

the NORTHBOUND NORTHCUTTS

to the people of *Arctic Siberia*



The Worst Year Ever!

This is all that we heard from the locals throughout the course of these past few months. Pick a season, a weather trend, or anything else, and it has been the worst one that anyone can remember.

Spring was awful because it was late and cold. Summer was even worse because the lack of rain and the constant smoke and forest fires around us resulted in a very poor growing season. Fall was no better, because the smoke still lingered until the end of September. Winter so far hasn't been good, because we have very little snow and we haven't had a strong freeze yet (*below -20C*).



While I would not say it has been the worst year ever, these past few months did bring their share of unusual difficulties as we adjusted to many unique situations that we had not yet encountered in our life and ministry.

Yet, in spite of it all, the Lord blessed and gave us a profitable summer with a modest garden harvest and strengthened relationships with our neighbors. We were also able to finish many important projects before winter, such as installing more efficient PVC windows in place of drafty wooden ones, replacing old leaking radiators and building a new fence around our property.

Important Highlights



September was an important month in that it marked 6 years since we had arrived in Russia for full-time ministry, and 6 months since we had moved to our new ministry in Vanavara!

We also had the joy of hosting our first visitors to Vanavara in this month as well. After a three day flight delay due to smoke from the forest fires, my (*Matt's*) grandparents were able to come and spend 10 days with us.

October 2, was our first Harvest Sunday service, and we invited our former co-workers, Kevin and Jessica Jones, to join us for this special service, and the Lord gave us a great weekend with them —full of fun, fellowship and teaching.

Also in October, a young family that we have befriended began to have some difficult times which were further magnified by presence of alcohol. The Lord allowed us to be there for them and help them through these times, and as a result, the Lord has opened the door for me to begin a personal Bible study with the husband. Please pray specifically for this family (*and especially the husband*) as we continue to meet and study the truths of God's Word!

Family Corner

At the beginning of the school year (*September*), Elliot was able to enroll in both private English lessons and Russian lessons. Many have wondered, "*Why English lessons when it is his native language?*" The reason is two-fold. First, it gives Elliot a chance to make friends with other kids his own ages and secondly, it is mutually beneficial — Elliot helps them in English, and they can help him in Russian.

Despite having extended months of snow and winter, there is still always excitement for the first snow of the year. This year, our first snow was late and didn't come until October, but our kids were still raring to get out and play in it as soon as it started to come down. We have also experienced the excitement of seeing the first trucks come off the winter road with much-needed produce and supplies to restock the barren shelves in the stores! Black Friday crowds have nothing on the masses in Vanavara that throng to the stores when a new shipment arrives off of the winter road.

Katie has continued to build friendships with the ladies in our building and around the community, and is even trying to learn some new "*pastimes*" such as knitting and crocheting in order to reach out more.

Kara continues to idolize her big brother and still tries to do everything that he can do - and then some!



An Impactful Change

We have had several inquiries about the Religious Freedom law that was passed and put into effect on July 20, 2017. Here is a brief summary of what the law states and how it affects us.

- Russian nationals can freely witness to whomever they want to about their personal faith, whether via social media or personal contact. (*one on one basis*)
- We as missionaries can freely witness to whomever we want to about our personal faith, whether via social media or personal contact. (*one on one basis*)
- Evangelistic outreach (*passing out literature or holding meetings in public areas on behalf of a religious organization*) is permitted ***IF*** you have a letter from that registered organization (*church*) stating that you are acting on its behalf. The violation fine is up to \$800, and possible deportation for foreigners.
- Houses and apartments can no longer be used as venues for evangelistic outreach, but can be used for gatherings and Bible studies among believers.

The law was drafted as a counter-extremism measure to combat terrorism, and the section on “*missionary activity*” was hastily included in the writing. While this appears to limit evangelism in general, there is a silver lining. The President of the Russian Federation has openly declared that the Bible ***will never*** be considered extremist literature! Sharing what the Bible teaches should not be considered terrorist activity!

There are more details in the law that will result in some more red tape for us as church-planters, and I will be sending out a follow-up in a future update on this new law and how it has already affected missionary activity here in Russia.

As always, we truly appreciate your faithful prayers and support of our ministry. We are honored to be your representatives to the people of Siberia.

The Northbound Northcutts

Prayer Requests

For wisdom as we help a needy family

For God to work in the heart of the one which whom we are having Bible studies

For Elliot as he continues with his Russian and English lessons

For our plans regarding the winter road and supply trips

For God’s direction concerning a building purchase

Prayer Praises

The opportunity to begin a personal Bible study with an individual

Our first year harvest from the garden

Our continued inroads into the community through personal contacts and relations

A wonderful visit with Matt’s grandparents

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