

Calvary Chapel Novosibirsk

January Prayer Letter

Hello everyone! We hope you all had a blessed Christmas this year. May this next year be full of grace for you! Thank you also for continuing on with us in prayer. Here are the latest updates and requests.

Church Retreat

This was a blessed time. There were 80-90 people both days, mostly from our church with a few from Omsk and from a Baptist church from a little town in between our two cities. The teachings on grace were an encouragement to many and nicely followed up the Sunday teachings we had just finished from the Book of Galatians.

This was also an “experiment” to see how having foreigners out would work under Russia’s new law that regulates outreach. Happily, there really isn’t much to report. It was almost completely business as usual. We did the same kind of outreaches we’ve done in the past. The only restriction was that we weren’t allowed to enter a university building to do evangelism, so instead we invited the students we planned to visit to a café next door. It actually resulted in a much more open time of sharing Christ than was ever allowed in the university during past visits. There were follow-up visits with some of those students as well. We were also able to do evangelism at a local youth club. As in past visits, we taught the students gospel songs and openly shared the gospel with them. Parental permission is required for work with kids under 18, but that also expanded our outreach some, as it led to additional contact with those parents. Aside from the organized outreach, the group also found many opportunities for personal evangelism – to those in their hostel, at coffee shops, and friends from previous visits.

Students in Church

This is growing, one-by-one. The students continue their outreach at their university, and there’s been fruit. Their weekly group at the university is still small, but the students are brining friends to church, and those kids are staying. Also, our worship leader is working with the students to help them put their own worship team together. They led twice at the retreat and have led twice in the church as well. It’s great to see young people so involved. This week they are at a conference in St Petersburg. A Calvary from northern California is conducting a conference and even paid airfare for the kids to attend. They got a great response. A group of Americans from that church is there now doing the teachings. Our students will return on the 6th.

No “Closed Doors”

Hopefully, the two examples above show that missionary work – even that of foreigners – still has ample room to thrive here in Russia. Multiple times over the years we’ve heard people say, “The doors are closing in Russia!” It’s probably important to remember what Jesus said about Himself in Revelation 3:7. The doors won’t close here until Jesus Himself closes them. Yes, there will be resistance – Jesus even said the world will hate us – but let’s not give up just because of some “new law” and hassles from the government.

Christmas Services

Russian Christmas is on January 7, but we held an additional service on the 24th. The was primarily because of a puppet outreach we did for children. Basically, it was an “upgrade” to a puppet outreach we did last year. That year, our children’s ministry asked a professional puppet show to do a show about Christmas. I agreed, without knowing the details, only to find out later that it was put on by unbelievers. In the end, it was just a typical Christmas program, but afterwards I told our children’s ministry team that any future shows would have to be put on by people from our church. So, this year they did exactly that. Some of the people from the children’s ministry got together with some of the students, and they put a show together. It went great, even better than last year’s show – in every single way. Additionally, non-believing parents who brought their children came in for the message, from Isaiah 9:6. The whole day brought a lot of joy to everyone.

This Sunday we’re expecting a number of the new people who came on the 24th, who said they wanted to come again, along with the “twice-a-year” kind of folks. Please pray that Jesus would touch their lives with the reality of His presence with us. Along with the Christmas service, we’ll also have a time of sharing from the students where they can give short testimonies about what they learned at the conference.

Hall

“We need a bigger place.” This is becoming an often-repeated phrase on Sundays, and it’s good to see how the need has caused people in the church to pray more. The biggest problem we’ve faced so far in our search is the presence of structural walls that can’t be moved. We’ve found several options we could afford, but each was broken up into smaller rooms, again because of structural requirements. It’s been frustrating.

How to pray

Pray for the outreach group the students do at their university. Pray for fruit. Pray for even more of their friends to come to church. Pray for the unsaved to turn to Jesus.

Pray for the students as they lead worship. Pray that, first of all, their heart would be seeking to worship God, rather than just play music together. So far, their priority to worship has been really clear. Pray for that to increase even more.

Pray that the students would have ears to hear and hearts to obey the messages given at the St Petersburg conference.

Thank Jesus that He is still holding the door open for gospel preaching here in Russia. Pray for that mercy to continue for the Russian people. Also, pray that believers would not turn away from that open door but instead enter the door.

Pray for our Christmas service on the 7th. Especially pray that new people (and the Easter/Christmas people) would not be content to just come and leave. Pray that God would convict them of His reality and draw them to repentance and faith in Jesus.

Hall. Hall. Hall. Please pray that God would lead us to some facilities we could buy. We would also be open to renting something reasonable. Pray for protection against unforeseen problems/deceptions. Also pray that we wouldn't make stupid mistakes out of impatience.

Pray for our family's future. Like we've mentioned in past letters, both girls will probably leave home this summer. Nichole is looking towards college, Paulina towards new ministry opportunities. Both are earnestly praying for God to lead them into His will and to keep them from going in a wrong direction. Please, please join them in that prayer. Also, pray for us, as parents. We are so incredibly thankful for what our girls have become, but the invisible future very definitely shakes our faith to the core at times.

That's about it for now. Thank you so much for taking time to pray. It truly means more to us than we could say. God bless you all.

In His grace,

Bill for us

As always:

Financial support can be sent to: Calvary Fellowship, PO Box 128, Mountlake Terrace, WA, 98403 – or dropped into any offering box at the church. Please make checks out to, "Calvary Fellowship", earmarking them, "Bill and Ania Shepherd". Your canceled check is your receipt for tax purposes. Thanks!