

Summary of and Reflections about the 2010 Friendship English Language Camp in Kondopoga, Russia (May 26-June 14)

by

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A relationship of trust, respect and love with the Russian teachers of English in Kondopoga began four years ago when we, along with five others, conducted the first Friendship English Language Camp (FELC) there. That FELC was well received by the Principal and Russian teachers and resulted in their request to East European Mission Network (www.eemn.org) to do the regular two consecutive weeks of FELC each year since. This good relationship continued in this year's FELC, the first week with 5th-7th graders, the second week with 8th-10th graders; the Kondopoga FELC team this year included us, Cindy Klug and Martha Hanson from Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Two Harbors and John Schleisher from Trinity Lutheran Church in Crookston (their first FELC mission trip), and Sandy Stephenson Nyes from Immanuel Lutheran Church, Proctor.

This year we had twelve 5th graders the first week and eleven 10th graders the second week - they all really captured our hearts. The 10th graders, especially, spoke English fairly well and we were able to have quite meaningful dialogue about the implications of Jesus' life and ministry for our lives.

The daily program each week is reflected in the pictures (next page). The curriculum was excellent, the theme being "Living in Love," each day reflecting an aspect of the life of Christ. Each of the five small groups each of the two weeks included a Russian teacher/translator and 10-12 kids. Our Russian colleagues were really wonderful - they truly loved the kids and without them our work would have been impossible!

Vadim Lysenko, the young Pastor at the Kondopoga Lutheran church, played guitar for our singing and sat in on many of the groups; he also helped ferry us around. Vadim interacts very well with the kids and his presence adds much to the program. We had excellent Russian hosts, all of whom had some connection to the FELC, and staying with them adds much to the value of the mission trip. Our itinerary was essentially the same as in 2008 (see www.flcduluth.org and/or www.nemnsynod.org).

The folks we've met in Kondopoga have become good friends and we feel very blessed to have been able to share the love of Christ. Sentiments such as these quotes this year by our Russian teacher friends affirm that the oft-stated axiom that "...when you go on a short-term mission trip, you receive much more than you give..." is most certainly true! ☺

"...I'd like to write (that) since you've started our course, a lot of things have changed concerning our faith. Thank you for making it possible for me, teachers and our students."

"I admire you. Each day with you has been a revelation to us. For all this week you have been leading us, teaching. We have been following you, listening, thinking, imitating. I'm sure you've made our way to God shorter. Thank you for your kindness, patience, generosity, understanding. God bless you."

"Dear American friends! You have become real friends and helpers to our children and teachers! This is the main result of your work. Thank you for your help and kindness. I wish you grateful students and loyal followers."

The other 24 Americans on EEMN's Russian FELC teams were in two schools in Petrozavodsk (30 miles away), including the Lutheran Camp. Several were from our Northeastern Minnesota Synod: Sonja and Jorgen Baertsch and Kathy Morris from our church (who were with the Lutheran camp week one and at Lyceum #1 week 2) and Mary Metzger from St. Andrew's Lutheran in Grand Rapids; Pat Becker from Grace Lutheran in Sandstone was at the new FELC near St. Petersburg the week after our FELCs.

Many other helpful interactions related to other aspects of our church's and Synod's ministry with the Ingrian Lutheran Church in Russia will be shared in other contexts (see above two web sites).



Our FELC team, devotions, meeting at 8 a.m., Tatiana, others often joined us.



Assembly at 9 a.m. – singing, theme for the day, skit by our team, short discussion of its meaning.



Carol sharing a story in English with our 5th -graders, Lirisa offering assistance



Paul in conversation with our 10th -graders Nadia offering assistance



Crafts were related to the lesson - Russian kids are very good at crafts, even 10th grade boys enjoyed crafts



All five groups had lunch together This is Carol with our 5th -graders



Sports - a time to let off energy! Here Vadim enjoys a form of dodge ball with the kids



A time of singing. This is a great way to practice English AND to learn Biblical principles



Groups created a drama based on one of our Biblical stories - presented on Friday afternoon before “graduation.” Above: angels at Jesus birth



Tatiana Ivanstova, translator & our very capable Russian FELC Director



Vadim Lysenko, wife Olga, holding 3 week-old Mark!! Their first child - brought him for all to see on the last day!!