

August 2011

CAUCASUS

2011
Conference:
"Rejoice In
The Lord, O
My Soul"



2011 CAUCASUS CONFERENCE

Over 50 disciples from the countries of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan met in an old resort near the Black Sea in Western Georgia for their annual conference entitled this year: "Rejoice In The Lord, O My Soul."

Barrett O'Connell (from the Houston Church) and myself departed from Dallas on Monday, August 1st, and after a long journey with flights and layovers we arrived on Wednesday, August 3rd at 3am in Tbilisi, Georgia. We were met by Slava Sarkisov, originally from Georgia, who is a region leader from the St. Petersburg Church.

After a little rest we spent the day with Slava and his wife, Natasha, walking around the beautiful city of Tbilisi, Georgia. It is mixed with both old and modern buildings and has a very rich history. The most memorable moment was climbing up to an old fortress on top of a mountain overlooking the city. What an amazing view (shown above), and we were inspired to pray for the city and the upcoming conference.

On Thursday, August 4th we drove with them in a taxi to the site of the conference (6 hour drive through the Georgia countryside) at an old resort located near the Black Sea.

Disciples arrived throughout the day and we enjoyed getting to meet many new disciples from the 6 churches represented. There were also guests from Latvia and Ukraine who wanted to be part of the conference and connect with their old friends.

It was great being able to have all meals together in the banquet hall during the conference and enjoy the Georgian food and great fellowship. After the first dinner we had the opening of the conference with some great worship and details of the schedule. It was so inspiring to see disciples from three countries (at war with each other) being one family.



Opening of the Conference

Over 50 disciples from the countries of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan came together for this year's conference.

GEORGIA



Memories of the Conference

- 1) Baptism of new sister from the Tbilisi Church in the Black Sea during the conference.
- 2) Picture of Misha, Barrett and Derik in the city of Batumi near the Black Sea.
- 3) Last meal together with the leaders and their families (included some wine from one of the brother's own vineyards).

On Friday, we continued the conference after breakfast. After some worship, Barrett shared (I translated) about Houston and himself. I then did a lesson based on the theme of the conference. They had d-groups and then had separate lessons for the marrieds and singles.

After lunch they had free time which was great to have such intimate fellowship. These churches are very loving toward one another and really enjoy their time together.

In the evening we had a great discussion on parenting. It is very refreshing to see the children and adults having really good interaction with each other. There were a lot of needs in the areas of family devotionals, spiritual leadership, and training of their children.

Later they had a night of dancing and great fellowship. Even Barrett and myself were encouraged to join them, learning some of their cultural dance moves.

On Saturday, we continued after breakfast with a combined lesson from three of the brothers: Alik, Kolya, and Misha. Later, Slava did a great lesson on humility with the leadership of all the churches.

After lunch we headed to the Black Sea for some free time, and to celebrate the baptism of a new sister from the Tbilisi church.

Later that evening we came together for a night of worship and prayer. I was really moved by the hearts of the disciples as they prayed for their churches and all the needs of the disciples. They really have the mission on their hearts and want to see many more people become

disciples despite some of the religious, political, and social challenges they face.

On Sunday, we closed out the conference with a communion service. I did a lesson on "Faith" in hopes to inspire them to really believe God can do great things through them.

In the afternoon, Misha took Barrett, a couple from Riga, and myself on an excursion to the port city of Batumi and the border between Turkey and Georgia. Of particular inspiration was a tour of an old Roman fortress that was built before Christ. We also saw a monument in honor of St. Andrew (the apostle) who supposedly was the first to come the region of Georgia. Later that night they had a concert in which each church did many performances of singing, skits, and dancing. They are very talented and really enjoyed this time together. Many stayed for great fellowship and some returned home throughout the day. There were tears and hugs each time they said their goodbyes.

The leaders stayed over on Monday to have a great time of prayer, fellowship, lessons, and planning. It was a great time, and I felt we were able to work through many group and individual conflicts. The unity is getting stronger and stronger despite the logistical challenges. They have needs, but are not "needy." They are so grateful and loving and really want to see great things happen in their cities and countries. We felt even more encouraged by them and their love, then they expressed about us being an encouragement to them. Continue to pray for the disciples in the Caucasus churches.



From Left to Right: Slava (St. Petersburg, Russia), Misha (Tbilisi, Georgia), Alik (Baku, Azerbaijan), Reso (Kakhi, Azerbaijan), Kolya (Erevan, Armenia), Barrett (Houston, TX) and Derik (Dallas, TX).