



Short-term ministry has mushroomed. In countries like Russia where long-term visas are almost non-existent, short-term ministry may become the only choice. And if you ever do a short-term trip to Russia, you'll need help from someone who has lived there. Someone like Vanessa Greer. ~Eds.

Five Places God Has Taken Me

by Vanessa Greer

I was sweating profusely.

Standing in line for over 30 minutes—under a heavy winter coat, sweater, shirt, jeans and long underwear—will do that.

Three people had cut in front of me and then I waited 10 minutes while the postal worker took her hourly break.

Finally I reached the window. A disgruntled clerk sat behind the glass. In my very broken Russian, I begged, “Please, I need 50 stamps ... for postcard.”

This was my third time at this window, and she knew my limited Russian vocabulary, so she didn't try to tell me anything. Instead, she hollered to a woman behind another window. I caught enough to know that I was in the wrong line and she was not going to give me the stamps (even though she had given them to me two other times).



Buying stamps can be a challenge.

I hoped that no one noticed my tears of frustration as I finally walked away clutching my stamps.

Of my Favorite Places in Russia, the *pochta*¹ is probably at the bottom of the list. Praise God that most places here in Akademgorodok (a suburb of Novosibirsk, Russia) are much more pleasant!



Like **Tamara's kitchen table**. It's small, but she can fit a lot of food on it! Tamara is the 76-year-old Russian *babushka* (grandmother) I am living with. Her entire English vocabulary consists of less than 10 words. But I am VERY well fed at her table (no

¹ *Pochta* is Russian for Post Office.

need for multi-vitamins when you have beets, cabbage and berries everyday!)

At her table she also makes me read to her. She really challenges me with my language studies and also brings a lot of encouragement and laughter to this overwhelming task. We may not believe the same things about God, but He no doubt brought us together.

God also brought me together with some awesome believers at **a local church**. Our church is *very* different from the Russian stereotype; we have no rituals or liturgies. Many Russians view evangelicals as a sect. I can't always understand the sermons, interact in Sunday school, sing songs or even follow the announcement that church will be an hour earlier next week, but I am able to worship with fellow believers. I look forward to building deeper relationships with these encouraging brothers and sisters.

Most of my travel around Akademgorodok is by foot, now in the bitter cold. But those 10 to 25 minutes are spent in **a forest of pine, aspen and birch trees** that make the time a little sweeter. It is often on these walks that God reminds me of His presence.

But the place of my biggest challenge is the small room on the sixth floor in **Novosibirsk State University's Language Department**. Every week, with Lucas and Jamie Orner (fellow InterAct



The Orners are also studying Russian in Siberia.

missionaries), I spend 20 hours in this little room with our Russian language teachers.



Vanessa's teacher (left) with Jamie and Lucas Orner.

Language acquisition is why we're here and the most important step we can take to be effective for Christ here in Siberia. It takes a lot of time and discipline to memorize vocabulary, do homework and practice speaking what we're learning. I praise God that He doesn't call us to anything without also providing the strength needed to accomplish it!

I pray that every place God takes me I will be motivated by His love and reminded that He simply calls me to be faithful.

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