

YULIA NEWBY, BURYAT BELIEVER EASTERN EUROPE/EURASIA



The 20 countries of Eastern Europe and Eurasia contain 202 least-reached people groups. 66.8% of the populations of Serbia and Montenegro – which is almost 7 million people - are considered least-reached. Russia has over 12 million least-reached people in 72 different people groups.

A decade of a democracy mixed with greed, crime, self-seeking politicians, a pervasive mafia and a decline of the quality of life has many in Russia looking back longingly to the former days of certainty during Communist dictatorship. The Marxist economies in Eastern Europe hurt national infrastructures, the ecology and the work ethic of the people there.

With the gradual recovery of most former Communist states and the growth of the European Union, we see ethnocentrism and religion becoming more important and even causing political confrontations in this area.

The genuine church overall in Eastern Europe and Eurasia is small and struggling. However, rays of hope shine in places like the Ukraine. This story is an example of one such ray of hope among the least-reached:

My name is Yulia Newby. I was born in Irkutsk to a Buryat family, a people group related to Mongolians. I can speak both Buryat and Russian which is the predominant area language.

When I was 5 years old, my family moved to Ulan Ude, the capital of Buryatia. We lived a normal Russian Soviet life there, devoid of any religion at all. Only old-fashioned, uneducated people believed in a God. I had heard of the great religions, but they meant nothing to my family.

My first exposure to religion came one Buddhist New Year when we went as a family to the datsan (Buddhist Shamanist temple)—since everyone else was going to see what it was like. It was not an enjoyable experience-- all very dark, dirty and mystical with strange smells.

My first encounter with a Christian came a couple of years later, attending a pioneer sports camp. A red-haired girl my age also attended, and we somehow found out she believed in God. We ridiculed her, making her confused and miserable.

My next experience came in the 8th grade, when an American missionary teacher came to teach English a couple of times a week in my school. She also invited us to a youth group. Although they knew the group was Christian, our teachers encouraged us to go to learn English. Of course we went to see “real Americans.”

At first, I only went to enjoy the fellowship and getting to know other people. However, at this place, I first heard about God, what He did, and who He was. Gradually the people there helped me to see God. They were different, not only because they were Americans, but because they believed in God. They were kind, full of joy. As I learned more about God, I began to understand His love for

me. At every meeting we were invited to come forward and receive Christ. Although I was too shy to go up front, after several weeks, I finally asked an American girl friend to help me pray. At the age of 14, I received Jesus. It was a very good day!

I immediately became involved in a home group. That was the beginning of my church, a cell group church. My life was changed. I could feel God's presence and love in my life. Later I also started leading a cell group myself.

As I tell this story at 27 years of age, I can look back and see how God comforted me during those early days. Sometimes it was hard to be a believer and face the ridicule. Very few openly believed in God. But I had found hope, the only real Truth and Love—I found it in God!

I asked God about my study plans after high school, and He showed me I was to stay in Ulan Ude to study. In university, I studied English and French, preparing to teach. God began to show me that He wanted me to be a missionary during my five years of studies.

There I met my future husband, a missionary with the Campus Crusade student ministry in Irkutsk. After we married, we began our ministry together here, working with students from all over Siberia and all over the Far East to help them know who Jesus is. Here, we meet many kinds of people, most of whom are without God or the Truth.

We are also excited to be a part of our church in Irkutsk, a very active and mission-minded church who wants to reach all the nations, great and small.

Our city of Irkutsk and all of Siberia are full of people who are willing to try or do anything to find true life—except to try God. Building relationships with them takes a long time. Pray for their hearts to be soft and responsive to the Truth of the gospel.

Pray now for all the approximately 200 least-reached peoples in Eastern Europe and Eurasia:

DELIVERANCE FROM ADDICTIONS:

Pray God sets the captives free from bondages to addictions such as alcohol and drug abuse, sexual addictions, pornography, and gambling, in order that they may be as lights in the world, examples of God's grace and goodness in Jesus.

HOUND OF HEAVEN:

Pray that the Holy Spirit searches for the lost of the remaining 188 least-reached peoples like the Buryat and demonstrates to them God's goodness that leads them to repentance.

OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD:

Pray God shows believers how to overcome evil such as greed, self-seeking, organized crime, and degeneration with His goodness and love that His kingdom may rapidly grow.

ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN:

Pray that the Church understands Paul's command to become "all things to all men" that they might win some in order to bring the gospel in a way that can be understood and accepted.

INVISIBLE MEANS OF SUPPORT:

Pray God to pour out His heavenly provision through those whose hearts are completely His so that He supplies and multiplies all resources needed for reaching those who have not yet heard the gospel of Jesus.

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