Russia traces its roots to the 12th century, when it escaped Mongol rule and formed the Principality of Muscovy. Over the centuries, it conquered adjacent territory and peoples. Today, Russia is home to nearly 200 distinct people groups, spanning Europe and Asia. It is also home to Lake Baikal, the largest freshwater lake in the world, which holds almost one quarter of the earth’s unfrozen fresh water.

Following the demise of the Soviet Union, the Russian economy shifted from a centralized, government-run system to a Western-influenced, market-based one. Russia is a top producer of natural gas and oil, as well as a leading exporter of aluminum and steel.

The known Christian population in Russia is only 17 to 22 percent. Muslims account for another 10 to 15 percent. After generations of Communist oppression under the former Soviet government, significant numbers of Russians do not hold religious beliefs or do not practice them.

That makes Russia a ripe harvest field for the Gospel. Lutheran Hour Ministries’ outreach occurs through mass media, technology and interpersonal channels.

**Ministry Response**

There is tremendous opportunity to share God’s love and reach out with the Gospel in Russia. Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM–Russia) responds to the spiritual hunger across this country through a variety of strategies:

**RADIO.** LHM–Russia partners with the respected Trans World Radio and Radio Maria to broadcast special events and Gospel messages addressing social issues. We also develop programming targeted at secular radio stations to reach those who do not yet know the Savior.

**PUBLICATIONS.** LHM–Russia has translated 15 Project Connect booklets into Russian, and Director Dr. Igor Savich and other authors have produced an equal number of original booklets on topics of faith, creation and evolution, dinosaurs, etc. They also produce short books on faith topics to support their relationship with the Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia and for outreach.

**BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSES.** LHM–Russia offers Bible Correspondence Courses (BCCs) to introduce the Gospel to people who don’t know Jesus, and to reinforce a biblical understanding for people who do. When someone responds to an outreach activity, LHM–Russia will typically invite the respondent to begin a BCC as the next step in his or her spiritual journey. BCCs are available for both children and adults. Two key avenues for promoting BCCs are LHM–Russia’s radio broadcasts and ads in publications.

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EQUIPPING THE SAINTS. LHM–Russia recruits volunteers and provides Equipping the Saints workshops that train volunteers in effective witnessing. Local pastors and deacons spread word to their congregations. “Members of parishes are relatively passive, and this is good for stimulating their ministry activity,” says Dr. Savich. Addressing the special conditions in Russia, the workshops combine live presentations, personal interaction, and video clips.

LIVE EVENTS. Live performances intrigue individuals who might not step inside a church building. They are a unique way to proclaim the Gospel and offer additional ministry resources to individuals. LHM–Russia organizes and supports music festivals; Christian rock concerts at colleges and shopping malls; and a stirring Christmas play which, despite its Gospel overtones, attracts a completely secular audience.

YOUTH PROGRAMS. Many Russian youth come from families plagued by alcohol or drug addiction. Through community centers, LHM–Russia provides support for outreach programs and Christian camps for at-risk youth. To help raise a new generation of believers, LHM–Russia partners with St. Petersburg Christian University to organize student mission teams, which travel to various cities during the summer to share the Gospel with those who live there.

PRISON MINISTRY. LHM–Russia partners with other organizations to share the Good News in prisons and penal colonies. Because they are separated from the outside world, incarcerated individuals treasure the opportunity to communicate with others. They are also among the most active participants in our Bible Correspondence Courses. We also plan and produce evangelistic concerts to bring the Gospel to them.

Impact

THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE: How God Used a Lutheran Hour Ministries Program to Bring a Dejected Prisoner to Faith

Dimitry was not a Christian. As a prisoner in Russia, his circumstances were dim. Racked with torment, unable to find peace, he pleaded his case before God. Soon after, God used Lutheran Hour Ministries’ Bible Correspondence Courses to introduce him to Christ’s forgiveness. Dimitry believes the material was God’s answer to prayer.

“These lessons helped me to know about the Christian faith,” Dimitry says. “Reading through these materials, I began thinking and meditating and—what’s even more important—I began applying Christ’s teaching and God’s will to my own life.” He appreciated the structure of the Bible Correspondence Course lessons, which help students grow in their faith and give them a chance to contemplate the depth of what they learn.

Today, Dimitry understands that Jesus Christ is the sovereign Lord of his heart.

“I want to begin a new life—the life with Christ—and this life is the eternal one,” he says. “I am not separated from God now. As soon as I am released from prison, I’ll come to church. No matter what people might say, I am a Christian, for there is one God and Christ is my Lord! May His name be hallowed forever!”

LHM.ORG/GLOBAL