



## UPDATE ON ASBEST, RUSSIA



Staff and Directors at The Salvation Drug Rehab Center

### TRIP REPORT FROM ASBEST, RUSSIA JULY 15-19, 2010 BY MARK MEDLEY

I was blessed to visit the **Sverdlosk Region of Russia** July 6-19, 2010. After ministry in Ekaterinburg (Worship Conference) and Serov (Pastors Conference) I travelled to **Asbest** to visit the many social outreach ministries of **Love of Christ Church**. I was greeted by one of the Pastors, **Andrei Berdieshev**, who oversaw my visit. The efforts there are Gospel-centered and resourceful, in tune to the particular needs of the area.

**THE SALVATION DRUG REHAB CENTER** is situated in the beautiful forest of the surrounding area. I met workers and approximately 50 persons who are presently enrolled in the program (near capacity). They were attentive to the message I brought and many asked questions for some time afterwards. **This center is run totally by former addicts who have gone through the center and have stayed to help others.** Their resourcefulness is impressive. One fund-raising enterprise is recycling plastic. They buy used plastic cheaply from local businesses and grind it through a special machine that they invented for the purpose. The end product is then sold at a profit to raise funds for the Center. They also have a fully operational saw mill on site. They have bought the rights to log a square in the forest. From this material they mill boards that are either sold to others or used for building projects on site.

With expansion of the program in mind, they are in the process of building another large, two-story dormitory to house new clients. The Center is practically self-sufficient, raising food in a large garden and in hot-houses as well as from animals (5 cows, 10 pigs, several chickens, 7-8 sheep, many rabbits). **The workers expressed deep gratitude for the help received from The Bridge years ago, to which they attribute the center's survival.**

## UPDATE ON SALVATION DRUG REHAB CENTER

### THE SALVATION HALF-WAY HOUSE

It is located in the city of Asbest, and re-acclimate those who have graduated from the Drug Rehab program, back into society. **This center is housed in the building previously purchased by The Bridge.** There, up to 20 people find a safe place where a regimented schedule of work, Bible study, prayer, rest and exercise gets them ready for clean re-entry into society. They attend the **Love of Christ Church** on Sundays. **Vitaly**, the overseer of the program, is a graduate of the program and will be married in August. They are preparing a room on site for him and his wife, who will live and continue to minister together there.

I was impressed with the overall condition of the building. The participants seem to be gradually and consistently renovating and improving the facility, including an updated foyer and lobby, offices, dormitories, rooms, hallways, kitchen and dining area, bath and sauna area, and building exterior, with plans for a new sports room in the future. The staff and students work to earn extra money and some of this money goes toward the renovation.

The building also contains a room for the training of the residents of the center, as well as for leaders and workers from other

centers in the region. This conference room has a projector and DVD player and is quite modern by Russian standards. My impression, especially after seeing the before- and -after pictures proudly displayed in the lobby, is that they are being very good stewards of the facility. The overall mood was good among the participants and workers.

### THE OPPORTUNITY HOUSE

This house offers another outreach of the Asbest church, whereby the participants work with local authorities (police, etc.) to rescue street children. They also give shelter and holistic ministry to mothers and children of those accepted into the rehabilitation program at the Salvation Rehab Center. This ministry includes counseling and life-coaching for mothers in matters of family, health and work. Older and mature ladies from Love of Christ Church work with them. Thirty two families have gone through the program in the past year; ten of them were added to the church.

There is an office on the premises through which networking and raising of funds and resources take place. Local businessmen donate food and supplies. Mothers who stay there, work on the farm of a church member in exchange for food from the farm. The facilities are clean and bright, and the atmosphere is safe and hopeful.



Transformation of the Leadership Training building bought by The Bridge in 2002



# ASBEST, RUSSIA: LOVE OF CHRIST CHURCH

## LOVE OF CHRIST CHURCH



Pastor Andrei with his wife and two of their three children.

There was a real connection made between myself and the two Pastors, **Alexi** and **Andrei**. Conferences for pastors may be an old wineskin. *"Our pastors know everything your pastors in America know... perhaps the important thing is not knowledge, but relationship."* I thought of Paul saying *"You may have 10,000 teachers, but you do not have many fathers."*

Pastor Andrei, who is also Bishop over the local region, has been changing his tactics in the way he works with the 60 or so pastors he oversees in the Sverdlovsk region. He used to visit the churches on the weekends and preach in the services, eat with the pastor and his wife, and then leave. Now, he visits during the week and spends two or three days talking with the pastor, his wife and his family. He prays for and

ministers to specific needs. He knows their children by name. **He sees that the true need is fathering and coaching these pastors. One pastor said of such a visit, "I received more than I would have at 50 conferences."**

This caused Andrei and me to talk about creating a "Health check list" for pastors and their churches. This would be an indicator of the "vital signs" and possible points of need to be focused on during such a "fathering visit". Andrei desires me to continue communicating with him and working with him to move in this direction. I will be contacting him through Skype and an interpreter in the near future. He and Alexi asked if I would return to work with them toward this in the future, which I am inclined to do.

### THE YEAR FOR CHRIST

Here is a real opportunity. The goal is to assemble a team of twenty persons and send them to villages in the district over a one-year period. They will preach, do social service, physical work, hand out flyers - anything that they are asked to do to help the local churches expand the Gospel in these villages. The goal is two-fold: 1) every home in the district (and eventually in Russia) will hear the Gospel, and 2) churches will be planted in the villages that do not have a church. This is exciting because it creates a venue for youth (and others) *cont...*



Children at the Opportunity House

## FROM R.K.'S CORNER

A few days ago, when I read the trip report from **Mark Medley**, who, at my suggestion, made a four-day side-trip to the town of **Asbest** during a ministry trip to **Russia**, my eyes filled with tears and my heart overflowed with joyous thanks to God! I marvel at the extraordinary transformation which we have observed over a decade in the lives of young atheists and ragtag drug-addicted Russians tucked away in the **Ural** mountains, near **Siberia**. **By the power of God through faith in Jesus**, they have made amazing changes in their local community and the larger region of **Sverdlovsk!** In this issue, Mark is giving us and update on **the growth of the Gospel in Asbest!**

The Bridge's involvement in the Ural began ten years ago. In **1994**, we established our first **Russian Bible Leadership Training School in Moscow**. Two years later, we moved it to **St. Petersburg**, from where we continued to train church planters and send them out into the field. We honor **Piet van Walsem, Nina Smirnova, Vadim and Marianne Babashkin, Roedie and Jeanette Rap, Lena Syomka, and Lena Stogni** who, through their talents, gifts and hands-on dedicated labor, pioneered and laid a good foundation in the leadership of the schools.

In **2000**, watching Western Russia being saturated by the Gospel, we felt called to pull up our tent-pegs and go Eastward, where the resources were less and the needs greater, to continue our training of pioneer church planters. Entering into a partnership with the indigenous **Love of Christ Church** in the town of **Asbest**, we relocated the Bridge-sponsored school there with a new name, **Mission Training Center (MTC)**. The Dutch couple, **Oscar and Anneke Griffion** were invited to join our team. They, with three Russians, **Andre, Bogdan, and Sasha** did the administration and teaching with assistance from visiting foreign teachers. In **2004**, we released MTC into the hands of the indigenous church and the local people on the ground.

For those of you who want to know more, I have placed onto our website prior issues of [The Bridge Report](http://www.bridgeinternational.org/archive.html), from January 2001 to present, detailing the Lord's work in Asbest: <http://www.bridgeinternational.org/archive.html>

*...cont.* to get a burden for souls that will push them past the lure of materialism. In the early 1990s, it was easy to get people to villages and start churches. Now pastors are not as well off as other professions. The social system is tied to the location of one's house and work. This makes it difficult to move quickly into another city or region.

During the **Year for Christ**, Love of Christ Church will provide food, shelter and transportation to the participants. All they have to think about is spreading the Gospel. The thought is, if they do this for a year, they may develop an ongoing ministry. There will be an opportunity to continue for a second year and hopefully this effort will breed new missionaries and church planters. **I believe that this is a worthy place to plant financial seed.**



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**Mark Medley** is Co-Pastor and Worship Leader at his local church near Knoxville, TN. We have known him and his wife, **Melissa**, for a number of years. He has taught at Bridge-sponsored schools in Russia and Kazakhstan.