discussions about life and faith were on the menu!

Support

I'm now online! If you would like to support my work in Russia, visit:

www.lcms.org/anders

You can also send your gifts of love to our Friends at:

MISSION CENTRAL
40718 Highway E-16
Mapleton, IA 51034

Make checks payable to Mission Central

Write "Russia/Alyssa Anders" on the memo line

If you receive this newsletter through the mail, but would prefer the email version, just let me know!
Send me an email at alyssa.anders@lcms.org and I'll gladly make the change.



Part of the group from our Christmas party