



August 2008 Story
HOPE Christian Family Counseling Center
St. Petersburg, Russia

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia continues to experience incredible economic crises. The human impact has been immense. Fundamental freedoms have been recognized, but because of economic troubles, women, children and struggling families often have been stranded by a tide of progress that has swept past them. When faced with the realities of poverty-level income, high rent and crowded living conditions, many pregnant women feel that abortion is their only option and more than 60% of pregnancies in Russia end in abortion. Often the children who survive are plagued by living conditions below poverty levels. As one of the most powerless groups in society, children bear much of the physical and emotional cost of poverty in a society that devalues life.

God has opened doors for the church to extend physical and spiritual help in St. Petersburg. To help combat a declining birthrate, the Russian government recently has welcomed pro-life outreach. HOPE Christian Family Counseling Center serves the community by defending the sanctity of human life in order to reduce the abortion rate in St. Petersburg. Since 1993, HOPE, a Lutheran Counseling Center, has served more than 15,000 clients at its two offices housed in government maternity clinics. In 2005, HOPE Center began offering its free, certified computer training class to improve the earning capacity of many of its clients. In addition to computers, students study the fundamentals of the Christian faith through Luther's catechism. HOPE Center has opened an addition counseling center at St. Michael's Church, a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Russia.

The primary work of HOPE Christian Family Counseling Center includes:

- Pro-life counseling and support of women
- Free pregnancy tests
- Christian family and marriage counseling
- Job assistance and computer training classes
- Youth presentations on chastity
- Proclamation of the Christian faith as students study the fundamentals of faith through Luther's catechism
- Sanctity of life seminars and forums to churches and seminary students

Volunteers and staff from our partner Lutheran churches have been meeting the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of Russian women, children and families. The LWML mission grant of \$36,000 will allow HOPE to continue this vital ministry.