

"Tara, you need to cut another CD."

"How is that going to happen?"

"God's gonna do it," her father confidently replied.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia has encountered a Christian revival. Like the early church, Russian Christians have been hungrily seeking the will of God in their changing land.

"The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit..."

Acts 13:4

Russia Changes its Tune...

Pastor Jeff Johnson, from Calvary Chapel Downey in California, and his daughter, Tara, have been on the front lines of Russian outreach. They have lead musical mission trips to the western city of Vladimir.

On their recent trip, Pastor Jeff wanted to

strengthen the church there and evangelize neighboring regions. Utilizing Tara's band and her CDs would be a challenge, but he was convinced it was part of God's plan.

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Seven years earlier, Tara's band had played a part in starting Calvary Chapel Vladimir. In the years that followed, Tara began a period of questioning her faith.

Eventually Tara recommitted her life to Christ, and returned to the music ministry. She began thinking of a return to Russia. This time she would bring her husband, Yuri Escandon, an officer of the Beverly Hills S.W.A.T. team. She hoped the maturing congregation in Vladimir could relate to her personal story of God's grace.



Pastor Jeff Johnson's daughter Tara fronts the CC Downey band in an outreach in Russia.

*Story by Alice Raines & Elizabeth Ortlip.
Photos by Tara and Yuri Escandon.*

A Russian tour was scheduled for July 1999. Production of Tara's new CD was completed. The NATO bombing of Kosovo relented, easing hostilities and making travel safer. The time had come.

A few days before departing, the mission

team members ministered in Calvary Downey's Freedom Celebration. Hundreds came to salvation before their eyes. Spiritually high, this team was ready to minister in Russia.

In Vladimir, and surrounding cities, Russian

Children in a Russian orphanage are excited to see their images in Pastor Jeff Johnson's video camera.



brothers and sisters diligently prepared for the team's arrival. Banners and flyers, along with television and radio broadcasts, announced the upcoming concerts. Counselors were prepared to share with those who would receive Jesus Christ at the event.

Arriving in Russia, the team experienced overwhelming support from their host churches. The warm reception made the team wonder if they weren't still at home in America. The group readied themselves for their concert in Vladimir.

Jeff Fadness, Calvary Chapel Vladimir's pastor, emceed the evening's event. Capacity crowds in smoky, strobe-lit halls rocked to Christian music. Tara and the Downey musicians brought down the house. During their last song, "This Is Love," a six-foot cross was erected, depicting a suffering Christ nailed to its frame before Jesus was symbolically raised from the dead. Pastor Jeff Johnson completed the evening with a message and altar call.

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"All the believers were together and had everything in common... They broke bread...and ate together with glad and sincere hearts..."

Acts 2:44-46

The Vladimir church had experienced tremendous growth within the past year. Sunday services had increased to three, and two Bible studies were being held on Wednesdays. Their Bible college now nurtures 19 students.

Tara was delighted. People who had been to her concerts years earlier introduced themselves enthusiastically. Strong leaders in

Prayers for a large turnout at the outreach concert were answered.



the congregation would come up to her and say, "I was saved at your concert!"

The highlight for the visiting pastor was an outreach in a wooded area just outside Vladimir. Sounds of chickens, dogs, and bleating goats echoed through a village of nearly 200 people.

Team members went door-to-door, witnessing and inviting residents to an impromptu, outdoor concert.

Missionary Ron Castro cautioned Pastor Jeff. "Often people will express interest," he explained, "but do not intend to come." Turning to the Lord in prayer, Pastor Jeff asked that those invited would indeed come.

Attendance was extraordinary. Many responded to the message; many asked for prayer.

When the team went to Murom, Tara's husband, Yuri, used his S.W.A.T. background to relate to many police officers. Wearing his uniform, Yuri brought various donations from U.S. police departments along with news of God's greatest gift-His Son.

Many policemen came to the concerts and made professions of faith. Yuri sought out those posted on security duty and proclaimed the Good News. After a barbecue, one Russian S.W.A.T. member prayed with Yuri to receive Christ.

Alexandrov, a nearby city with a population of 60,000, is without an evangelical church. Higher-ranking members of the Russian criminal underworld keep their summer homes there. As a result, gang warfare plagues the streets.

No written penal code guides law enforcement. Where better, then, to hold another concert?

Over 200 people attended. Fifty gave their lives to the Lord, including the assistant chief of police's 17-year-old daughter, and two women from a nearby orphanage. Calvary Chapel Alexandrov was born that Sunday, with 20 people in attendance. One week after the concert, 35 people came for the service. Now, missionaries from Vladimir follow up with weekly visits to nurture this new church.

Pastor Jeff and his team visited orphanages and birthing-homes with gifts of diapers, food, and milk. Proceeds from the concerts went to causes in the host cities.

Everyone attending received special Russian editions of Josh McDowell's *More Than A Carpenter*, which includes the Gospel of John.

Please pray for the congregations in Russia, that they, like Paul, may preach and teach boldly, without hindrance.

"Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ."

Acts 28:31

>> TO REACH/SUPPORT THIS MISSION

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Little girls from an orphanage curiously peer at the visiting Americans.