

I would like to share with you a little bit about my personal life and insight on my green card journey:

Eleven years ago when I lived in CA with Rich and Sue Greggs, I considered staying in America no matter what the consequences. I made this decision based on the fact that I was tired of the struggles, difficulties, sufferings and other issues that I had faced for so long in Russia. Furthermore, as a former orphan I saw no future for myself upon returning to my home country. Back then Sue and I would go to Mimi's Café where we would discuss my personal training as a chef. On this particular evening at Mimi's we had an argument, and I told Sue to leave me alone and she did. I walked on the freeway back home, which was about a 10 mile walk, and pondered on one of the biggest questions of my life.

The Question: What is my responsibility/call/obligation as a Christian, as a former orphan and as someone who is richly blessed? The Lord communicated to me that I had to go back to Russia. I was obedient to Him and went back. It was tough to be in Russia because I did not know why God wanted me to be return. Then in the fall of 1998, He told me to minister to orphans just as others, mostly American missionaries, had ministered to me.

The next four years were tough and very challenging. I was obsessed about going back to the states and tried a lot of foolish things down roads that came to dead ends because it was not the Lord's plan. Then, I was able to return to America in the summer of 2001 for three months to fundraise and speak for The Harbor. In the fall of 2002, I came to the states for school and more than three years ago completed my education. Since graduating from Franklin University, I have been involved with The Harbor full-time.

Unfortunately, I have not been able to go back to Russia for over four years due to my immigration status. The dilemma was that if I were to go to Russia then I would not be able to come back to the states. This would have jeopardized the ministry so I stayed here and patiently waited for the Lord to open the door. It has been both spiritually and emotionally challenging these past four years.

Waiting in the wings for God's will, without knowing the end results, is a tough thing. Most of us prefer to get an answer quickly for our prayers, but the Lord has told me many times, "Be still, know that I am in control, and it will happen according to my plan and time." Furthermore, it has been hard to pray and wait when you know that you have only one year before your legal status expires and then you have to go back home regardless of the paperwork and permission of both governments. I was afraid of all of the "what ifs" and what would happen to The Harbor. Eventually, I had peace in my heart because I knew that no matter what would happen the Lord would take care of The Harbor and me. He has done that my entire life even when I did not know Him as my Father. My human flesh was worried, but my spiritual side had confidence and I was smiling. When we let the Lord be the driver then we can smile and praise Him even in the midst of uncertainty.

My green card process was long, unpleasant at times, discouraging and quite expensive. However, at the end, and in the long run, it was well worth it (Praise the Lord). I am excited to go to Russia in less than two months. I will be in Russia for four months ministering at The Harbor, orphanages, individuals, etc. I might be teaching cooking classes at our Professional Training Center's culinary class. Also, I will be training our radical graduates how to become mentors and leaders in the ministry like The Harbor, so that they can be effective mentors and counselors. I will be helping Luba, The Harbor Director, with the paperwork needed to get an official license for our Professional Training Center so it is recognized as an educational facility. Along with these various projects, I will be doing many other ministry activities. Please keep me in your prayers as I get ready to depart and minister in Russia.

For more news check out our website: www.theharborspb.org

Now I would like to share a little bit about The Harbor:

The Harbor celebrated seven years of ministry. At the beginning of the new school year we started with 22 residents. There are 5 new boys and 3 new girls. We also have new mentors. One of our former graduates Sasha wrote Luba a note which said, “*Dear Luba, I hope that you are doing well with God’s help. Since I have written you my last note a lot has changed. Recently, I became a Christian and was baptized. My daughter has accepted Christ and has been baptized as well. I thank the Lord that I foolishly did not get married because it would have led to divorce eventually. I am doing really well. I am living in St. Petersburg now. I would love to know more about how you are doing. Please write me.*”

Statistically, the average age of Russians who get married is 22, and the average age of divorce is 25; thus, what Sasha did was smart. Otherwise, she would have become just another statistic. It is so powerful and amazing to see tremendous growth in the lives of our graduates. Their discernment and the ability to make wise choices, show the power and hand of God in their lives. Sasha was one of our first graduates and if not for The Harbor and its partners, she would be in a different situation. *Pray for Sasha’s spiritual growth and for a Godly husband.*

The dean of St. Petersburg Christian University (SPCU) is on a one-year sabbatical, so our Pastor Ivan has become the temporary dean of SPCU. Thus, we have found another pastor, Dima, from Calvary Chapel to work in conjunction with Pastor Ivan. Dima will be responsible for our spiritual formation and growth of our residents in the two-year program while Ivan will be doing the same for our graduates and staff. In addition, Ivan will continue to teach some of the spiritual formation classes, but pastor Dima will be our primary teacher for our residents. *Pray for wisdom, patience, trust, and a bonding of relationships as pastor Dima becomes part of our ministry.*

The Harbor feels very blessed because among our staff there are three couples who are ministering to our residents and graduates. It is important for orphans to see a living example when it comes to marriage, spiritual growth, love, care, support and other Godly characteristics. *Please pray for our staff couples: Vadim & Ecka, Sergey & Masha, and Andrei and Ulia.*

By next fall, The Harbor is planning to expand our residential program with an additional apartment that will house 8 more orphans and 3 new mentors. This will bring our numbers to 30 full-time residents every two years and about 12 in our Next Step Phase post-adaptation program. In order for this goal to become a reality we need more radical brothers and sisters in Christ who will become our ministry partners. Our monthly expenses per resident are \$150. We are looking for two-year commitments from our ministry partners. By investing into one resident you are making the difference in that person’s life for eternity. Please help us to reach more orphans before they become part of the already grim statistics. *Pray for successful fundraising and the Lord’s provision even in the midst of the financial crisis and struggles that have been occurring in recent months.*

We understand how difficult it is right now financially especially in America, yet in the midst of struggles you are faithful and committed. We are forever grateful to you and the Lord is richly blessings and touching many lives of “the least of these.” We (the entire Harbor, Melinda and I) thank you so much from the bottom of our hearts.

Blessings, Alex & The Harbor

To financially support The Harbor please make tax deductible check out to CRM (Account #9970) and mail to:

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