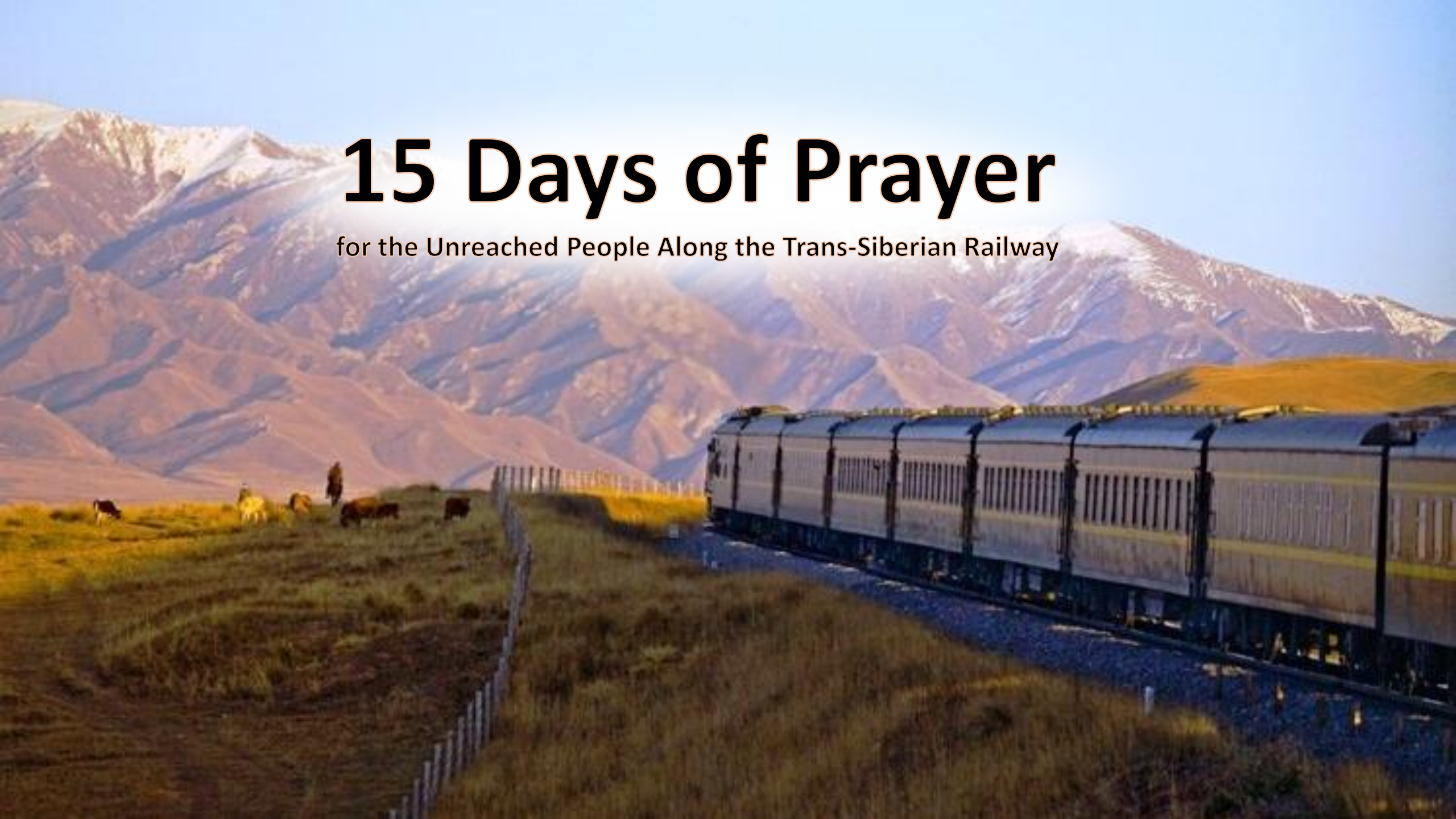


15 Days of Prayer

for the Unreached People Along the Trans-Siberian Railway





Climb aboard the Trans-Siberian Express for an ethnographic experience in Russia! You are about to embark on a 15-day prayer journey across Russia. Each day you will go to visit one of Russia's unreached people groups. You will learn about and pray for the Tatar, Mari, Bashkir, Buryat, Udekhe, and others. All aboard!



Day 1 – Mishar Tatar

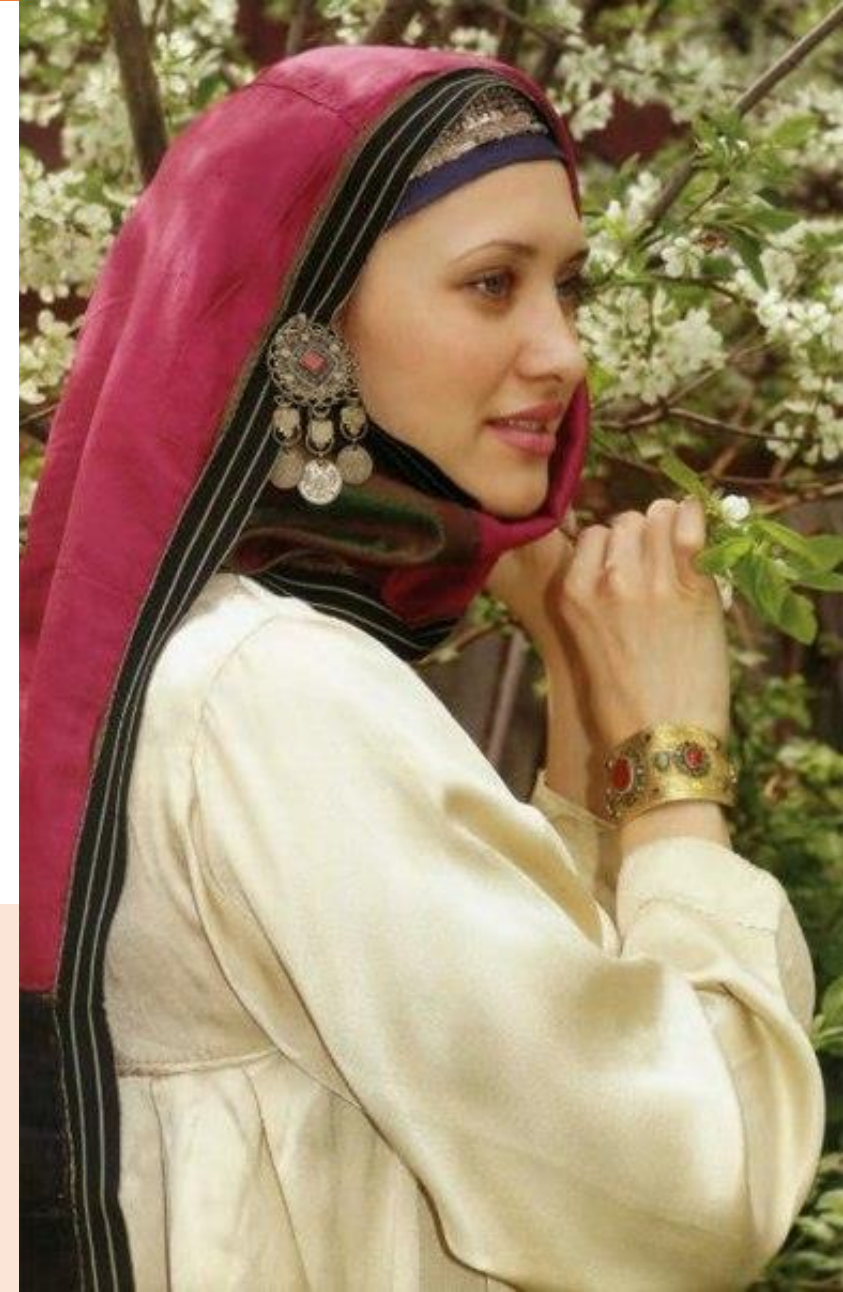
Today we arrive in Nizhny Novgorod! We will rent a bus and travel 188 km southeast to the town of Medyana. The locals refer to this part of Russia as Misharistan.

Mishar villages are huge, clean, and have good quality homes. This district is probably the only one in the region where young people continue to live, instead of leaving for larger cities. If you compare Mishar villages with neighboring villages where Russians live, the statistics are not in favor of the latter.

Mishar Tatars carefully preserve their traditions. You notice it while talking with them or in their kitchens; the Tatars cook perfectly! Nobody has ever left them being hungry. Despite the actions of the Soviet government to eradicate religion in the country, the local Tatars have managed to preserve wooden mosques – unique historical monuments with a 200-year history. But what is more interesting, the Mishar Tatars, not only honor their own tradition, but keep and respect ancient Russian traditions.

Prayer Points:

- Ask the Lord to call those who are willing to go to Russia and share Christ with the Mishar Tatar.
- Pray that God will give missions agencies favor and strategies for reaching these Muslims.
- Ask God to open doors for Christian businessmen, teachers, and other tentmakers to share the Gospel with them.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to soften the hearts of the Mishar Tatar towards Christians so that they will be receptive to the Gospel.
- Ask the Lord to raise up a strong local church among the Mishar Tatar.



Day 2 - Besermyan

Today our train stops in Glazov. We will visit the village of Yukamenskoye 40 km to the south. Here we will meet a community of Besermyan.

The Besermyan are a Turkic people group living in northern Udmurtia. They are believed to be descendants of the Volga Bulgarians. Although they have belonged to the Orthodox Church for many centuries, they do not know the Word of God or the basic truth of Christianity. Many have left the church.

Prayer Points:

- Pray that the Besermyan, having retained their national identity, would know God and live by His Word (Isaiah 54: 4-8).
- Pray for Christians to come in contact with Besermyan and proclaim to them the Savior Jesus Christ.
- Pray that the hearts of the Besermyan will be open to accept the truth of the gospel and share it with their loved ones.



Day 3 – Ural Mari

Our stop today on the Trans-Siberian railroad is Kungur. We then drive 80 km south to the village of Syganka. The people group we will get to know are the Ural Mari.

The Mari of this region migrated to the Urals in the 16th century to avoid forced Christianization. Over the centuries, the Mari of the Urals managed to preserve their unique culture and religion. Despite persistent persecution by Tsarist and Soviet governments, the powerful influence of Russian Orthodoxy, Islam, and atheism; the Mari have continued to pray in secrecy in their holy groves.

Prayer Points:

- Pray that the Ural Mari will know the one true God, who is not limited by the walls of the church.
- Pray for the destruction of spiritual bonds that keep the Ural Mari from knowing and accepting the truth (Matthew 4:16).
- Pray that the Ural Mari people will love and glorify God (Ps. 85: 9-10).
- Pray for the publication of the Bible in the native language of the Ural Mari.



Day 4 – Bashkir

Our stop today on the Trans-Siberian railroad is Yekaterinburg. We then ride the bus 186 km southeast to the Bashkir village of Khalitovo.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries Russians and Tatars began seizing Bashkir land. Prior to this, the Bashkir had lived as nomadic shepherds. They turned to agriculture for survival; and today, most of them still live as farmers. Some, however, have moved into the cities to find industrial work.

The Bashkirs are almost entirely Muslim. In the eighteenth century, the Orthodox Church attempted to convert them to Christianity, but today, very few are Christians.

Prayer Points:

- Pray that God will raise up faithful intercessors who will stand in the gap for the Bashkirs.
- Ask God to strengthen, encourage, and protect the small number Bashkir Christians.
- Pray that God will raise up loving Russian Christians to reach out to their Muslim neighbors.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to soften the hearts of these Muslims towards Christians so that they will be receptive to the Gospel.
- Ask the Lord to raise up strong local churches among the Bashkirs.



Day 5 – Bukharans

Today we arrive to the city of Tyumen. 20 km outside of Tyumen is the town of Yembayevo. Yembayevo was founded by the Siberian Bukharans.

The Bukharans constitute a significant part of the Siberian Tatars. Ethnically they are descendants of Uzbeks, Tajiks, Uyghurs and in lesser degree Kazakhs and Karakalpaks. They were merchants from the Khanate of Bukhara and started to settle in the area in the 17th century. They numbered 23,700 in 1926. Their main areas of settlement were Tobolsk, Tara and Tyumen.

Prayer Points:

- Pray that the Bukharans' eyes and hearts open up to Christianity, even though they are set on their faith of Islam.
- Pray that Russians and Bukharans continue to improve their relationship and that their past struggles will not be repeated.
- Pray that the Bukharans become a reached people group and are able to spread the Gospel to those around them.



Day 6 – Baraba Tatar

Today the Siberian Express travels across the Baraba Steppe. The Baraba Tatars are the indigenous people of the area. The train will stop for us at Ozero-Karach station. We will hike 8 km to the village of Tarmakul.

The Baraba Tatars began to follow Islam in the first half of the fifteenth century. At the time of their conversion, and well after it, the Baraba naturally retained most elements of their native religious practices, which were similar in many respects to the religious traditions characteristic to the native peoples of West and South Siberia, and to many steppe nomad traditions as well. Pre-Islamic elements include shamanism, the use of anthropomorphic figures (qurchaqs) to represent ancestors and other tutelary spirits, burial rituals, and the Barabas clan-based social structure.

Prayer Points:

- Pray that the eyes and hearts of the Baraba Tatars will be open to Christianity, despite the fact that they are confirmed by faith in Islam.
- Pray that the Russian and Tatar peoples will continue to develop relations, and their past wars will not happen again.
- Pray that the Baraba Tatars will become reached and will share the gospel with those around them.



Day 7 – Eushta Tatar

Today's stop on the Trans-Siberian Express is Yurga, Kemerovo Oblast. We will get off the train and travel 62 km north to the village of Kurlek. Kurlek is a native village of the Eushta Tatars.

In the 16th century this region of Siberia was inhabited by different groups of Tatar tribes. Near today's city of Tomsk roamed the Eushta Tatar tribe, at the head of which stood the Prince Toyan. The Tatars were engaged in cattle breeding and hunting, animal husbandry and fishing.

Prayer Points:

- Pray for missionaries to the Eushta Tatars who would tell them the Good News (Luke 24:47).
- Pray that the converted Tatars will have the courage to testify about their Savior Jesus Christ.
- Ask God that the Eushta Tatars can preserve their culture and thereby serve and glorify the Lord.



Day 8 – Chulym

Today our train stops in Bogotol. We will visit the village of Pasechnoye 161 km to the north. Here we will meet a community of Chulym.

The Chulym Tatars first came to the Chulym River when they were driven from their homes in the Sibir Khanate by the forces of Ermak Timofeevich. They used to live along the middle and lower reaches of the Chulym River (tributary of the Ob River).

Although most Tatar are classified as Sunni Muslim, the Chulym seem to be shamanists (believe in an unseen world of gods and demons), a belief probably influenced by their close association with the Khakass people.

Prayer Points:

- Pray that Lord will send forth Christian medical teams and health care workers to live among the Chulym of Russia.
- Ask God to grant wisdom and favor to missions agencies ministering to the Chulym.
- Pray that Russian Bibles will be placed in the hands of the Chulym who understand the Russian language.
- Ask the Lord to bring forth a triumphant Chulym church for the glory of His name!



Day 9 – Tofolar

We have arrived in Nizhneudinsk! Once off the train we will go to the airport to fly by helicopter 93 km south-west to Alygdzher. The local people of Alygdzher are the Tofalar.

The area is known as Tofalaria. Tofalar villages are spread through the Sayan mountains. Traditionally, the Tofalar were hunters of wild game, herders of domesticated reindeer and gatherers of wild food. Their reindeer were the largest in the world. They used reindeer as other peoples use horses: as transportation and as burden-bearing pack animals. They were semi-nomadic, moving their tipis and their families to the mountains in summer and to warmer lower elevation river valleys in the winter.

The Tofalars are largely animists who were superficially Christianized by Russian missionaries in the 19th century.

Prayer Points:

- Pray for Bible translators and Russian believers to have a burden for the Tofalars' souls.
- Pray God would reveal Himself to them.
- Pray for a Christ-centered Church to rise up among them.



Day 10 – Soyot

The Trans-Siberian Express takes us to Irkutsk. We hire private plane to fly us south-west to Orlik. Here we will get acquainted with the Soyot people.

The Soyot people were once part of a cluster of peoples that eventually split into three groups. Then the Soyots themselves were nearly engulfed by the much larger Buryat groups that migrated into their homeland from Mongolia. Approximately 350–400 years ago, the Soyot people moved to Buryatia from the area of Khovsgol Lake. The traditional lifestyle of the Soyot people, like others in the Taiga group, was characterized by reindeer-breeding and hunting but by 2009 most people were living in villages.

Although most Soyot practice Tibetan Buddhism, they are trying to go back to their Shamanistic roots in an effort to revive their dying culture.

Prayer Points:

- Pray for culturally sensitive workers to take Jesus to the Soyot people in such a way that they realize that they can embrace Him without jeopardizing their culture.
- Pray that the Soyot will know the great power of Jesus Christ over the power of spirits.
- Pray that God would send Russian, Buryat & Mongolian Christians to share the Good News of Jesus with the Soyot people.
- Ask God to open the hearts of the Soyot to make them receptive to the Gospel of Christ.
- Ask the Lord to raise up strong local churches among the Soyot.



Day 11 – Buryat

Today our train takes us along the shores of beautiful lake Baikal. This afternoon we arrive in Ulan-Ude. We will look around the city and then visit Ivalginsky Datsan 38 km outside the city.

The Buryats are the largest unreached people group in Siberia. They are originally nomadic herdsman who are closely related to the Mongols. They have incorporated Mongolian, Tibetan, and Chinese elements into their culture, and they have also been influenced by the Russians after living together with them over 350 years.

Buryats practice Tibetan Buddhism and Shamanism. There is a preoccupation with the spirit world, and monks and lamas are called upon to alleviate evil spirits through divination and oracles, sorcery, mediums, and astrology.

Prayer Points:

- Pray for God to raise up Buryat believers to take the Gospel to the many villages where Buryats have never heard the name of Jesus.
- Pray for the completion of the translation of the Old Testament in the Buryat language.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to soften the hearts of Buryats toward Christians so that they will be receptive to the Gospel.
- Pray that Buryats will see and understand the great power and eternal victory of the One True God over the evil spirits.
- Ask the Lord to raise up strong indigenous Buryat churches.



Day 12 – Evenki

Today's stop on the Trans-Siberian Express is Mogacha. We drive 99 km to the north to reach the Evenki village of Tupik.

Today Evenki are divided into two large groups, engaging in different types of economy. There are the hunting and reindeer-breeding Evenki and the horse and cattle pastoral Evenki as well as some farming Evenki.

The Evenki were forced to convert to Orthodox Christianity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As a result, by 1862 there were 9,480 registered Evenki Christians. However, their conversion appears to have been largely superficial. They continued to worship spirits; they also included statues of Jesus among their idols.

Prayer Points:

- Pray that the existing Christians among the Evenks to have a real redemptive faith in God and live by His Word.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will work in the hearts of the Evenks and they will turn to the true God, turning away from worshiping idols (Acts 26:18).
- Pray that all Evenks will have the Scriptures which they can read and learn the truth about God.



Day 13 – Nanai

We have arrived at Khabarovsk! Today we visit the Nanai community of Sikachi-Alyan, 74 km north along the Amur river.

The Nanai traditional belief is shamanism; however, there are some who are Tibetan Buddhist. They believe that the shamans have the power to expel bad spirits by praying to the gods. They worship the spirits of the sun, the moon, the mountains, the water, and the trees. Among all of their beliefs, they believe that the land was once flat until great serpents gouged out the river valleys. They also believe that all of the things in the world, each thing possess its own spirit who wanders independently throughout the universe.

Prayer Points:

- Ask God how you can do your part in breaking down the spiritual strongholds that have kept Siberian people from Him.
- Pray for the Nanai people to know the one true God and that they may receive knowledge of Him.
- Please help the Nanai to recognize the God of all Creation and to worship Him rather than the creatures He has made.
- Pray that God reveals Himself to Siberian people such as the Nanai even as He did to the nomadic nation of Israel and pray that He makes Himself at home in the hearts of the Nanai.



Day 14 – Udekhe

Today our train stops for us in Bikin, Khabarovsk Krai. After getting off the train will walk down to the Bikin river. At the river, there will be boats waiting for us to take us upstream to the village of Krasnyy Yar. Krasnyy Yar is home to about 400 Udekhe.

The Udege speak the Udege language, which belongs to the Tungusic language family. Their religious beliefs include animism, animal worship, and shamanism. The Udege are mainly engaged in hunting, fishing, and ginseng picking. Since the advent of Perestroika, the Udege, led by Pavel Sulyandziga, have been actively involved in the struggle for control over their traditional territories along the Bikin River.

Prayer Points:

- Ask God to preserve the language and culture of the Udekhe people.
- Pray that God will send workers to live among the Udekhe and share the good news of Jesus Christ with them.
- Ask God to open the hearts and minds of the Udekhe people to believe and accept the Truth of Jesus Christ and to know the power of the One True God.
- Ask God to establish a strong, healthy church in each of the 9 Udekhe settlements.
- Pray that God would raise up Prayer warriors on behalf of the Udekhe people.
- Pray that there will soon be gospel recordings and Bible portions available in the heart language of the Udekhe.



Day 15 – Taz

Vladivostok! We have reached the end of the Trans-Siberian Railway. We have traveled 9288 km by train and 1990 km by auto. But our journey is not finished. Now we will go to the airport and catch a short flight to Kavalerova. From the Kavalerova airport we will drive 130 km south to the town of Михайловка. Here is where the largest community of Taz people live.

In the mid-19th century, when the Chinese and later the Russians appeared in present-day Primorsky Territory, these lands were inhabited by among others, the Nanai, Udege and Oroch peoples. An outcome of this interaction is the Tazy people, a group that resulted from mixed marriages between the Chinese and native peoples of the area. Today just 276 people identify with this group.

Traditional religious practices of the Taz are a combination of Buddhism and the Chinese cult of ancestors. They believe that a person has ninety-nine alternately dying souls.

Prayer Points:

- Pray for the preservation of this small people group and for them to know the one true God.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will work in the hearts of the Taz and that they will be ready to receive the Good News of Jesus Christ.
- Pray for workers to evangelize among the Taz and that they will gladly receive the gospel.
- Pray that the testimony about Jesus will bring forth the fruit of repentance and life in the worship of God.

