



EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT

WINTER 1998

VOL. 6, NO. 1

A Conference That Was a Longtime Dream Come True

In the wake of glasnost and perestroika and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, it is increasingly evident that one of the most neglected subjects among Evangelical Protestants is the role of women in the life of the church and in evangelism. By all accounts women constitute the majority, sometimes the vast majority, of worshipers in the former Soviet Union. But little has been written on the particular needs or gifts of women in the church or how women might be assisted in reaching other women for Christ.

Over the past decade *EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT* editor Mark Elliott had periodic conversations on this subject with Anita Deyneka, director of research for Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries, known in Russia as the Association for Spiritual Renewal. Dr. Deyneka offered encouragement to Dr. Elliott through a number of grant proposals which were unsuccessful, and gave advice in preparing the two grant proposals that ultimately were successful in 1996, one from a foundation that prefers to remain anonymous, and one from the British Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge. Dr. Deyneka also recommended Mrs. Galina Obrovets as conference coordinator, which proved to be an excellent choice. For a proposed conference on women's ministries Dr. Elliott sought participation from a broad range of Evangelical churches, consisting primarily of presentations by women from Russia and other post-Soviet republics. Mrs. Obrovets, with her energy, organizational skills, and gift of diplomacy, was a tremendous help in realizing both these goals.

Sixty-three women from eight former Soviet republics, representing 12 denominations, met in Moscow, 6-8 June 1997, in what appears to have been Russia's first-ever interdenominational women's conference on evangelism. A total of 32 women shared reports on a remarkable variety of activities aimed at spreading the gospel in Russia and in the other former Soviet republics.

Highlights included an encouraging emphasis upon mutual love and understanding across denominational lines, vocal appreciation for the reduction in the sense of isolation many women felt in their ministries, and an extraordinary eagerness to learn and to share as much as possible about the best

means to witness and work for the Kingdom. (Very few women left before the end of the conference, and the vast majority remained for several hours after the program was scheduled to have ended.) Those involved in planning the conference hope that it will serve as a catalyst for ongoing evangelistic networking among women of the former Soviet Union across denominational lines.

Elizabeth Carlson, a journalist who previously resided in Moscow for several years, assisting her husband, Blair, prepare for Billy Graham's 1992 Moscow crusade, served as a media observer at the conference. Her summary of the benefits of the conference reads as follows: 1. the opportunity for

(continued on page 2)

WOMEN in MINISTRY

From All Angles

Women's Conference Papers Published

The 70-page book, *Rol' khristianki v sovremennom obshchestve [The Role of a Christian Woman in Contemporary Society]*, which provides the basis for this theme issue on women and evangelism, includes 28 articles written by women in the former Soviet Union working in a variety of ministries. It is available in Moscow at the Association for Spiritual Renewal Bookstore.

For ordering information, please contact:

Assotsiatsiya "Dukhovnoye Vozrozhdeniye"
Kv. 29-30 Novye Cheryemushki
Ul. Nametkina, korpus 5
Moscow 117420
Tel: 7-095-719-7945
Fax: 7-095-719-7890
E-mail: nadp@asr.ru
<http://www.asr.ru>

In the U.S., it is available for \$4.00, plus \$3.00 postage and handling, from:

Institute for East-West Christian Studies
Wheaton College
Wheaton, IL 60187
Tel: 630-752-5917
Fax: 630-752-5916
E-mail: melliott@wheaton.edu

In This Issue

Women Caring for Body and Soul

PAGES 5-8

In Keeping with Tradition

PAGES 9-10

New Paths

PAGES 11-14

participants to establish personal contacts and networks; 2. the cross-pollination of resources, materials, ideas, and information across denominational boundaries; and 3. the energizing effect of sharing personal testimonies and experiences.

Conference presentations ran the spectrum from a woman engaged in a quiet but effective witness to prisoners through letters (who movingly confided she had never spoken in public before), to an array

of exceptionally articulate presentations by women of obvious talents and accomplishments, including an actress, a Ministry of Foreign Affairs employee, a Ph.D. in history, an editor, a radio broadcaster, a psychologist, a nurse, and a number of evangelists. Two speakers from Central Asia, one

Russian and one Uzbek, told such stories of faith under the fire of blatant persecution that all assembled were in awe of God's work through them. These two courageous women simply have refused to be cowed, and boldly share their witness despite opposition from Muslims, Communists, and some brothers in their own churches.

All in attendance at this conference felt richer for having learned how others are witnessing to their faith and working for the Kingdom in very difficult circumstances. Many more should benefit from the distribution of published papers from the conference. Wheaton College's Institute for East-West Christian Studies and the Evangelical women of the former Soviet Union who participated in this historic gathering hope that readers of the *EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT* will be encouraged and inspired by the following reports of courageous and creative women witnessing and working for Christ's Kingdom. ♦

Editor's Note: The EAST-WEST CHURCH AND MINISTRY REPORT would like to thank Michael Denner, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literature, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL, for his capable translation work for this theme issue.

Participation by Denomination

Evangelical	
Christian-Baptist	29
Evangelical Lutheran	1
Ingrian Lutheran	2
Mennonite	2
Methodist	8
Nazarene	2
Nondenominational	5
Orthodox	1
Presbyterian	5
Pentecostal	7
Salvation Army	2
Seventh-day Adventist	2

Participation by Republic

Armenia	1
Belarus	2
Georgia	1
Latvia	1
Moldova	1
Russia	55
Ukraine	3
Uzbekistan	2

WOMEN in MINISTRY

From All Angles

CONFERENCE INTRODUCTION • 6 JUNE 1997

Women's Ministry and a Tale of Two Barbaras

Mark Elliott

Three women, including Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Mary Magdalene, were the last mourners to depart from Golgotha following Christ's crucifixion. And Mary Magdalene was the first to discover the empty tomb. Thus, devoted women with broken hearts were the final witnesses of Jesus' death and the first to encounter the empty tomb, which allows all women and men to proclaim "Christ is Risen!" Furthermore, Jesus' first appearance following his resurrection was to Mary Magdalene. She who declared, "I have seen the Lord," was the first to testify to the reality of the resurrection (John 20:18).

Women also figured prominently in the origins of the Evangelical movement in Russia. Princess Elizaveta Chertkova, mother of a prominent supporter of Tolstoy, first invited Lord Radstock to preach in St. Petersburg in her palace. Princess Sophia Lieven and many other women of high society became believers under the preaching of Lord Radstock, opened their homes to Evangelical worship, and sponsored a remarkable array of compassionate ministries in the capital.

And then in the twentieth century, who can but

marvel at the spiritual fortitude, exceptional organizational skills, and courage of the women who established the Baptist Council of Prisoners' Relatives? In the late 1960s and in the 1970s it was one of the most effective groups to challenge Soviet atheism and to publicize in the West the fate of those who would not forswear their faith. And today, as well, women in Evangelical churches are actively involved in a great range of evangelistic outreaches which, however, are not widely recognized. More needs to be done to encourage the work of women in the church and in evangelism.

Some estimates suggest that as many as 80 percent of new converts in the former Soviet Union are women. As a result, concerted prayer and greater financial support from all believers is needed for the evangelistic and compassionate ministries of women, and specifically for more literature addressing the needs and burdens of women. Women of the church have much to offer, but Evangelical churches and Western missions both are struggling to understand the unique needs of women and how best to incorporate women into Christian service in

a rapidly changing society. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, women have been much more active in outreach, but resources are still lacking, as is training, support, and encouragement.

A story of two women named Barbara may prove instructive. I have a good friend who is a highly educated Russian believer, doing a great deal of creative evangelistic outreach through his church and through his professional work. But my Christian brother, whose testimony has inspired me so much personally, disappoints me in one respect, because he buys Barbie dolls for his daughter. I worry for any child who is encouraged to think of a Barbie doll as her heroine—this myth of the perfect figure, with limitless clothes, perpetual youth, and the perfect man: muscle-bound Ken. This is not reality and I believe it is not Christian to encourage our daughters to dream about Barbie figures, Barbie beauty, and Barbie wealth, which, as Jesus said, will all pass away.

In this conference we represent a great variety of Evangelical churches; but where we can, we should take inspiration from examples of selfless love in the Orthodox tradition as well, which is so much a part of Russian history and culture. In this case I am thinking of St. Barbara, one of the “new martyrs” of the twentieth century. Many of us know of the Communists’ murder of the Grand Duchess Elizaveta Fyodorovna in 1918, sister of Empress Alexandra and widow of Tsar Nicholas II’s uncle, the Grand Duke Sergei, police chief of Moscow. He was killed in 1905 by a terrorist’s bomb, with his wife as eyewitness. Grand Duchess Elizaveta Fyodorovna founded the Convent of Sts. Martha and Mary in Moscow. She deserves our respect for turning her

personal tragedy not into a sea of bitterness, but into a wave of diverse and creative ministries for Moscow’s poor, especially the city’s destitute young girls. But martyred alongside Elizaveta Fyodorovna on 18 July 1918 was her coworker, Barbara, who chose not to leave the side of the Grand Duchess when the Bolsheviks came to arrest her.

Evangelicals certainly have differences with Orthodox. But if we look at the examples of these two Barbaras, we all will want our daughters to appreciate the self-sacrifice and compassion of Barbara of the Convent of Sts. Martha and Mary, and we will want our daughters to discover the lie behind the idol of shop-window Barbie dolls. And beyond the Barbara martyred by Bolsheviks, we have the even better example of the namesakes of her convent. Because in Martha and Mary, whom the great Russian artist Nesterof painted in the convent’s famous church, we have the heart for service and the heart for devotion, which in combination exemplify the model Christian life for every believer.

In 1914, nearly on the eve of Communism, British writer Stephen Graham worshiped in the Convent Church of Martha and Mary and was inspired to title his 1915 survey of Russian religious life, *The Way of Martha and The Way of Mary*. In Communism’s wake part of the task of every believing woman—and every believing man—is to see how best to combine the service of Martha and the devotion of Mary. ♦

Mark Elliott is editor of the EAST-WEST CHURCH AND MINISTRY REPORT.

Difficulties for Women in Russia Are On the Increase

Barbara Evans Clements

Editor’s Note: While the author did not participate in the Moscow women’s conference, June 1997, her insights provide valuable background on the overall situation of women in Russia today.

The Soviet Union came to an end in December 1991. Change has continued since then in Russia, with very mixed results. In general, the news for women—farm workers and city-dwellers, Siberians and Muscovites—has not been good. They have lost, or are in danger of losing, many of the benefits of the old Soviet system without gaining much from the new society. Their basic problem—too many burdens and too few opportunities—has not changed at all. In fact, for many individual women, it has only gotten worse.

The Feminization of Poverty

Women throughout Russia are suffering because the economy has continued to deteriorate. A few

people have benefited from the new entrepreneurial opportunities, but the great majority of the population has only seen life become more difficult. Rampant inflation wiped out savings. Government financing of such amenities as vacation hotels on the Black Sea has dried up. There are fewer lines at the shops now, but this is mainly because most people cannot afford to buy the fancy imported goods for sale there. Life is particularly hard for the millions of single, older women trying to survive on tiny pensions. Meanwhile, national funding for social services, such as day care and medical clinics, has been cut, throwing responsibility for these programs onto local governments already struggling to make ends meet.

It is not Christian to encourage our daughters to dream about Barbie figures, Barbie beauty, and Barbie wealth, which, as Jesus said, will all pass away.

**WOMEN in
MINISTRY**

**From All
Angles**

Despite their history of participating in the labor force, despite their high levels of education and training, women have been much more likely to lose their jobs than men.

Discrimination Against Women

The economic collapse is also worsening discrimination against women. Despite their history of participating in the labor force, despite their high levels of education and training, women have been much more likely to lose their jobs than men. Russian statisticians estimate that more than 70 percent of those workers laid off in the current restructuring of government departments and factories are women. Women are less likely than men to be admitted to retraining programs. Some observers also have charged that many women still working have taken pay cuts and are now paid significantly less than men for the same work. Nor are great opportunities available in the new enterprises opening up in Russia. Only ten percent of the new business owners are women. Foreign companies openly discriminate against women, particularly older ones, in hiring.¹

Men in Power

Politically, men still dominate. Boris Yeltsin's cabinet and the leaders of the opposition parties that so bitterly oppose him are all men. In the earliest of the new legislatures established in Russia, the Baltics, Ukraine, the Caucasus, and Central Asia, female representation was minuscule, no more than five percent. As troubling was a widespread sense among Russia's citizens that women did not belong in politics. People told pollsters that women had disgraced themselves by voting for the Party line in the old, rubber-stamp Soviet parliaments. The fact that all the male delegates to those organizations had voted as they were told did not seem to disqualify men from office-holding.

The prejudice against women in power grew out of deeply held beliefs about women in Russian culture. Before the revolution, Russians had believed that women should tend to their families and leave running society to men. Men were rational and suited to the hurly-burly of politics; women were gentle and fulfilled when at home. Communists had disputed these ideas, arguing instead that women should be involved in every aspect of society. The Soviet government never provided the support women needed to make this vision a reality, and it never promoted women to the top of the Party. But it had never renounced the idea that women should be equal either. Once communism collapsed, the old ideas about the fundamental differences between women and men seemed to reassert themselves, strengthened now by the widespread disillusionment with communism's failures. Rejection of communism led many women to reject notions of women's equality they associated with it, and turn inward, concentrating on their families. As the economy worsened and the

politicians fought with one another, this made a good deal of sense anyway.

Women Taking the Initiative

Some women have challenged the new discrimination, however, and they may hold the key to the future. Tens of thousands of women have been setting up self-help groups, a very promising development in a nation where the leaders have long discouraged independent organizations. There are religious societies, support groups for the unemployed, clubs for soldiers' wives, professional organizations for women in business or academics, neighborhood or city-wide associations promoting economic development or providing social services. The Association of Small Towns promotes economic development by marketing local crafts, many of which are made by women. The biggest of all these women-centered organizations is the Union of Women of Russia, the group that sponsored the new political party, Women of Russia. It has concentrated on finding work for the unemployed as well as on establishing itself as a national umbrella organization that will put all the women's groups in touch with one another.

The situation of women in Russia today makes one ask, "Has the country really had a revolution?" A new political system has yet to stabilize. Economic reform is ongoing, but slow, and its major effects to date have worsened women's lives. Although communism, the Soviet Union's official system, has fallen into disgrace, no new belief system has emerged to take its place. In the void old ideas about women are pushing back into prominence. Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, the ultranationalist member of Parliament, announced his solution to women's problems: *Our party will find husbands for all unmarried women.*²

Consequently the realities of women's lives in today's Russia are not pleasant ones. Political freedom rings hollow when democratically elected leaders cannot solve the nation's problems any better than the communists could. Most women are responding in a time-honored Russian way: They hunker down and take pride in coping with the demands of everyday life. But a few are arguing that women should apply their abilities to the public world, should vote and run for office, should clean up Russia. The women of Russia are not so different from women all over the world. In their diversity of culture, perspective, and ability to cope, they are far more interesting than any simple image that might be created from myth or illusion. ♦

Endnotes

¹*New York Times*, 17 April 1994, 1; Nadezhda Os'minina, "Russia Is Masculine in Gender," *Woman Worker*, May 1993, 10-11; Yevgenia Albats, "Russia: Women on the Edge," Ms., March-April 1994, 12.

²Albats, "Russia: Women on the Edge," 15.

Excerpt reprinted with permission from *Reemerging Russia, Search for Identity*, ed. by Max J. Okenfuss and Cheryl D. Roberts (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 107-13.

Dr. Barbara Evans Clements is professor of history at the University of Akron, Akron, OH. She completed a Ph.D. from Duke University in 1971. She is the author of *Russia's Women: Accommodation, Resistance, Transformation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), and *Bolshevik Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

The Christian Women's Association "Life" in Belarus

Miroslava I. Shlyazhko

The role of a woman is unique and has its own special beauty. That is why a woman who understands the role defined for her by God experiences satisfaction. She leads a fulfilled life. She enjoys her duties. This is the sort of woman that is described in Proverbs 31:10 as being "worth far more than rubies."

There are more than fifteen hundred people in our fellowship, Grace Pentecostal Church, of which the majority are women. And the majority of these serve God using the talents which the Lord has given them. About four years ago, God prompted several of our sisters to unite—to pray together, work together, and fellowship together. Of course, there were a lot of mistakes in the beginning, but the blessing received was greater. God led us along His path and we endeavored to be attentive to the voice of the Holy Spirit. We learned to wait and to rely and set our hopes not on our own strength, but on His power and guidance.

Fellowship with other Christian women is very important for those new to the faith. At such times, when they discuss the problems and proper behavior of Christian women in the home and at church, these new believers begin to understand that while receiving a blessing is all very well, giving of themselves and their own time is even better. They realize that, having received the love of Christ, they must strive to give it to those who are in the world.

Help for the Needy

What first motivated our sisters was a desire to help the needy. (Our church does not receive any humanitarian aid.) This help has been realized in our church in several ways. First, material help is offered to members of our church who are in need—invalids, pensioners, and the unemployed. The sisters and the church council examine carefully the situation of each needy person and, as necessary, distribute funds from the church's accounts.

Secondly, we help by operating a clothing exchange. So much used clothing is given to us that we have enough not only for the needy in our church, but also enough to distribute to orphanages, to small village churches, and to those who have recently been released from prison. From time to time, even those far from faith come to us for clothing, and we find them suitable clothing as well. We want everyone to know that the Christian church is founded on care and love.

Medical Ministry

Our church also sponsors a clinic run by a sister who is a cardiologist, along with two nurses.

Although we do not have much medicine, people—especially the elderly—like to seek assistance here. Here they find people who will listen and pray for them. And this, as experience has amply shown, is often more important than medicine. We also have organized church visits to hospitals.

It is a great joy for the church when a baby is born. We have organized a service for newborns so that mothers are never left alone with their problems. The leaders of our home meetings and our knitting group take part in this service. Elderly women on pension make wonderful socks, booties, caps, and shirts out of old and useless scraps. Children's clothing, food, and bottles are collected and distributed.

Christian Education

We also conduct work in the area of Christian education. This work began (let this not seem strange) with gynecological examinations. It was here that we found 14- and 15-year-old girls who had come for abortions. It was precisely this discovery that caused us to go to the schools to hold discussions about Christian values. Work among youth is not easy. But the sisters, moved by the Holy Spirit, believe that the sowing of the Word among these young people will sooner or later take root. We also conduct evangelistic services at children's clinics. Here sisters distribute Christian literature, hoping that in it children will find role models and the meaning of life.

Concern for Others

God desires that each Christian show true love and care towards people. We must pray that God would direct our work and subordinate our labor and desire to His will. Missionary to India Dr. E. Stanley Jones once said, "Life is awareness." Life that exists on a lower level develops only awareness of itself. The higher we go up the scale of existence, the wider and deeper our awareness becomes. Jones explains: "You can discern how far up the ladder of awareness you've climbed by asking yourself the question, 'How much do I concern myself about others?'" If we see only ourselves and our own problems, we will always be unhappy. Our prayer is for God to always make us aware and to teach us what to say and how to help our neighbor. ♦

Miroslava Ivanovna Shlyazhko was born in 1959 in Ivatsevichi, Minsk region, Belarus. Raised in a Christian family, she completed one year of a Bible institute. She now administers social programs at Grace Pentecostal Church.

**WOMEN in
MINISTRY**

**Caring for
Body
& Soul**

We want everyone to know that the Christian church is founded on care and love.

Witnessing to Prisoners Through Letter Writing

Nadezhda V. Sheludyakova

I was born into a Christian family, but I did not accept Christ into my heart as my personal Savior until April 1985. I truly desired to make up for the time I lost when I lived only for myself. And God answered my prayer for labor in his fields. In August 1993, I was invited to answer letters from people who wrote with questions about spiritual matters. After a long period of enforced atheism, people knew almost nothing about God. Practically every letter was filled with the same questions: Who is God? Who is Christ? How can I see, understand, and feel Him? How do I become a Christian? How do I pray to God? Where can I get prayer books?

Political freedom in Russia was accompanied by the arrival of spiritual literature. God's Word penetrated to every corner of our massive country. The Good News reached even prisoners. Light appeared at the end of the tunnel for many of them when they learned that Christ shed his blood for even them. I received letters—some interesting, some "difficult"—from prisoners. Often I did not know how to answer. I would kneel down with a letter and ask for help from the One who had entrusted this work to me. The Lord miraculously put thoughts and words into my mind.

An Udmurt man once sent me a petition (along with a request to send it on to the President) in which he asked that the period of his incarceration be reexamined. After reading his letter, I suggested that he read the Bible story about Joseph and entrust

himself into the Lord's hands. To my joy, he did this after having realistically assessed his own situation.

In some letters, no questions are asked, and nothing is requested. These letters are from those who have been sentenced to capital punishment. Four death-row convicts from the Tashkent region sent me a letter: "We have discovered the love of Christ, and have accepted his words into our hearts, and we have made a covenant with God! Our lives have come to an end, but we are not a bit embittered, for Christ has taken us into His embrace."

There are touching letters from elderly people who have received religious literature and to whom God has revealed Himself. In Christ they find consolation and hope during a time particularly difficult for the elderly.

I have written to many people and told them that God loves them so much that he uses every possible means—even prison—to save their immortal souls. And the majority of people agree with me. For example, I corresponded with one prisoner from Rybinsk. When he began to read the Bible, God was revealed to him as a loving Savior, and the convict accepted Him into his heart. The convict's mother visited her son in prison and through his witnessing she, too, came to God, and through her, her sister learned about the Lord. How happy was this man and his family!

It is clear in the letters that our people are searching for God, but it is also apparent that the devil is not sleeping. Many-faced, false teachings lead people astray. In order to oppose this, we must pray for the preaching of the Gospel—from the pulpit, on the streets, in letters, and in everyday conversation. ♦

I kneel down with a letter and ask for help from the One who entrusted this work to me.

Nadezhda Vasilyevna Sheludyakova was born in 1938 in a Christian home in Bykhov, Mogilev region. She accepted Christ after the death of her husband in 1985 and now works for the Bible League, a Christian charitable organization.

MARINA KARETNIKOVA

Making Faith a Reasonable Choice

Elizabeth Carlson

Marina Karetnikova, a professor and historian from St. Petersburg, spoke with commanding authority at the June 1997 women's conference in Moscow: "We cannot only sit and study the Bible—this is not enough. Three things are also necessary—work, prayer, and education." Professor Karetnikova is an educator. A solid, white-haired woman of nearly seventy, she loves to challenge Christians to use their minds as well as their hearts. Many atheists come to faith through discussions, she reminded us. We must not be afraid of debate.

Professor Karetnikova comes from a family of

intellectuals. Her mother knew Stalin personally and gave him a book, the story of a conversion in the Volga region. "It was kept in the archives for 40 years," she told us passionately, implying that it must have been valued by this man who was outwardly devoted to atheism.

"I came to the church as an old woman," she said, but she has made up for lost time. She uses her considerable experience in education to teach the Bible. Beginning with just 25 people, soon 150 were crowding her apartment to study the Scriptures. They started with a children's Bible, simple to

understand. Little by little she gathered more materials. One hundred staff members now use such materials in libraries all over St. Petersburg, giving personal direction to seekers. Because of Marina Karetnikova, libraries of Christian resources have been established in prisons, hospitals, factories, and even state libraries.

Professor Karetnikova exhorted like a grandmother. We must become familiar with all

types of literature if we are to point people to God. "We must show our children how a Bible story applies to their lives, not just tell them a lot of stories." Her message is straightforward: "We need to think and analyze as Christians. We must be aware of the world." ♦

Elizabeth Carlson is a journalist, wife, and mother, from Minneapolis, MN. She lived in Moscow from 1991 to 1993.

Supporting Families of Alcoholics

Nina V. Belyakova

An epidemic of Alcohol

Christian women who have family members who drink find it far from easy to cope. In Russia, everyone drinks. Men drink; women drink; children drink. They drink out of grief; they drink because they're happy. Statistics show that, due to alcoholism, our country is at risk genetically. Every fifth person is an alcoholic. Our countryside and villages are well-known for their alcoholism. The number of drug addicts is rising with terrible swiftness, and includes schoolchildren and youth. Numerous children are born drug addicts because their parents are drug users. Furthermore, the number of people who suffer from AIDS is increasing.

Christian women are ashamed of their alcoholic husbands. They pass anonymous notes forward at church requesting prayer for them, as is the practice in traditional Russian Protestant churches. They suffer moral insults and physical abuse, and are left practically without recourse. The police rarely interfere, and when they do, it usually takes the form of the husbands being beaten, which usually leads to their being rendered incapable of working. Consequently, even more spiteful relationships emerge within families. Treatment for alcoholism exists, of course. But in the first place, it must begin with the patient's own desire. And in the second place, it is very expensive and, therefore, inaccessible to the majority of Christian and non-Christian families alike.

The Twelve-Step Program

Mothers and children don't have a chance to hide when the alcoholic is particularly aggressive, and the whole family lives in fear. It is painful to see sisters suffering from the effects of an alcoholic or drug addict who deeply believe that this is simply their cross to bear and that no help is possible besides fasting and praying. Of course, prayer plays a huge role in the process of recovery. But, fortunately, there is also psychological help, including the Twelve-Step Program. In this program, people suffering from the same dependency admit their inability to deal with the problem. They give themselves over entirely into God's hands and allow Him to work in every step, in

complete trust and submission, in the midst of this difficult environment. Honesty and courage lead to success in such circumstances.

The facts given to family members during the process of instruction are the main tools for cooperation with the alcoholic or addict. Support groups like these meet on the premises of the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists and at Christian medical associations. There is already help for the dependents themselves. A group of brothers and sisters who were cured of alcoholism by the Lord have undergone training in a seminar for the Twelve-Step Program. We believe that "The Son of man came to seek and to save what was lost" (Matthew 18:11).

Encouragement for Women

Although we sisters are but powerless vessels, nonetheless we are strong in our love, endurance, and faith. And the Lord, in order to bring about His plan of saving alcoholics and addicts, calls forth sisters who live in such families "to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual act of worship" (Romans 12:1). Of course, this does not mean to allow yourself to be abused by an alcoholic.

The renewal of the mind, and the recognition of God's will as "good, pleasing, and perfect" (Romans 12:2), leads to unusual results: the curing of husbands and wives of alcoholism and drug addiction and the healing of marriages. And Christ's church will be filled with the souls of those who were at the roadside.

I want to encourage sisters who have problems like these: Don't grumble; don't lose heart. On the contrary, search for answers to the questions: "Why did You choose me, Lord? What did you want to say to me on this path?" And then we can say, like the psalmist David: "The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation" (Psalm 118:14). ♦

Nina Vladimirovna Belyakova was born in 1948. She was born into a family of believers, but at the age of 15 left the church. After many years of searching and wandering, she became a Christian in Tallinn in 1972. A nurse by training, she does Christian work at Emmanuel Pentecostal Church, in the Christian Medical Association, and in support groups for family members of alcoholics.

**WOMEN in
MINISTRY**
**Caring for
Body
& Soul**

Christian women are ashamed of their alcoholic husbands. They suffer moral insults and physical abuse, and are left practically without recourse.

A Witness for Christ Through Compassionate Ministries

Yelena Ya. Tishchenko

Socially Disadvantaged Women and Girls

Today Russia faces extremely difficult economic conditions, especially in industrial regions like Yekaterinburg. Many military-industrial factories have closed down and left people without work. Women are the first to be dismissed from work, and it is significantly more difficult for them to find new work than for men. Economic instability has led to a sharp increase in the number of crimes committed by women. As a result, women's pretrial holding jails and penal colonies are filled to overflowing. The conditions there are simply inhuman.

Our Organization

In 1996 in the Sverdlovsk region representatives of Methodist, Seventh-day Adventist, Russian Orthodox, Baptist, and New Life (Charismatic) churches created the organization "Christian Women." The main activities of the organization include religion classes in children's hospitals; help for blind children, handicapped youth, and children needing psychiatric services; art instruction for gifted children from poor families; and work with women and children in prison.

The guiding principle of our organization is this: "Women who are deprived of freedom are not deprived of the right to a human life!" In our region there is a pretrial holding jail with more than one thousand women and girls, ages 14 to 70, and a penal colony for 900 women. Several years ago there were approximately 700 convicts total.

Prison Conditions

Among those charged with crimes who are being held in the pretrial holding unit, there are usually four to six pregnant women and three to five women nursing children born during their incarceration. The conditions that the women live in would horrify anyone. Up to 30 women are housed in cells that measure 12 to 15 square meters [130 to 160 square feet] and have sleeping space for only 10 to 15 people. Many women and girls spend

more than a year awaiting trial in such conditions. They become spiteful and withdrawn and lose any hope for a return to a normal human life.

The women's colony in Nizhniy Tagil, about 110 miles [180 km] from Yekaterinburg, includes representatives of virtually every nationality that calls Russia home. Among them are women who are illiterate and those with a college degree, women who are psychologically sound and those who have deviant behavior and sexual perversions.

There is a children's home on the premises of the colony for 40 children up to three years of age who are born in the pretrial holding cells or in the penal colony. When they turn three, these children are sent out to various orphanages in the region and, practically speaking, these little children lose all contact with their mothers. In 1996 regional authorities financed only 25 percent of the women's required medication and personal-hygiene products. Authorities make no attempt to rehabilitate these women. Deprived of life's natural stimuli, they typically continue a pattern of repeated crime.

How We Help

The majority of the women and children who have committed crimes and have served their sentences give up all hope for a future life. The goal of our organization is to overcome this sense of helplessness. To that end, we regularly visit the convicts and discuss spiritual matters. We provide the women and girls with religious and other wholesome literature. We provide all necessary medications and personal-hygiene products. We provide children, nursing mothers, and pregnant women with vitamins and needed clothing and shoes. We organize visits between mothers held in the colony and their children who have been sent to orphanages. These meetings help to preserve family ties. We have quite a bit of experience in these matters, since the United Methodist Church of Yekaterinburg has been conducting similar meetings between male convicts and their children. We provide the women and girls in the colony with free examinations by medical specialists and social workers. We instruct the women and girls in making decorative applied arts, such as knitting and applique. And we work with employment services to find jobs for women who have been released from prison.

Despite chronic shortages we continue to work and pray to realize our goal—the spiritual and social rehabilitation of convicted women and girls so that they can return to a normal, human life as mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters! ♦

The conditions that the women live in would horrify anyone. Up to 30 women are housed in cells that have sleeping space for only 10 to 15 people.

Yelena Yakovlevna Tishchenko was born in 1955 in Sverdlovsk (now Yekaterinburg), in the Urals. She graduated in 1977 from the Ural State Polytechnical Institute. She also completed three years of training for pastors and spiritual leaders in the Russian United Methodist Church. She accepted Christ in 1991 at the founding of the Sverdlovsk United Methodist Church. She is a pastor at the United Methodist Church "Returning" and president of the Sverdlovsk Regional Social Organization "Christian Women," Yekaterinburg.

The Woman's Proper Place

Irina F. Yakubova

It would seem that the period of the church's persecution is behind us. But has anything really changed in the life of society? Has there really been a Russian awakening? Alas, far from it. Today women are undergoing a trial-by-freedom. Will we pass it?

To begin with, conducting meetings, conferences, and seminars for women is an extremely important task. And this is in no way connected with a yearning for feminism. As a matter of fact, it's just the opposite. I am not a proponent of those movements which actively struggle for women's independence or equality of rights. I support the right for women to meet, exchange opinions, and encourage one another. Touching on the issue of women's rights and independence, the question immediately occurs to me: "For what rights are women fighting, and towards what independence are they striving?" Without resorting to historical research, I will briefly treat the aftereffects of women's emancipation here in Russia.

Prerevolutionary Emancipation

Having begun with liberation from parental guardianship, and then from dependence upon men, and then taking on the established orders and laws in society, emancipated women joined in open political struggle. Recall, for example, Sofia Perovskaya [who took an active part in the assassination of Alexander II in 1881]. Then there were the years of the revolutionary movement [leading up to 1917]. How many women appeared on the arena of history! A list of their names alone would fill a whole page. And, of course, these were ladies of high society from religious families. They were succeeded by female commissars and women in leather coats [recalling several characters described in Boris Pilnyak's 1918 novel, *The Naked Year*], and militant atheists who were merciless with enemies and even friends with opposing views.

Soviet "Emancipation"

After Soviet power was established, the mass media began to circulate the image of woman as a builder of the new society, in which she would have the exact same rights as man. Women were praised—chairwomen of collective farms, directors of factories, athletes, scientists, members of government. Many women dreamed of becoming pilots and captains. Women strove to be the heroines they saw on television and read about in books. Among these heroines there was no place for the woman as wife or as mother. If such women did appear, then critics charged the authors with portraying a backward, patriarchal home life and accused them of being bourgeois.

The Woman's Proper Place Under God

Moving to the present, I would be remiss if I claimed that in Christian families there was ever, or is now, much attention paid to the upbringing of girls. In the best of cases, they become acquainted with the righteous life of biblical women in Sunday school. Even our families which converted to God comparatively early are not always models worthy of imitation. And that's a pity. Based on the example given by her parents' relationship, a girl ought to begin to prepare herself early on to become a wife, a mother, and a helper to her husband and father. She ought to learn to submit her character to God, acquire common sense, patience, the ability to reason well, and take care of the family hearth. Being a good mother, a loving spouse, a faithful friend, and a charitable woman, she will be able to serve the church and society. And here I'd like to turn to the words of the Bible: "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior" (Ephesians 5:22-23).

I dare say that this admonition might be interpreted not only within the strictly familial aspect. From my point of view, women—no matter how independent, intelligent, educated, or talented they may be—are in need of divine guidance through their husbands, fathers, pastors, and spiritual leaders. Without their blessing, any action by women will not be as effective as it could be. This view does not in any way diminish the role of women. We all know full well that the freedom given to women in Christ is incomparably greater than any other freedom.

Subordination and obedience which we display in relation to our husbands is not simply obedience for the sake of obedience, but obedience for the sake of salvation. The Lord Himself speaks to us through our husbands, fathers, and pastors. Having received their encouragement, support, and blessing, we will feel the will of God in any service. Voluntarily submitting to their will, we do not simply subordinate ourselves to the will of God, but we teach ourselves, subduing our main sin, pride, which was instilled in us by years of rule without God. Humbling ourselves, we reveal love which conquers all. ♦

Irina Fyodorovna Yakubova was born in 1947 in the Kemerovo region of Siberia. She graduated from the Karelsk Pedagogical Institute as an English teacher. A Christian since childhood, she was raised in a Pentecostal family. She completed catechism in the Russian Orthodox Church of Zosima and Savvatii. She now is in charge of the training of small group leaders in the Alliance for Social and Cultural Progress, Moscow.

**WOMEN in
MINISTRY**
In Keeping
with
Tradition

From my point of view, women—no matter how independent, intelligent, educated, or talented they may be—are in need of divine guidance through their husbands, fathers, pastors, and spiritual leaders.

Creativity and Compassion in Women's Ministries

Maria S. Gevorkian

Being more perceptive, more emotional, and more kind-hearted, it was easy for women to quickly respond to Christ's call, and they served Him during the blessed time that Christ walked on earth in human flesh. They were the first to see Him after his resurrection and hastened to spread the good news. Jesus' first appeal after his resurrection was directed to women: "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers." Having accepted Christ into their hearts, they never once doubted Him, as some of his closest apostles did. Recall the apostle who demanded to see Him and to put his finger into Christ's side, only then saying, "My Lord and my God!" (Matthew 28:8-10).

Christ performed not a few miracles, and continues to perform them in the lives of each of us. Blinded minds, however, often fail to see the obvious. This is especially true of men, who today put even more faith in reason than they did two thousand years ago. Therefore, Christ's appeal to the heart and soul of mankind is even today directed to women: "Go and tell my brothers!" This means first and foremost to those nearest to us by blood: to our husbands, brothers, and sons. We thirst for their salvation and they, having come to believe and accept Jesus Christ, do more than we do: they preach; they make others see things reasonably; they exhort; and they do all this having received the impulse from our heart.

In the Home

One role women perform is to strive to create Christian families. One family, if that family is Christian and united by a spiritual principle, can have an enormously positive influence. Even though Christ gave preference to spiritual kinship, He never once denigrated the role of the family. Through Paul and Silas we have the promise, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household" (Acts 16:31). A perverse, twisted, one-sided, and over-simplified reading of Christ's word has misled some to think they can leave their families, children, and elderly parents in order to enter into so-called Christian communities. By strengthening our love and faith for our families, we should prove that Christ, who called on us to love our neighbors, never meant anyone to interpret his words as a justification for leaving our families.

Maria Stepanovna Gevorkian was born in Yerevan, Armenia, in 1949. She graduated in 1973 from the Yerevan Foreign Language Institute, and in 1997 she completed a one-year Bible school program. As a child, she attended the Armenian Apostolic Church. Since 1994 she has been a member of the Methodist Church, where she leads a Bible study for teenagers and teaches knitting. Profits from craft sales are used for charitable causes.

In the Arts

Women who possess professional skills and are filled with God's love can create and lead groups of adults and children who have common interests, such as music, painting, various folk crafts—in a word, any activity that involves creativity. Such groups are easy to organize and they provide ample opportunities for evangelism. With a good leader a feeling of mutual faith and love arises easily and naturally. While in Corinth Paul stayed with a certain Jew named Aquila, and he stayed with him precisely because he and Aquila shared a common profession. Common work soon grew beyond a business tie, and the household of Aquila and his wife, Priscilla, became a place of domestic worship (Acts 18:1-3).

Creativity, which is instilled in each of us, can bring us closer to God. Even with the limitless heterogeneity of creative manifestations, the most surprising facet is still that in creating something, we are creating ourselves. And this is precisely what our Creator bade us do when he said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness" (Genesis 1:26), and imparted to man a will, freedom, and authority. Even when sending man out of the Garden of Eden, God bade him to cultivate the land. We need to apply all our energies so that the path which has been shown us by Jesus Christ reaches perfection, so that God, looking down upon us and upon all of the rest of His creation will say: "It is good." Another useful aspect of such work lies in the fact that, whether done by children or adults, creative work has a certain material worth, and this makes possible charitable sales: "Work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need" (Ephesians 4:28).

In Assisting the Needy

Another opportunity for involving women in active work is the rendering of assistance to disabled people in rehabilitation centers or at home. Very often people with physical disabilities thirst to find some sort of support in faith. I became convinced of this from my own experience working in a center for posttraumatic rehabilitation. If we need the Word of the Lord as much as our daily bread, then people like this need it like they need air. This help can be rendered to them either through brothers and sisters in Christ working with them as service staff in an institute, or by visiting them at home. Regrettably, there are quite a few disabled people who are completely alone, weary, and verging on hopelessness. Their hearts are receptive soil for sowing seeds.

In conclusion, the end of the age is approaching;

technological development is leading us headlong towards an ecological catastrophe; and the enmity that has filled us has led to numerous wars. Self-destruction threatens us. Thus it's time, my dear sisters, for us to do as the Apostle Paul once bade our brothers do: robe ourselves in the full armor of God and, having taken up our spiritual sword, our shield of faith, and our helmet of salvation, to go forth and stand against all the machinations of the devil.

The Work of a Christian Woman in the Salvation Army

Larisa V. Makarova

The Salvation Army is first and foremost a church. Our organization is engaged in more than simply social work and good deeds. God wants us to be soldiers of Jesus Christ. The Salvation Army is an international movement that represents an evangelical branch of the Christian church. Its teaching is based on the Bible, and its service flows from a love for God and a practical concern for the needs of people. The mission of the Salvation Army is to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ; to satisfy basic human needs; and to give personal exhortations to enable the spiritual and moral rebirth and the physical renewal of all those in need who fall into the sphere of the Army's guardianship regardless of race, color, religion, sex, or age.

The Salvation Army existed in Russia from 1912 to 1917, and its activity in Russia was renewed in 1990. As well as in Russia, we also carry on work in Moldova and Georgia. Our uniform is, in fact, a

Perhaps the day is approaching when, as the prophet Jeremiah spoke, "The Lord will create a new thing on earth: a woman will save a man" (Jeremiah 31:22; literal English translation of Russian Synodal version). Let us raise up a prayer in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, that our hearts would burn with pure love and that, in the heat of this love, all evil that reigns in this world would be consumed. ♦

means for bearing witness. When people ask us who it is we are saving, we are given the opportunity to bear witness about Christ. We in the Salvation Army have a saying: "We give God our hearts, and people our hands." It is useless to talk about God to a person who is hungry.

In the Salvation Army there are no prohibitions concerning what women can do. Our responsibility is to preach. We have 22 corps. Our preachers bear the rank of officers. It is excellent that in our organization women have equal rights with men. Married couples who serve are both officers and assist one another. In order to serve as an officer, women must be able to preach. ♦

Larisa Vladlenovna Makarova was born in 1950 in Izyum, Kharkov district, Ukraine. She was educated as an optical engineer. She came to Christ in 1990 with the help of friends. After completing the Salvation Army Institute for Officer Training, she became an officer in the Salvation Army.

Evangelism and Women's Ministry in Uzbekistan

Khamira Kh. Sakhibova

I was born into a Moslem family. When I became a Christian, my father wanted to hold a funeral for me, following an established Uzbek tradition. According to this tradition, whenever someone betrays the Islamic faith, the family turns him or her out and conducts a "graveside" ceremony. After this, the person who has been repudiated does not have the right to communicate with his or her relatives. Immediately before the ceremony, I went to my father and told him that I was simply a sinner who no longer wished to live in sin, and my father changed his mind. Moreover, in a short time he became a Christian.

Now I am the pastor of the sole Uzbek Christian church in Tashkent. We had many debates about who was to be the pastor. In the beginning, I was called the "police granny," but now I'm the pastor and these women relate to me as though I were their mother. Our church is only a year old, but already a lot of young people attend, even though we have no Sunday school nor any Christian youth camps.

Under the influence of Islamic traditions women in our churches are not psychologically prepared to

be leaders. As in the past, the KGB uses scare tactics against church members: often enough I'm hauled before the KGB, but I'm still standing here in front of you. The situation is aggravated by the fact that among the various denominations there is no mutual understanding. I therefore often feel like I'm in complete isolation.

In Central Asia it would be impossible for us to hold an open conference like this one. I want to ask you to direct your efforts towards making it possible to open churches run by Uzbeks in my country. Christians abroad worry about and pray for Central Asia, and we are thankful for that. However, they unfortunately lack the proper understanding of Central Asia's cultural heritage. It is very important that our national churches be developed. ♦

Khamira Khatamovna Sakhibova was born in 1950 in Chimkent, Kazakhstan. In 1979 she graduated from the pedagogical institute of Chimkent. She converted in 1989 after watching the Campus Crusade "Jesus" film. She is now the pastor of the Uzbek nondenominational church "Sevgi Makhalyasi."

WOMEN in
MINISTRY

New
Paths

Often enough
I'm hauled
before the KGB,
but I'm still
standing here
in front of you.

In Uzbekistan, Tadjikistan, and Turkmenia—there are 54 Baptist churches and groups. Of these, only ten have pastors: three are led by elderly men and seven groups are headed by young laymen. Women lead all the rest.

The Role of Women in Central Asian Churches

Olga V. Avetisova

It has been only in the past five or six years that the question of the situation of women in the churches of Central Asia could even be entertained. The Soviet system led to the creation of an indivisible and centralized church authority. This gave birth to the imposition of identical or similar traditions and principles in all churches of all regions. All of our churches, regardless of denomination, were identical, as similar to one another as twins.

One of the offshoots of perestroika was freedom of religion (a relative freedom, of course), which gave rise to an influx into the church of a considerable number of educated and thinking people. This religious freedom opened the door to a great many believers of foreign countries, as well. All of this opened up new channels into the life of the church and, in many ways, completely changed it. Freedom also led, as always, to the conflict between old traditions and new concepts. This conflict touched on the traditional understanding of the role of women in the church.

The Position of Women in Traditional Churches

In accordance with established principles, women were not allowed as a rule to take part in the church service with the exception of the congregational prayer, the reading of poetry, and singing. Women were relegated to the role of silent listeners during the service; performing various domestic duties in the house of prayer; and caring for the sick. Women were allowed to take part in the making of church policies only during general votes.

Women in the Home and in Sunday School

On the other hand, the question of how to raise children was left to women alone, along with teaching Sunday school. (There are almost no male teachers in the Sunday schools.) This means women alone were responsible for the upbringing of future pastors and deacons. Religious women believed that since the Scriptures said, "Women should remain silent in the churches....It is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church" (1 Corinthians 14:34-35), then their Christian duty was to listen to what the brothers said and to fulfill their orders through physical labor, and that was it. They weren't allowed to teach; to spread the Gospel was forbidden; to organize churches was impossible, etc.

Can Women Lead Others to Christ?

I know one sister who was a devout believer. This elderly woman was the only Christian in her entire city. Being a saved child of God, she saw that people were perishing around her, knowing nothing of salvation in Jesus Christ. She prayed that God

would send someone who could tell them about Christ. Many years passed, but no one came. But the very life of this woman bore witness to God, and people around her began to question her about what it was that made her different from them. As well as she could, she began to tell them about Christ. Interested people got together and began to come to her to read the Bible. In this group, she alone prayed, she alone read the Bible, and she alone was considered a Christian. I met her in a prayer house in Tashkent. She told me that she had come to ask for brothers to visit her city to hear the repentance of those who had for so long been gathering at her home. "Why don't you yourself suggest that they repent? After all, you said that some of them have been meeting with you for several years and have long been ready to repent."

"Yes, that's true. But can I really do it myself? I'm a woman, you know. Only men can spread the Word and summon people to repent." We conversed for a long time, read Scripture, until she finally said with unsure happiness: "So that means I myself can suggest that they repent? And this repentance will be real? But what if these people decide to be baptized, won't the brothers say that they have to repent all over again in their presence?" This limited understanding of the role of women is characteristic of almost all older churches [in the former Soviet Union].

Life, however, has corrected this. In three republics of Central Asia—Uzbekistan, Tadjikistan, and Turkmenia—there are 54 Baptist churches and groups. Of these, only ten have pastors: three are led by elderly men and seven groups are headed by young laymen. Women lead all the rest. They conduct the services, they preach, but they cannot perform religious rites, and they are not invited to church conferences, to which all other leaders and pastors are invited.

The Position of Women in New Churches

About 100 new churches have opened in Central Asia in the past five years. Of these, 50–55 are Korean, 20–25 are Uzbek, Tadjik, or Turkmen national churches, and the rest have both Slavic and Asian members with worship in Russian. For all intents and purposes, this is "new wine in new wineskins" (Matthew 9:17). So what is the situation for women here? In charismatic churches a woman may take the role of home cell group leader, prophetess, and missionary. There she may pray for the healing of the sick by laying on of hands. The sole responsibility she cannot accept is to perform baptisms, lay on hands during services, or perform the Lord's Supper.

The situation of women in Uzbek, Tadjik, and Turkmen national churches is usually shaped by Asiatic traditions: complete subordination, humility, and silence. As a matter of fact, frequently this appears so only in the church, while at home the picture is changing. In reality, many women understand full well the meaning of the saying: "The husband is the head, but the wife is the neck, and the head does not turn without the neck."

What Does Scripture Say About the Role of Women in the Church?

Theologians and writers who have delved into this question as a rule note that Jesus revealed to the world an entirely new perspective on women. He lifted them from the dust and placed them on practically the same level as men. He also pronounced that, in the eyes of God, men and women have the same worth. "God sent his Son, born of a woman" (Galatians 4:4). In the entire course of Christ's earthly life, women served him devotedly. They never left his side, even during the last hour of the horrible tortures of Golgotha and his death, when all his other disciples had abandoned him (Matthew 27:55). Christ appeared first to women after his resurrection (John 20:13-17), and women were directed by the angel to bring the good news to men (Matthew 28:1-7). Equally with men,

women received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:17-18). Together with men, they served the Lord and were His faithful servants (Romans 16:12 and elsewhere), and like men, women suffered during the persecutions.

Women's Gifts

What are women to do then? Yes, God entrusted the right of solemn performance of religious duties to men. It is doubtful that any sincere Christian woman who dutifully hearkens to the word of God would dare to contest this fact. Preeminence in ministry belongs to men. Amen. But it is also true that "In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman" (1 Corinthians 11:11). Christian women can do much to change things for the better in the local church. The gifts given to women by God for the good of the church are independent of men. The church will not be complete if the gifts given by God to women are not used. The duty of the present-day minister of God is to recognize the gifts of all members of the church and create the best conditions for their manifestation. ♦

Olga Vladimirovna Avetisova was born in 1948 in Kislovodsk, in the Caucasus. She graduated in 1975 from the Tashkent Polytechnical University. She accepted Christ in 1966 at a Baptist worship service, and now works with all evangelical denominations as a mission leader and coordinator of missionary activity.

The husband is the head, but the wife is the neck.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

This letter of appreciation is sent on behalf of the recent conference on "Women In Ministry" here in Russia in June 1997, bringing together Christian women from a broad geographic and confessional range. Having participated in church-based ministry for over a decade, first in Eastern Europe and now for four years in Russia, I have observed that helping women come to terms with their abilities and spiritual gifts within the context of the church is a tremendous need. This has become especially clear in recent years in the seminars and training schools that my mission and others have held for youth leaders from a number of Christian denominations throughout East Central Europe and Russia. Invariably at each training event, there are a number of young women who request additional time to discuss such issues as singleness, dating, marriage, and leadership within the context of the church. In addition, significant numbers have indicated struggles with various issues of shame which have been a part of their experience, or the experience of those in their youth programs, including physical and sexual abuse, incest, abortion, prostitution, and the devastating effects of alcoholism. (Only now are

drug-related issues beginning to affect Russian youth in a major way.) Many have gladly received biblical counsel in these areas.

The work which has been started through this consultation is vital in a number of ways, namely: 1) introducing Russian Christian women to each other across a wide range of confessional and professional affiliations; 2) opening up their thinking with regard to women's service in the church; 3) challenging them to find ways of positively impacting the thinking of leaders and laity in the churches toward the participation of women in viable ministry activities; 4) helping them to see new ministry options for themselves; 5) encouraging them to take opportunities which will use their abilities and gifts meaningfully; and, perhaps most important, 6) assisting them to serve as role models for a new generation of young women who desperately need to feel valued and challenged toward faithfulness to their calling and giftedness. My sincere thanks and best wishes in making the discussions an ongoing effort toward the extension of God's Kingdom here.

Kaarina Ham
Youth for Christ
Moscow

Proclaiming Christ Boldly From Moscow to Yalta

Shirinay M. Dosova

Our church was established in 1991 after doing street evangelism on the Arbat, the main shopping street in Moscow. I remember that two people came to the first worship service. I thought it seemed like too few, so I asked them to wait five minutes and quickly went out to the street. The street was empty because it was Sunday morning. Then I saw two girls coming in the distance. I no longer know what I said to them, but they stayed. One of them, Christina, is now a member of our church. Her mother also belongs to us and her father became a Christian too.

A Passion for Souls

I opened the Bible and read Matthew 28:19: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations." It was my first sermon and I had been a believer for only a few months. I told my congregation, "Jesus said: 'Go therefore.' And why are you sitting here? Why have you come here? The entire country is drowning in alcohol, drugs, and crime, while we sit here and do nothing. People are lost because they don't know Jesus." I'm amazed today that my congregation did not run away. Two of them even brought someone else along with them to the next worship service. And that was the beginning of our church.

In the beginning, our church grew very quickly. Each year we baptized 20-25 people. This year, however, the situation is different. People are coming reluctantly to the worship services. One gets the impression that everyone's thoughts and lives

are centered on just one thing—earning more money. And this sickness has also entered our church. Christians have lost their sense of heaven. We can learn much from the European eel which lives in freshwater rivers and oceans. At the end of its life, the eel undertakes an incredible journey to the Sargasso Sea, which is thousands of miles away, southeast of Bermuda in the Atlantic Ocean. During its eight-month journey, the eel takes no nourishment at all. It undertakes the long trip to its final destination to leave behind its offspring and then eventually dies. The eel's migration instinct is so strong that it can cross long stretches of land in order to reach a river that flows into the sea. Is there such a desire, a yearning within us, for the Heavenly Kingdom? What is most important in our Christian lives? I am concerned about this when I reflect on the condition of Jesus' church today.

Our church also gives me cause for concern. Because we don't have a room of our own, we are forced to rent one under illegal conditions. We must always keep in mind that we could be turned out into the street. The Orthodox Church is urging people to stand against Protestant churches, often calling them sects. In February 1997 at the instigation of Orthodox priests near Moscow, 300 children's Bibles were burned right before the children's eyes as they stood in their schoolyard. Unfortunately, this was not an isolated incident; such events are becoming the norm.

Evangelism: Wherever People Will Listen

I am once again preaching on the Arbat, although the situation there has changed completely. Fewer people are out walking and most of them are foreigners. One rarely meets Muscovites, and it isn't easy to get their attention. At the end of June, I spent three days in Yalta. Along the shore, I experienced what I used to back on the Arbat three years ago. People stopped and listened to God's Word; some even wept. Approximately 100 people came forward to repent. Praise God that people still have such a thirst for his Word. Last winter we evangelized at Moscow's Leningrad Train Station. We are under obligation to bring the light of Christ to weary and wounded souls. At the train station, there are always 200-300 people just sitting around. They are so thankful when they hear us preach. Once, an elderly man brought us some nuts and said, "It is so good that you bring the Good News. One should talk about it everywhere." ♦

Excerpt reprinted with permission from Light in the East News 6 (December 1997): 8-9.

The entire country is drowning in alcohol, drugs, and crime, while we sit here and do nothing. People are lost because they don't know Jesus.

Shirinay Murzayevna Dosova was born in Uzbekistan in 1957. In 1987 she was led to Christ by someone who had spent 12 years in prison for his faith in Christ. After listening for several hours as he told her about Jesus Christ, Shirinay recalls, "I cried out, 'I do believe!'" He replied, "Just remember two points which the Bible teaches: first, the righteous life; and second, the Gospel message." The next day, Shirinay Dosova went out to the Arbat to preach. She now leads the church "Good News" in Moscow.

Electronic Resources for Post-Soviet Women's Studies

Mark Elliott

To understand the situation faced by Christian women in post-Soviet societies, the concerns of all women need to be taken into account. In addition to printed sources, readers may tap a wealth of relevant electronic resources. One word of caution: The accessibility of an abundance of information via computer must be tempered with spiritual discernment in order to differentiate that which is edifying from that which is unedifying—and one finds a great deal of both on the Internet.

Bibliographies

Professor Mary Zirin (mary@bigbear.caltech.edu), an independent scholar from southern California, has produced a comprehensive bibliography on *Women, Gender and Family in the Soviet Successor States and Central/East Europe*. Unfortunately, it currently is out of print, but an updated version is in progress. In the United States it is available on interlibrary loan from Princeton University. In addition, the Amherst College Web site includes a three-page bibliography on women in Russian literature (<http://www.amherst.edu/~nehrl/biblio.html>).

Web Pages

The Web page for the Center for Civil Society International, Seattle, WA (<http://solar.rtd.utk.edu/~ccsi/nisorgs/niswomen.htm>), provides a great deal of information relating to: 1) NIS Women's Organizations by Country; 2) International Organizations Active in the NIS: Women's Issues; and 3) Electronic Resources: Women. Also, a Melbourne, Australia, webmaster (elleon@c031.aone.net.au) has gathered an impressive array of material at her Russian Feminism Resources Web site (<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/2533/russfem.html>) under 1) Organizations, Mailing Lists, Conferences; 2) Women and Russia Links in English; 3) Women and Russia Links in Russian (English index to Russian-language sources); and 4) Women in Other Post-Communist States. Under organizations, for example, one may download helpful summaries of the work of the Convent of Sts. Martha and Mary and St. Dimitry's Sisterhood of Nurses. The Russian Christian Home Page (English index at: http://www.bethel.edu/seminary_academics/international/russian/russian3.htm; Russian index at: http://www.bethel.edu/seminary_academics/international/russian/russian5.htm) includes a 12-page essay by Sergei Averintsev on *Brak i sem'ya* [Marriage and the Family]. Finally, Network of East-West Women (<http://www.neww.org>), with links to Russian,

Polish, and U.S. offices and web pages, focuses on advocacy for women through the promotion of "tolerance, democracy, nonviolence, health, and respect for the institution of a civil society." The NEWW quarterly, *Best of the Season*, began publication in 1997 in English and Russian, on line and in print. An annual hard copy subscription is \$15 from 1601 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 701, Washington, DC 20009; 202-265-3585; fax: 202-265-3508; e-mail: eastwest@neww.org.

Electronic Serials

Other electronic serials deserve consideration. *We/Myi: The Women's Dialogue* is a Russian-language bimonthly women's magazine. Issues 13 forward are summarized and partially translated into English on the Web (<http://www.neww.org/vim/vimintro.htm>). The U.S. sponsor is The National Council for Research on Women, 530 Broadway, New York, NY 10012; 212-274-0730; fax: 212-274-0821. The coeditors are Colette Shulman (tel/fax: 860-354-0333; shermancs@aol.com) and Nadia Azhgikina (anadia@glasnet.ru). Issue 14 carries a thoughtful six-page interview with Bishop Chryzostom of Vilnius and Lithuania on Russian Orthodox views on abortion and contraception.

Gender Monitor (http://solar.rtd.utk.edu/~ccsi/electrnic/women/gm_1-1.htm) is a quite informative "internet serial that summarizes articles related to women's issues which appear in the Ukrainian press." It is a service of the Ukrainian Center for Independent Political Research. Finally, *Women East-West*, the newsletter of the Association of Women in Slavic Studies (<http://ash.swarthmore.edu/slavic/>), is a useful source well beyond the academic community.

To understand the situation faced by Christian women in post-Soviet societies, the concerns of all women need to be taken into account.

Mark Elliott is editor of the EAST-WEST CHURCH AND MINISTRY REPORT.

A Series of Surprises

Tatyana D. Popova

I was pleasantly surprised by the fact that Christian women from various Protestant denominations from all parts of the former Soviet Union were invited to the conference. The women described their Christian ministries and shared problems and plans, and it did not even occur to anyone to assume a sense of superiority of one denomination over another. Meanwhile, in real life, at least among believers in Russia, this problem is one of the most vicious.

In my opinion, the most important lesson from the conference concerns the unity which our churches on the whole are lacking—and society as well. All conference participants were leaders in Christian ministry and, of course, realized how important the role of evangelical women is in the church and in evangelism. But unexpectedly, all of us came to understand that the breadth of ministry among Christian women in the former Soviet Union is much larger than we would ever have imagined. For example, many people think that the Salvation Army's ministry is charity and compassion, but at the conference we learned that it successfully plants new churches and ministers to people there as well.

The Breadth of Women's Ministries

We all discovered new forms of Christian ministry. For example, Natalia Loginova (Moscow) has organized a Christian Club for Women in Business. Galina Chentsova (Moscow) is a psychiatrist who helps Christians deal with their psychological problems. Olga Mogan (Moldova) publishes the magazine *Maria* for Christian women. Natalia Chetverina (Moscow) writes Sunday-school curriculum for churches. Vera Kadayeva (Moscow) has created a network of Christian children's camps. Pentecostal women from Belarus shared with the

participants how they organized a center to help low income families—in one of the poorest republics of the former Soviet Union!

During the conference we had a number of workshop opportunities. Most of the women took great interest in the workshop on the problems of family relationships led by Yulia Lenchenko, who invited everyone to visit her crisis pregnancy center. Of course, as an editor, I tried not to miss any opportunity to meet with the speakers in order to relate their experiences in articles in the future. I also hope to develop friendships with them.

The Historical Perspective

There was only one man in the conference—Dr. Mark Elliott, the initiator and organizer of the conference, who opened the conference with a discourse on the history of Christianity in Russia. Dr. Elliott expressed his hopes that Russian women would not bring up their daughters on the ideals of Barbie dolls, but with role models such as St. Barbara from the Convent of Martha and Mary, grand duchesses Chertkova and Lieven, and also our mothers and grandmothers, whose strong faith carried them through the devastating hardships of over 70 years of Communist rule. This was the first time in my life that I heard an American Christian worker give references from Russian history as examples to follow. This not only surprised me, but caused me to reconsider my view of American missionaries (in some sense, Dr. Elliott is a missionary too) as people with little knowledge of Russian history and culture.

Some would consider it a weakness that some conference speakers went off on tangents, departing from their topics. But we have a saying in Russia that "people talk about what really hurts." That made everything the women said when they drifted from the themes no less interesting than their topics.

One of the conference highlights was a musical program prepared by Methodist women. After the final prayer led by a Presbyterian pastor, all the participants had the opportunity to exchange addresses and phone numbers and continued their conversations over cups of coffee. No one was in a hurry to leave, and while some were thanking Dr. Elliott and Galina Obrovets for the real women's celebration, others were asking, "When will be the next conference of this kind?" ♦

Tatyana Dmitrievna Popova was born in 1953 in Leninogorsk, Kazakhstan, and studied journalism at the University of Alma-Ati. In 1978, she "accidentally" walked into a Baptist Church where three months later she repented and six months later she was baptized. She currently works in the publishing department of the Russian Christian Mission "Light in the East."

It did not even occur to anyone to assume a sense of superiority of one denomination over another. Meanwhile, in real life, at least among believers in Russia, this problem is one of the most vicious.

EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT, published quarterly by the Institute for East-West Christian Studies, seeks to encourage Western Christian ministry in East Central Europe and the former Soviet Union that is effective, culturally sensitive, and cooperative. It also serves as a forum for the exploration of a variety of issues relating to Christianity's presence in Europe's formerly Marxist states. Letters to the editor are welcomed. Subscription rates are \$42.75 per year (U.S. domestic first class); \$47.75 (Canada); and \$52.75 (international); e-mail \$20. **Reprint and photocopy policy:** 1) Quantity photocopies or reprints of up to three articles from a single issue may be distributed or reprinted with no royalty charge. 2) Written permission is to be secured for each distribution or reprinting. 3) The following statement is to be carried on each photocopied article reproduced and each article reprinted: **Reproduced (or Reprinted) with permission of EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT.**

EditorMark Elliott
Assistant EditorSharyl Corrado
Designer.....Anna Pugsley

EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT
Institute for East-West Christian Studies
Billy Graham Center
Wheaton College
Wheaton, IL 60187
Tel: 630-752-5917
Fax: 630-752-5916
E mail: melliot@wheaton.edu

