



# RCA Missionary Update

## from the Bronkemas

The Moscow Protestant Chaplaincy is an English-language congregation in Moscow, Russia, ministering primarily to the expatriate community. The church has an extensive social ministry, including a soup kitchen that serves 1,400 meals per week and a racial task force that helps minorities with counseling and support and documents attacks against them. Bob and Stacy Bronkema, both ordained, grew up in families that were familiar with the mission field—Stacy's grandmother was a missionary in the Dutch East Indies, and Bob's parents were missionaries. After serving in diaconal ministries in Italy and at a church in Florida, they began their own missionary service in Russia in 2006. The couple has three children: Rachel, Naomi, and Bethany.

### Russia facts:

- Population: 142,893,550
- Size: 17,075,200 square kilometers (1.8 times the size of the U.S.)
- Major religions: 15-20 percent Russian Orthodox, 10-15 percent Muslim, 2 percent other Christian, large population of non-practicing believers



### MINISTRY

Chaplaincy

### LOCATION

Moscow, Russia

### PARTNERS

American Baptist Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), United Methodist Church

### CONTACT

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Dear family and friends,

October 2009

Summer is officially over here in Russia. September 1 marks the first day back to school and the beginning of fall. It has been a wonderful summer, but we are glad to be back in Moscow for the start of school and the beginning of the church year.



*The Bronkema family: Naomi, Stacy, Bethany, Bob, Rachel and their dog, Rosie*

MPC has been in the news quite a bit lately. We recently published our yearly Racial Task Force report which was picked up by BBC, Reuters, NPR, and a number of other news outlets. We continue to get feedback and interest on our report and we seem to be holding our breath hoping that there aren't any serious repercussions from the authorities on this side of the pond. So far so good, although one member of the task force did receive a threatening phone call. Please pray for Sydney that God would protect him. He was involved in a number of the interviews with BBC.

You can find a number of interviews and videos on the Moscow Protestant Chaplaincy group Facebook page. I know, what have we devolved to if we have to refer you to

Facebook, but it is actually a wonderful way to get the word out about what is happening at the Chaplaincy. Here are some of the links to the BBC story: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8230158.stm>, and again a video on BBC which shows Bob's hand (I know—5 minutes of fame) <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/newsnight/8234271.stm>.

We expect there to be more press over these next few weeks, but we continue to pray for the safety of our members through all of this. Hopefully a little exposure will raise awareness and some substantive changes will take place.

Our refugee resettlement program with the US Embassy has kicked into high gear. We had two more people accepted for resettlement and they should be heading to the states in December. We will let you know about their location and any way in which you could potentially help as they get settled into their new country. Also, in June our administrative assistant, Arold Rixilia Rambeloarisoa, and her family won the green card lottery and are now resettled in North Carolina. If you happen to live in that area it would be great if you could contact them just to see how they are doing and if they need any help. They are originally from Madagascar and are a wonderful family. I am sure you will be blessed if you contact them. Their email is [miorarold@mail.ru](mailto:miorarold@mail.ru).

Roney Kumi, who was our faithful organizer and overseer of all of the programs that came out of our Parish Center (medical clinic, English, Russian, and computer classes, task force, etc.) now finds himself in Chicago. We're not sure for how long, but he would also appreciate connecting with people interested in assisting him on his journey. His email is [ronkum2@yahoo.com](mailto:ronkum2@yahoo.com). These are some tangible ways in which you may be able to help those who have lived in the closest thing to hell imaginable and have survived and are now looking for a better life.

The medical clinic continues to be blessed with daily miracles. An average of over 20 come to the clinic every Tuesday and Thursday. The need is great. I just received a Facebook message that may launch us into an initiative to open a hospital on the outskirts of Moscow that would treat anyone and everyone. We are in the dreaming stage right now, but there is a fine line between dreams and visions.

Our present vision is to open up an overnight emergency shelter. Pray that God would provide the wisdom to implement this shelter in such a way that people of color could come and stay safely overnight. We sent two of our members to Washington DC this summer to attend a conference on homelessness so that they could come back with a little more knowledge. We thank the US Embassy here in Moscow for their visa support and for their continual support for the idea of the shelter. Speaking of the Embassy, through the Department of Energy they were able to donate a used Toyota Land Cruiser for our ministries. It was much needed and as of last week we have been able to drive it legally! We are so grateful for our relationship with the embassy and the diplomats here in Moscow.

What about the church? You can never tell what it is going to be like from one year to the next. After a huge attendance last May we left for the states, and I came back in July to a nearly empty church. I almost expected the same this summer, but thankfully, that didn't materialize. The church remained full and this past Sunday we had to use all three trays for communion. That usually only happens on Easter. It seems that people are recognizing and appreciating the diversity and uniqueness of MPC. We continue to have Bible studies in many different locations around Moscow. Someone said if he won't come to the mountain then move the mountain. The Sunday school classes have welcomed many new children, and the school year has just begun. On September 19 we began a whole series of



*The ordination of Vladimir Tatarnikov*



*Vacation Bible School in Napels*



*Young Adults and Student Group that meet every two weeks for worship*



*Soup Kitchen*

events around Moscow for middle and senior high school kids. Please keep that in your prayers as we look to kick off opportunities for youth to get plugged in while living in a city that can be very isolating. We really feel as if this year is going to be an extraordinary year on just about every front. As we step back and look at the church, it is a bit overwhelming to realize that we now have 22 paid staff and a whole army of volunteers helping out in over a dozen programs. What was really encouraging was the fact that we were gone for seven weeks this summer and the church continued on as if it didn't even notice our absence. Now that is a good feeling!

What about the kids? The family spent much of the summer in Olympia, Washington which was a real treat for everyone. Rachel had an awesome experience this past summer with MPC's youth group at Mission 2009: Naples, Italy. You can see some of their experiences on the blog: [http://pokrovsky36.typepad.com/mpc\\_mission\\_2009/](http://pokrovsky36.typepad.com/mpc_mission_2009/). It is a worthwhile read with some great pictures. Bob and Rachel had an eight hour layover flying back to Seattle and were able to meet a member of MPC in London and see the city before heading to the West Coast. She went to tennis camp for a week as well and is really coming into her own on the court. She is glad to be back in Moscow, working hard at school, spending time with her friends, and playing on the soccer team.

At the end of the past school year Naomi helped her 5th grade class meet the goal of reading over 800 books by reading over 100 by herself. She was ecstatic to get back to Washington to run around in the woods, play on the beach, and spend time with her cousins. She started off 6th grade by winning a class election to become one of the two 6th graders on the school council. She is looking forward to an exciting year.

Bethany was also glad to get to Washington. She received many awards in school this past year and was happy to take a break. After getting a new pair of rubber boots for her birthday, she became the master blueberry picker and helped fill the Bronkema freezer with berries. She also went to tennis camp and enjoyed it.

We continue to be amazed by God's providence.

We remain your servants in Christ,

The Bronkema family

*To access extensive information about the Bronkemas, or to make a financial gift for this ministry, simply go to [www.rca.org/bronkema](http://www.rca.org/bronkema).*