




God's Mission ...as told from the perspective of Alyssa Anders

LET THE LITTLE CHILDREN COME

July 2019



Camp Лагерь

Last week I had the pleasure of serving at a children's camp in the village of Koltushi. Outside the metropolis of St. Petersburg, this little village provides a welcome relief from the hustle and bustle of the city. I not only enjoyed the fresh air and nature, but also with the sincere spiritual fellowship I found among those gathered there.

These summer camps are the Russian version of a Vacation Bible School. The theme for the camp "Tales from the Sea of Galilee" and we focused on the parables that Jesus taught. I assisted with skits and prayer times, led an English session and was a general camp counselor. In our English group, we played games and practiced vocabulary, and also learned the first two verses of "Seek Ye First" in English. Our group performed the song for the rest of the campers at the final closing ceremony, in English and in Russian, and I was very impressed at how quickly the kids picked up the English words!

Some of the kids at this camp were from Lutheran families, others had never been to church before. Some knew all the answers and others asked their own questions, such as "what is a pastor?" Whoever they were and whatever background they came from, each of these precious kids heard about Jesus. We read together God's Word and discussed God's love. I pray that these seeds of faith would find good soil, grow and bear fruit in each of their lives.

Simple Faith

When we plan for these camps, we often stress our role in speaking God's Word to the kids. We plan Bible lessons, try to think of ways to retell Bible stories in ways that will stick in the kids' heads, and plan fun activities that are centered about the theme of the camp. Sometimes, though, it's the kids that serve and teach us.

One of the most touching moments of the camp was one evening when we all

Prayer Requests

"but Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.'"

Matthew 19:14 (ESV)

- That the seeds of faith planted in the kids' hearts would grow and bear fruit
- That God would bless the English Bible Camps in Poland
- For safe travels for everyone involved in the English Bible Camps
- That God would prepare a team to come to Russia next summer



gathered in the front of the church for a short devotion and time of prayer. The kids sat on mattresses in front of the altar and listened to a short devotion before the leader opened the prayer time. We've all have sat through a prayer time like this, and honestly I hate that awkward silence while we wait for someone to be brave



enough to pray out loud. Not so this time. One after another, almost without a pause in between, the kids offered up their heartfelt prayers to their Savior.

They praised Him and gave thanks, they prayed for us (the volunteers), they presented their requests, and without self-consciousness of hesitation they offered up their simple prayers of faith. They weren't afraid that their words weren't good enough or fancy

enough or "religious" enough. They just prayed. It wasn't without reason that Jesus said "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 18:3)

Change of Plans

While we try to remember the simple faith of a child when we pray, we also have to keep in mind that sometimes God answers our prayers with a "no." This year it did not work out for us to travel to the National Youth Gathering in

Minneapolis. The girls we were hoping to take with us weren't able to get visas in time, even though they started the application process well in advance. I don't know God's greater plan in this, but I trust that He has one. So instead of traveling to Minnesota, I've been able to focus more on the children's camps and also my own Russian studies.

Looking forward

Soon I'll be heading to Poland to help coordinate the English Bible Camps there. I hope to have lots of stories and pictures for my August newsletter!

Speaking of English Bible Camps, I wanted to let all of you know about an exciting opportunity to serve in Russia next summer, leading an English Bible Camp. We need to enlist a team soon so that we can start the process for visas—a process that is usually plagued with delays and red tape. We're looking for a team of four to six people from the same congregation (or at least a group of people that already know each other). Other than a willingness to serve and be flexible, you don't need any special skills—we'll provide the curriculum and translators. It will definitely be a stretching experience and accommodations will be rustic, but it's also sure to be an adventure that you'll never forget. If you feel God calling you to speak God's Word and love into the lives of kids in Russia, or if you just want more information, please contact me (alyssa.anders@lcms.org) or Erin Alter (mission.teams@lcms.org).

Support

I'm now online! If you would like to support my work in Russia, visit:

www.lcms.org/anders

You can also send your gifts of love to our Friends at:

MISSION CENTRAL
40718 Highway E-16
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Write "Russia/Alyssa Anders" on the memo line

Scenes from the camp

If you receive this newsletter through the mail, but would prefer the email version, just let me know!
Send me an email at alyssa.anders@lcms.org and I'll gladly make the change.