

# Bibles for Russia

## *A Canadian School Celebrates 10 Years of Outreach*

As told to Marilyn Cameron  
by Marion Deer

AS I DROVE WITH A FRIEND TO THREE HILLS, ALBERTA, one evening in 1981, I did not realize what a profound effect the experience would have on me. I was on my way to the Prairie Bible Institute, an interdenominational school about 60 miles from Calgary, to see its annual Christmas program.

A world globe measuring about 15 to 20 feet in diameter took center stage. Behind it students dressed in various native costumes ascended and descended a staircase. As each student reached the top of the globe, the words of John 3:16, "God so loved the world," were read in the language of the country that he or she represented. A slide and tape presentation about four former students now serving in various countries around the world was interspersed throughout the program. In an emotional grand finale, the audience joined with the choir in singing, "For God So Loved the World."

After the program, I studied the pictures that lined the hallway near the entrance to the school. Portrayed were former students now serving as missionaries in faraway lands.

As we drove back to Calgary, I thought about ways our school could make a difference in the global picture of missions. Were we doing all we could to inspire our students to share the love of Jesus with others?

That was 10 years ago. Since that time, our school has experienced a successful partnership with the Lord in global missions. However, this past year's project proved to be the most exciting of all.

After Mikhail Gorbachev took office, much more religious freedom was allowed in the USSR. Our Seventh-day Adventist believers were able to meet openly. In 1990, for the first time in 73 years, they were able to send representation to the General Conference session.

After watching the GC session live from Indianapolis via satellite dish, I was impressed to present a project related to the newly opened work in Russia, along with four other projects, to our staff for their consideration. They unanimously agreed that we should focus on sending Bibles to Russia as our mission project.

### **Introducing the Project**

We launched the project on December 9, 1990, by showing students selected parts of the General Conference video and explaining our goal to send adult and children's Bibles to Russia. Many of our students had followed with interest the events unfolding in the Soviet Union through media coverage so they felt enthusiastic about participating.

We approached the project as we always did, giving each of the younger children a container to fill with money and return. By the end of the first day, we had already received \$27.19! When we dismissed for the Christmas holidays, we had raised \$148.25. By the end of January that amount has grown to \$689.51.

During this time, our teachers and students made presentations about the program at various Adventist churches in Calgary. As our project should have been concluding, enthusiasm seemed to mount instead of diminish. By February 13 the bulletin board in our school entranceway read "With love to Russia" - \$1,310.92. And funds continued to arrive! Students and teachers visited nearby Adventist churches to share the

good news and invite others to join us. After one of our presentations, a member of the audience handed me a \$900 check for 200 adult and children's Bibles.

The next morning the school secretary excitedly told me that one of our constituents had given her a \$1,000 check after hearing about the school's mission project.

On April 12, we sent the money we had raised to the General Conference to help finance an order of 90,000 Bibles that were scheduled to go to Russia. We were able to send 392 children's Bibles and 588 adult Bibles, a total of 980 Bibles for our brothers and sisters in Russia!

### **Money by the Pound**

The following Sabbath I spent visiting with friends in a church near Calgary. After seeing the video on Russia, two of the families presented me with more than 30 pounds of coins that they had been saving. We gave the students an opportunity to guess how much the coins were worth. Guesses ranged from \$1.82 to \$1 million! One boy came very close, guessing within \$2 of the total amount, \$208.55.

The story spread and within the next several weeks other families turned in coins they had accumulated over the years.

About a week later, a friend came to my home to do some work for me.

When he was done, I offered to pay for his services. He shook his head and handed me two \$100 bills. He wanted to match funds turned in by a church he used to attend. Today's total reads "To Russia With Love" - \$7,019.36.

### **How to Get Started**

A mission project may seem like an overwhelming task. Here are several ideas that have worked for us and may be useful in helping you get started.

Each year the coordinator for the program proposes several ideas for our school's annual mission project. We then decide as a staff which one to pursue. Next, we take the idea to the student

association. Doing so ensures that the students will take an active interest in the project. The student association president and the mission coordinator should work closely together, planning church presentations, bulletin board displays, and procedures.

At a general assembly of the student body and staff, we get things off to an enthusiastic start with a short presentation of the year's project.

By this time a bulletin board display should already be up. Students should receive containers immediately for the funds they collect for the project. Encourage them to bring back the containers by a certain date.

Students need something tangible to remind them. Audio-visual aids are especially helpful. These might include a

video on a mission project, colorful maps, graphs, and charts; and examples of objects for which the funding is used. For example, one year we raised funds to send books and church supplies to developing countries. As materials came in, we compared their height graphically to the Calgary Tower. At the end of the project, the materials had attained a height of 163 feet, one-fourth the height of the tower.

Leadership is essential. One or more staff members need to take a special interest in the mission project. They must be willing to organize church presentations involving the students and work to keep motivation high. If the same person

can be responsible for the mission projects from year to year, this helps ensure the continuity and consistency of the program.

### **Maintaining Momentum**

To maintain motivation and enthusiasm, the project must continually be updated. Human interest stories must be shared. Posters and charts must remain current. Most important, those involved with the project must constantly keep the Lord as their partner and remain open to His leading.

Sometimes a school may feel that it is too small to take on a mission project, but Jesus used just 12 men to shake the world and forever change its course. Our school enrollment has doubled in the past 10 years. The Lord can work through few as well as through many.

### **Some Ideas**

With a little ingenuity, a school can discover numerous opportunities to meet the needs of others. Here are some examples of projects we have undertaken in past years:

1982 - Funding a first-year medical student in Manila.

1983 - Operation Eyesight - \$500 raised, making possible 22 cataract surgeries in India, Haiti, Peru, Bangladesh, and Kenya.

1984 - Slumber Kits for Sleeping Children - \$979 raised, funding 39 kits for children in de-

veloping countries to make their rest more comfortable.

1985 - More than \$10,000 raised to help rebuild our school after it was destroyed by a fire.

1986 - Funds raised for local needy families.

1987 - Story books for Africa.

1988 - Bicycles for SDA workers in Africa.

1989 - Funds raised to restore William Miller's home.

We have also implemented a Maranatha project. Every other year our students in grades 10-12 raise funds and then travel to help with a project in another country. Last year they went to

Lazaro Cardenas, Mexico, for a week to help construct a church. This experience will be a treasured element of their education.

Our school entranceway now has a monument to our interest in missions. The idea that was shared with us by the Christian school in Three Hills, Alberta, has spilled over into our own hallways. A 4-foot by 8-foot wooden map of the world hangs on the wall with 13 brass plates attesting to our commitment to global missions.

### **Conclusion**

When Elder R. Wilcox of the General Conference visited Russia he gave a Bible to a young girl. He told her that if she would read this book that God would help her to understand, and would lead her to Him. With tears in her eyes, she said, "Would He really do that for me?"

In part, the inspiration for Bibles for

Russia were Elder Kulakov's closing words from the General Conference video of Russia, which still ring in my ears today:

"I lived with the feeling that we are not abandoned. We have our brothers and sisters around the world. The time will come when we are joined to the world family."

We must launch out in faith, with God as our partner, working with our young people in service to others. We may not go abroad, but we can teach our students to work for Him. Through outreach and "traveling on our knees" we can experience the joy that comes from helping others. 57

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