

Eurasian Missionary College

Preparing national church planters and missionaries for Tatarstan, Russia and Central Asia
February, 2003

Practice gives experience

At EMC we love theological training. It's fascinating to study hermeneutics, homiletics, and Christian doctrine. However, Bible knowledge without practical know-how can make for mini-theologians who don't minister. Therefore, all of our students are required to participate in 'practicum', where they apply what they are learning.

For their practicum, the students are divided into three groups, each headed by an experienced mentor. Our goal is to expose the students to missionary service in an environment similar to that which they'll face when they return home to minister. During the 3-week practicum students must study their assigned city, work out a plan of evangelization, and put the plan into practice. A mentor (who also meets and ministers with the students throughout the school year) lives with the students in the village or city, offering constructive advice and showing by personal example how to build bridges for the gospel. The cities chosen for this year's practicum were Buinsk and Kazan.



'Main Street', Buinsk

'Practice' in Buinsk

Buinsk is one of the regional centers of Tatarstan, with a population of roughly 27,000. 90% of its inhabitants are Tatar, and identify themselves as Muslim.

The students, led by mentor Artur, studied the city and felt that staging concerts would be an effective means of attracting young people to hear the gospel. To do this, however, required the permission of the mayor, who consistently said, "No." He explained that the Mullah (leading authority from the mosque) and the leader of the Orthodox Church opposed Christian concerts in their city. In addition, the mayor indicated that local leadership considered evangelicals to be a sect.

With this door closed, the EMC students regrouped and decided to try a different approach. They distributed leaflets in Russian and Tatar, inviting interested parties to participate in an evangelistic Bible correspondence course. After completing the course, respondents will be visited by students, who get to know them, and eventually invite them to a Bible study or church service.

This turn of events was, in retrospect, a divine re-direction, as most of our students will be ministering in Islamic contexts where personal contact is the most

effective means in leading people to Christ; and where mass evangelism is either inappropriate, or impossible.

- Please pray for Buinsk. There are 3 mosques, 2 Orthodox churches, but no evangelical presence.



The Buinsk Team

'Practice' in Kazan

The 2nd group, led by Michael, targeted a dormitory and apartments in one of Kazan's many regions where there is no evangelical church. They interviewed people, and when appropriate distributed Christian literature, evangelistic books and cassettes. They also visited professional schools offering evangelistic concerts and a showing of the Jesus film. One school agreed to host a concert "against narcotics". But many refused to let our students in, and in one case, just days before a showing of the Jesus film, the hall they were to use burned down.

The students also distributed Christian literature at markets, looking for opportunities to have meaningful conversations with people. Once again, in the spirit of a practicum, there were several valuable 'life' lessons learnt. It became obvious that there is a variety of means of getting the good news to people, and that ministry is always a spiritual battle! Appropriately, they were studying Nehemiah at the time.

Simultaneously, our "Sisters' Group" worked in the same region with the wife of a local church planter. They distributed invitations for a Bible correspondence course and visited orphanages to share the good news with children. A foundation was laid for starting a children's group in one of the dorms.

Television Coverage!



Insur worked with a third group that will eventually assume leadership of a local church. He had several goals in mind, one of which was to unite the group and teach them how to interact with the authorities (this being an unfortunate but important reality of the local situation). His strategy to accomplish this (and a real ministry) was to offer Christian concerts "against narcotics". Because drugs are rampant, local authorities are receptive to anyone willing to take a stand

against them. The concerts enabled the students to invite people, warn them of the dangers of drug use, while also telling them about ultimate freedom in Christ. This led to numerous opportunities to share Christ with students. The group did 5 concerts in student dorms and 1 concert in a drug rehabilitation center.

The concerts were so successful that one local television station gave a favorable review, including an interview with Insur. This was exciting, as it is rare for the media to show such a positive aspect of Christianity!

Please pray for:

- Those who heard about Christ during the practicum.
- The spiritual growth and formation of all our students.
- The spiritual and material needs of the school
- Softening of the hearts of people in Buinsk & Kazan, leading them to repentance.

Second 'Practice' in Buinsk

A second practicum last month saw the Buinsk team doing a number of activities. As explained above, gospel-work in the town met with considerable resistance from the authorities, so other means of contact had to be used to build relationships with people. The team offered to do 'odd jobs' for people. In the village, practical help is one of the strongest ways of demonstrating Christian love. They staged a concert in an old age home. Just before New Year's celebrations, they posted advertisements all around town inviting people to a party where 'Father Frost' and his granddaughter gave out gifts. The students also visited close to 20 people, giving gifts and establishing friendships. Brochures warning of the dangers of narcotics were distributed. In the brochures was an explanation of how to come to God. Also distributed were about 4000 invitations to enroll in the "Iman" bible correspondence school. At the moment 15 people from the town are undertaking the course. The students also attending the local sports complex, striking up friendships with young people there. 2 neighboring villages were visited and evangelistic brochures distributed. In the process, students were able to make contact with people, talking on spiritual themes and helping the physically needy.

New contacts in "High Hills"

Visoki Gora (literally High Hills) is a town of about 20 000 people some 20 km out of Kazan. There is no evangelical church there. About a year ago, as a result of the work of one of our lecturers, one young family came to Christ. Tahir, the lecturer, is currently preparing them for baptism. When he visits, some of our students go with him. Their aim? To establish a new church through personal relationships. Already relatives of the family we know, and some of their immediate neighbors, are showing an openness to the gospel. Again incidences of practical help are proving a powerful witness.

For secure communication with EMC, email Paul Kellner at kellnerp@cbd.net. If you are interested in financially supporting EMC's ministry, please contact Bill Johnson at BJohn58719@aol.com



Tahir and the young man he led to Christ

Second 'Practice' in Kazan

Praise God! As a result of contact with the Ministry for Youth Affairs and Sport, and with the help of the local church 'Faith and Life', we were able to undertake a number of activities with a group of our students in their second practicum.

Firstly, with the help of 'Faith and Life', we were able to put on 2 concerts, one for children, and for teenagers of disadvantaged families. Each concert included the giving away of Christmas gifts.

Further, we were able to organize a Christmas celebration for homeless children, in which we gave them a meal and gave them the opportunity to receive presents from 'Father Frost'. We also distributed gifts in the local children's home (a so-called orphanage).

We staged a second concert in the rehabilitation center for drug addicts. At this center, after our first concert, Michael's group was given permission to work with the teenagers there; already they have run several Bible Studies with interested residents.

Finally, on our own initiative, we staged a concert in the regional center of Pestretsi. The concert evoked wide interest, attracting some 150 people, many of them teenagers and children from the local children's home. God gave us the favorable disposition of the local Town Hall manager, who invited us back for a further visit some time.

Please pray for:

- The planting of a new church in Buinsk, favorable disposition of the local authorities there, encouragement for the team and the conversion of people currently doing the correspondence course Iman (which means 'Faith').
- The planting of a new church in Visoki Gora, strengthening in the spiritual growth of the converted family there, and growth in their leadership qualities.
- The planting of a new church in Pestretsi, further opportunities to travel there and put on concerts, and raise up a group of missionaries to that town.
- The development of relationships with the Ministry for Youth Affairs so that we can work with them in some official capacity among homeless children and drug addicts, despite our lack of experience and opposition from local Muslims.

Thank you again for supporting the work we are doing.