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В Похвалу Славы Его

“To the Praise of His Glory”

by Janette Sullivan

Time of Refreshing

March 2024

I have been in Georgia (the country) these past 4 months. I am so grateful for the time to get away, focus on my walk with God, get some counseling, and process through many things. Last year was a difficult one in many ways, and I have battled to understand how God is leading me in my future. I also came to realize that I have been grieving a lot. With my team leaving Ulan-Ude, ministry and life drastically changed for me. Everything changed and it felt like God was taking it all away without clarity for what is next. While I can't say I am leaving Georgia with all the answers, I have some concrete things I can hold on to as I walk forward into the future.

So what is next? I will be returning to Ulan-Ude for a little while longer. God has opened up a new door of ministry for me there to help a missionary couple (not with SEND) with a Bible translation project. The Bible has been translated into Buryat, but it's a higher literary language, which the average Buryat can't understand. God has laid it on this couple's heart to translate 25 Bible stories into 3 of the 4 Buryat dialects, so that the average Buryat can understand it. My teammate Bruce is also a part of this project, he has been working on drawing pictures in Buryat style to go with the stories. It's an exciting project. I was asked to also be a part because this couple needs a lot more help, but finding workers right now is difficult. I can't help with translation, but they will need help with distribution and what is called "Scripture Impact" so that the stories won't just sit on a shelf, but will be read and engaged with by the Buryat people and in the local churches. I will also help with testing the translations, which means sitting down with Buryats to read through the stories to gauge what they understood from the translated text and to determine if the translation needs to be changed or different words/phrases used to better convey what the text is saying. Although I'm not exactly sure all of what is involved in this project, I look forward to exploring more about it and seeing how I can participate. One of the things that God has reminded me of lately is how much I want to be involved in developing relationships with people outside the church and sharing Christ in day-to-day interactions. This project will give me opportunities for that, Lord willing. I have been given the go by my SEND leadership to stay in Ulan-Ude for another 1.5 years (as long as politics or other unforeseen things don't interfere with that).

So I'll take it one step at a time. I will leave Georgia next week already, I plan to cross the land border here between Georgia and Russia on March 11 and then fly once I get into Russia. Entering Russia has always come with a feeling of tension, but even more so now. However, I have crossed the border 3 times now, going in Russia, since the war started, and every time it was relatively smooth and painless.

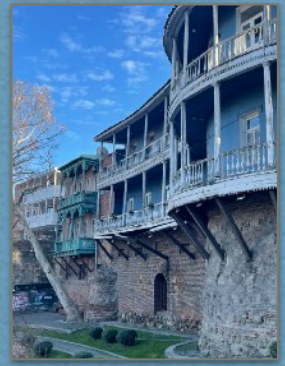
What have I been doing in these past few months? My first priority was to focus on my relationship with God and spend more time with Him. I have found some fun ways to do that, through online mini retreats and the time of Advent and Lent to practice different spiritual practices to help me connect with God in new ways. I have been meeting weekly with a counselor. I'm very grateful that God paired me up with a woman who is located here in Georgia, so I was able to meet face-to-face with her, and she has been a great blessing for me. I have been processing a lot (and have more to do!) and doing a lot of inner work. This can be hard, but worth it in the end. I'm praying God will use all of what I've learned to bring good change into my life. In addition to this, I have attended a local international church and some of the women's fellowship meetings. One woman organizes a monthly hike for anyone who is interested, which I was thrilled to join in on. This also gave me an inspiration to do something similar in Ulan-Ude when I return. I also joined a gym and enjoyed getting back into exercising and moving my body. Again, I was reminded of how much I enjoy that and have considered if this is an area I should pursue more. Spending time with Renata and Leah (the SEND team here) was also a great blessing. We have done some fun things together and it's been good to see what SEND is focusing on here. Renata and I were able to pick up right where we left off and living together has been so easy. I'm so grateful for this time and I want to thank you for your support and prayers for me during this time. This time of rest has been just what I needed and I now can move forward with a better vision.

“For the Lord is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor; no good thing does He withhold from those whose walk is blameless. Lord Almighty, blessed is the one who trusts in You!” Ps. 84:11-12



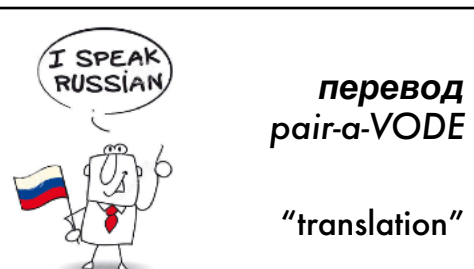
Cultural Tidbits - Georgia

Georgia is a beautiful country tucked in between the Black and Caspian Seas. It borders Russia, Turkey, Armenia and Azerbaijan. For such a small country, it has a lot to offer, with the Caucasus mountains and the sea all within its borders. There is a lot of amazing scenery to see! Georgia is considered a Christian country and within the city there are hundreds of Orthodox churches all over. When you travel outside the city, it's not uncommon to see a church or monastery nestled in on a hilltop. Many Georgians consider themselves to be Christian, although I think for the majority for them it is more of a cultural identity and large part of their history that they are proud of. However, there are hundreds of small ethnic Muslim people groups that live in or around Georgia. Georgians are also known for their hospitality and wine, a good combo! They have been making wine for thousands of years and it's such a large part of their culture. In addition to this, they have a lot of different cheeses, which they use to make their famous "khachapuri" (cheese-filled bread). Beans are also a large part of their diet. I have enjoyed my fill of Georgian food during my stay. Because Georgia used to be part of the former Soviet Union, many people here speak Russian. The Georgian language seems to be rather complicated, but is beautiful and has its own unique alphabet. Tbilisi, the capital, is a modern city with a lot to offer and a very fun downtown to explore. I am grateful to the Georgian people for their hospitality and kindness in welcoming me for this time.



Prayer & Praise Corner

- Praise God for this time of rest and renewal in Georgia.
- Praise God for the Bible translation project and God's direction in this.
- Praise God for safety and the opportunity to live in Russia at this time.
- Praise God for a great time reunited with Renata.
- Praise God for the identity we have in Him as His beloved children.
- Pray for God's continued direction in future ministry and in my life.
- Pray for a smooth border crossing as I return to Russia.
- Pray for my heart to have a deeper trust in God as I return to UU.
- Pray for people's hearts in Buryatia (and Russia as a whole) to turn to the Lord and find peace and joy in Christ.
- Pray for the church of Buryatia to be a bright light for Christ and to bring hope to the hopeless.
- Pray for peace between the East and the West.
- Pray for God to prepare the hearts of the Buryat to receive, read and understand God's Word. Pray for faith to come from hearing as they interact with God's Word.



Pictures from Top to Bottom:

- ◆ On one of the hikes with Leah
- ◆ Ira, Renata and I shortly after arriving in Georgia (Ira is a dear friend from UU)
- ◆ This is the way Georgians make bread - they stick the dough on the sides of a stone oven. The bread is absolutely delicious!
- ◆ View from a church on a hill overlooking the old capital of Georgia
- ◆ Georgia unites people! (Alla is a friend from when I lived in Ukraine in 2005, Ira and Irina are both from UU, plus Renata, Leah and I.)