

2011 Friendship English Language Camp - Kondopoga

Theme Verse: *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13)*



Kondopoga EEMN team

“When the airplane is flying level, people don’t believe in God. When the airplane has a problem and is headed down, then people believe in God. But, when it crashes, then where is God?” This was Katya’s reply to our question of why she and two others in our group of eleven 10/11th graders said they didn’t really believe in a God. This was not a flippant response, nor was it an ideological party-line reply one might have expected some years ago under the atheistic communist regime. From

the ensuing conversation it was clear Katya had thought about the question and had had conversations about it. She hit the nail on the head on a couple of truths based on her observations—for we believers, the church, when things go well, why do we tend to forget about God, and for the skeptic, “Where is God when it hurts?” A couple of days later at lunch at our table we noticed Katya in deep conversation with young Pr Vadim Lysenko (our translator noted that the conversation was about God and these questions). Another little event was the appearance one day of Oleg, from our



Oleg and Katya

group last year, now 11th graders, wanting to see us and asking on behalf of 7 others in that group if they could get together the following week. noting they recalled the week together the previous year as “one big happy family”—we did, and we all intend to keep in contact via Email as they leave home to follow their destinies. These two anecdotes illustrate important principles of this short-term mission using a curriculum that is biblically based, with singing, crafts, sports, dramas, etc, all in English: 1) giving the kids an opportunity to practice English, 2) sharing the Gospel or simply awakening young people to the possibility of living in relationship to God, and 3) the centrality of relationships. The Principal of School #3 in Kondopoga strongly supports the



Singing at Assembly

Crafts

Drama (in English)

program, he and the teachers emphasizing that there is no doubt that their students benefit from the English experience and do better academically as a result of the week of FELC. We have accomplished much if our time together simply initiates the desire by these young people to explore more deeply with Russian spiritual leaders such as Pr. Vadim in Kondopoga, or Nadia and Pr. Alex in Petrozavodsk. Nadia has said we needn’t be focused on “gaining converts” or “making disciples,” rather we and the curriculum can awaken awareness and interest, they can follow up during the year with discipleship. We sense that our demeanor and interactions are

every bit as important as the content of the curriculum—even the fact that we are still happily married after 53 years and that Paul is an academic research scientist and a believer serve as significant witness in a country where 90% of marriages end in divorce, the average woman has 7 abortions, and until recently scientific atheism was the central ideology. The father of one of the Americans leading music at the “Lutheran” FELC in Petrozavodsk died on Wednesday of the first week—what she shared about that and the way she dealt with it had a profound spiritual impact on the kids, one saying “We’ve been learning about ‘Hope,’ now we see it for real.” Nadia noted that when she was sharing about “Hope” and heaven for Jean’s father, one young girl said “..that’s a good recipe!”



Carol, our class, translator, English practice

As we’ve noted, our team was in Kondopoga, 30 miles north of Petrozavodsk, with 50 6th-8th graders week one, 50 9th-10/11th graders week two. Our team of 6 worked well together, and everything went smoothly—no unusual anecdotes to report! At the celebration event Friday afternoon the Russian teacher/ translators shared about the value of the program: Conversational English practice, relationships, spiritual value for their kids. Seeds were planted. More details of these FELCs can be found at our church web site (www.flcduluth.org/education/global-ministries/russia/).



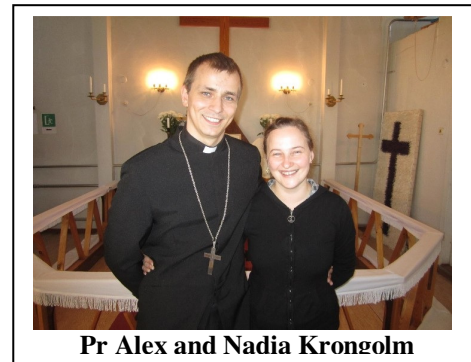
Skit during Assembly by the “Kondopoga Team” illustrating the day’s theme



Vadim on guitar, Barb leading singing at Social Center service project

We did initiate a new component this year, a service project one afternoon, which had actually been suggested by one of our Russian teachers last year. We all went to a social services day center for disadvantaged kids—our kids sang songs they’d learned, shared gifts (their craft plus donations brought from home), and were treated by performances by kids from the Center, e.g., a blind girl played the keyboard and sang songs she had written—it was very successful, illustrating what Jesus would have us do with our lives, caring for others.

We also had good opportunities to spend some time with Nadia and Pr Alex Krongolm in Petrozavodsk and get updated on new developments in their ministry and the new church building in the context of our work on behalf of supporting their ministries—for more information see our church web site (a separate summary report about these visits has been sent to the partnering churches supporting Nadia and Alex).



Pr Alex and Nadia Krongolm

Thank you for your prayer support.

—Paul and Carol Anderson