



# MBL MISSION NEWS

Reporting events taking place in Russia, Armenia and Nicaragua and at home

The Mission for Biblical Literacy

Volume I, Issue I  
APRIL-MAY 2006

## Some basics about Bible reading

In January of this year, Thom Walker and I had the opportunity of sharing the Mission for Biblical Literacy story with a about 15 Pastors and their spouses. This took place in Tulsa during the period that Phillips Theological Seminary was gathering Oklahoma Clergy for the annual Minister' Week, a time of theological refreshment.

We thank Dr. Jim Caton for making the arrangements for that wonderful evening so that we can share the many good stories about mission work that is taking place in Russia, Nicaragua, and Armenia.

During the introduction, Jim Caton was sharing a bit about how the Mission for Biblical Literacy came about. As many know, it was started as the Institute for Biblical Literacy by the late Dr. Roger N. Carstensen. Carstensen had resigned his position as the President of the Christian College in Georgia where he had served since 1961. The Institute began in 1976 in Athens, GA. The purpose of the institute was to call Christians back to Bible reading. In short, it was a call to pastors, layman, and all believers to get back to the basics of Bible Study. Too many were slack about their study of the Holy Scriptures . that contain the basis of Christian faith and practice.

Jim shared and instrument from his former Pastor who provided an excellent procedure for studying the Bible. It went something like this:

*In reading the Bible, do not start with Genesis. Read it in this order:*

1. Mark 2. John 3. Acts 4. Psalms 5. Philippians, 6. Romans 7. I John 8. Luke 9. Hebrews 10. Matthew.

*After Reading the New Testament, read the Old Testament.* The above reading list was given to Dr. Caton by Rev Vernon Gustavson in 1956. This gift I now pass on to you. Jim Caton

## You need to come with us

Want to go on a mission but can't! Yes you can! Sponsor one of the team members or designate a love gift to be used for at the orphanage such as winter shoes for the kids, socks, vitamins, books.



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New shoes are fitted to one of the girls of the orphanage

John Novikoff and Betsy Haun provide help to a child who needs a knit cap.



## “WOMAN IN CHRIST: HOLY AND BELOVED”

A women's international forum entitled “Woman in Christ: Holy and Beloved,” organized and conducted by the Christian women's magazine *Sestra* and the Center for Biblical Literacy in cooperation with other charitable organizations, was held on March 8, 2006 in Moscow.

The meeting coincided with the celebration of International Women's Day, which is a national holiday in Russia. Over three hundred Christian women gathered from evangelical, Baptist, Pentecostal, Lutheran, and Seventh Day Adventist churches of Moscow, St. Petersburg, twenty towns of the Moscow Region, Kursk, Kaluga, Tula, Tver, Rostov-na-Donu, and Maikop, as well as from the United States, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, and Moldova.

The meeting was opened with the Lord's Prayer pronounced in the languages of the forum participants: Russian, English, Ukrainian, Moldavian, Georgian, and Armenian. Then the participants proclaimed the Apostles' Creed. Vladimir Shvets, president of the Bible League, prayed for God's special blessings for the forum and Oleg Askalenok, president of the Christian military union, came to greet and congratulate the women.

In her greeting Galina Obrovets, publisher of *Sestra* magazine, said, “The 8<sup>th</sup> of March is becoming the traditional day for Christianwomen's meetings. There are many conferences conducted all over Russia today. We are here because the love of the Lord unites us, and every woman who is going to speak has profound spiritual experience and rich experience in ministry to share with others. During the years of open doors for evangelism after perestroika many Christian women started organizing important new ministries:

Biblical counseling Charitable projects Christian education Child evangelism ministry support groups for recovering alcohol and drug addicts

“The world is quickly changing and the role of woman in society is changing as well. But the need to be encouraged and loved is not changing. This world needs Christ as never before. People in Russia are losing hope for a better life; they even lose their interest in life. They go into virtual reality, become addicted with gambling, alcohol, and drugs. They ignore the value of family relations, and as a result we have so many social orphans, children abandoned by their living parents.

“Who will help people in need except for Christians? Jesus teaches us: ‘Let your light shine before all men, so that they may see your good deeds and worship your heavenly Father’ (Matthew 5:16).

*This article was presented by Dr. Natalia Loginovna*

*And edited by Kathy Ames*

We also read in Ephesians 2:10: ‘For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.’”

The forum organizers' main goal was for the women to be inspired by the Holy Spirit and hear God's call for ministry. The participants had the opportunity to hear inspirational messages from women speakers about the joy and blessings in ministry, and also to see numerous displays of ministries developed recently.

Kathy Ames, an American, spoke of ministry to Russian orphans. Since 1994, groups from her church have led summer camps with Bible lessons for children in orphanages. She encouraged the women to get involved in their own personal ministries, whether to orphans, alcoholics, addicts, or others in need of the good news of Christ.

Natalia Loginova, director of the Christian organization “To Children With Love,” led a charitable offering for orphans which was a very important part of the forum. She addressed the participants with these words:

“On this wonderful day we can not omit the hardest topic: orphans. There are so many of them in Russia nowadays. The real numbers of the statistics may be changed or hidden, but there are more than 3 million orphans.

“These are social orphans. That means they have mothers, grandmothers, aunts—these are THEIR children. These children live in our neighborhoods, walk the same streets. These are OUR children. Look into their faces. Referring to a child, Jesus said, ‘...whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me’ (Mt. 18:5).

“Orphans are mentioned in the Bible more than forty times. God knows what orphanhood is; otherwise He would not have promised us: ‘I will not leave you as orphans.’ His hands are never too tired to hold His children, the ones who are rejected by people and suffer, who are encouraged and comforted by God in the best way. Who will stretch out the hand of help to those children except us, Christian women, from different churches? Up until now, as you've just seen, the majority of help comes from abroad.

“We are thankful for our Western brothers and sisters. I can't believe that they love our orphans more than we do. Preparing this meeting, we wanted to glorify our Lord and Savior, and also we wanted to do something useful. Our attempt to become more like Christ is measured by the feeling of others' pain.



**THE ROGER N. CARSTENSEN FUND**

If your mailbox is like mine, it is probably stuffed with a large number of letters from organizations seeking funds for their cause. Undoubtedly, there are a number of organizations that are responding to many human needs all over the world. Needless to mention, money is needed to accomplish the purpose of the agency that sent the letter.

MBL has had the opportunity to go world wide since 1990 when Roger N. Carstensen first went to Russia with the group from the Peachtree Christian Church of Atlanta. Carstensen was so fired up from teaching the Bible in Russia, that he forgot to retire and continued his teaching ministry across Russia, Siberia and the Far East. He continued excitedly in his work until he passed away in February of 1996. In his honor the Roger N. Carstensen fund was established through the Christian Church Foundation. At present, it reports that it has grown to \$91000.

Today, the ministry of MBL has been expanded to Armenia, Nicaragua, and Israel. because many supporters continue sending their gifts of love and support to sustain this mission. Thankfully, there are some of us who are volunteers and so we can boast that we hold down the administrative costs to a negligible percent of the total offerings.

While donors contribute mainly to the operational budget of MBL, one must realize that there is no replacement of funds except by donors making repeat donations and by the enlistment of new donors. It is for that reason that I ask each of our readers and contributors to pray and give wholeheartedly to the Roger N. Carstensen fund. If it is possible to raise the principle of this fund to the sum of \$1,000,000. dollars, than it is conceivable that there can be enough annual interest to fortify the needs of those who are serving in the field of Russia, Armenia and Nicaragua.

I thank the many friends of MBL who have sent in generous offerings to support this work. But now, as the cost of this work is increasing, it seems only reasonable to underwrite a fund that will provide a generous annual income to supplement the annual budget. So I am asking: "will you join me now as I write my own check for \$1000 to be applied to the Roger N. Carstensen fund"? I know this can work if we work it because God has ordained it!

**DOING UNTO OTHERS AS ...**

In an earlier mission to Russia, the group provided shoes , gloves and knitted wool gloves and caps to the children. Shown below is Kathy Ames of Richmond, VA scrubbing the feet of one of the boys who will receive the gifts. MBL and Christ Church provided the shoes and socks; Mrs. Louise Kane of Savannah knitted and donated all of the caps and gloves.



Mrs. Cain has another large batch of knitted items to be sent to Russia. The team will pick these up and take them to the orphanage at Dimidova.

Kathy Ames will also be leading a group out of the 3rd Presbyterian Church of Richmond VA June 21-July03 hopefully to the same area.

**GOOD NEWS AND BAD NEWS**

A major player of our Russia team, Rev. Pavel Makarenko, the young Baptist minister who has assisted our American teams and who has provided followup to the orphans, was hospitalized recently with pancreatitis. Although Pavel has been released from the hospital, he is convalescing at his home in Smolensk.

Pavel has been a primary force in helping us to develop the ministry in the Smolensk region where there are 34 orphanages located. We pray for his full recovery and look to visit with him again.

*Pavel @ sits with kids from Dimidovo during closing assembly.*





## The Mission for Biblical Literacy

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### "Opening the Bible"



(cont from page 2)

#### Women in Christ

Although we all have different incomes, each of us can serve as she is able. Just remember: 'God fulfills every need, according to His riches in glory.' I urge you to serve our children materially, to give orphans hope. We collect donations today for children who do not know a mother's warm hands or a father's kind words. I wholeheartedly thank you, dear sisters; your name is precious in God's sight, because as we do something little for the children we do a big thing for God."

Many different themes of the forum touched the participants' hearts: "Women's Vocation," "The Joy of Charitable Ministry," "Showing Christ through Good Deeds," "The Education of Woman in Ministry," and "Woman and Society." Here are some responses: "I thank the Lord that I'm here at this forum. I received a lot of interesting and useful information. The most important for me were the topics connected with sacrificial and effective ministries in God's field and in His name..."

"Thank you for the forum! I could not even imagine that there are so many ministries. May God bless you as you serve others. I understood that I'd lost God's blessing when I decided to live for myself..."

"The really kind atmosphere of the forum... it's really nice to be among God's children. This is a real woman's celebration."

"[The most useful question for me was] 'Where is my place?' and the reminder to pray for finding my own place in ministry

upper left women at Forum

lower left Galina addresses women at the forum

Anna Naumova displays the Center for Biblical Literacy material



(below)

## **GALINA OBROVETS TO ATTEND "MIX IN '06"**

With the thought that the Disciples women (CWF) will meet with UCC women in Indianapolis, it seemed too good an opportunity not to have Galina attend and represent MBL. A display booth has been rented and it will be set up to reflect all of the good work that is taking place in Russia and Armenia. Galina will also show a cd about the work she is involved in with Russian women in churches, government, prisons, hospitals and other areas across all of Russia. The dates of the event will be July 27-30, 2006 and will be held in Indianapolis. The timing for Galina is just right as she will come to the USA to report to the MBL Annual meeting that convenes just days before the Indianapolis event.

## **TO RUSSIA WITH LOVE AND CONCERN**

Plans are now underway for MBL's third visit to the orphanage in the village of Dimidova. The campus houses 180 children ages 5-18. It is one of the largest of 34 orphanages in the Smolensk region. Dimidova is approximately 90 kilometers north of Smolensk.

The team this year is comprised of Methodist, Episcopal, Disciple and Presbyterian youth and adults. Each person will pay for the airfare tickets and visa documents. This cost is approximately \$1450. Another \$771 will need to be raised per person to offset costs of hotel, food, train, coach travel, excursion in St Petersburg and orphanage curriculum and sports equipment. A fund raiser will take place in April, May, and June. Sponsorship will also be encouraged. Those who do not participate in the fund raiser will pay the full amount of \$2256.60.

A number of the team are getting to be veterans in short term missions: among them are Heyward Gignilliat (4x) Aiken Reeves (2x) (1x) Lawrence Lehr (1x) Laura Lawton (1x) and Emily Aimones (1x). First timers are Grace Ragan, Stege Wheeler, Mary Sprague, Kara Stanley, Haley Murray and Sharon Kay Banks. For those who are interested in this mission tour, please call John Novikoff at 404 8061485.

### **The itinerary:**

- Jul 09 Depart Savannah on Delta Flt 782**
- 09 Depart Atlanta on Delta Flt 46**
- 10 Arrival in Moscow next day at 10:**
- 10 1630 St Petersburg by train, arr 2230.**
- 11-13 excursions**
- 14 Depart for Dimidova , arr evening**
- 15 set up vbs**
- 16-21 Worship Service, Ministries to children**
- 21 Depart to Moscow , arr evening**
- 22 Free days in Moscow**
- 23 Depart Russia on Delta Flt 47**

Please write the names of those you see on the Russia itinerary into your prayer book or list. So far, we have seen many changes come over those who have given of their time and money to go on a short term mission, Undoubtedly, it is life changing.

Also, keep in mind Mrs. Anna Nerkararyan, our Armenia liaison who will be taking a group to an orphanage that is located in the city of Varnadorz. Varnadorz was the city that was badly damaged by a devastating earthquake in the early eighties and is still

### **MBL BOARD TO EXPAND**

FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE BOARD HAS BEEN FUNCTIONING MORE LIKE AN EXECUTIVE BOARD RATHER THAN A FULL STAFFED ENTITY. Many of our past members have either rotated off, finished their terms, or otherwise have resigned.

In the last few years of reorganization, MBL has carried the ball and has performed its ministry as well as could be expected for the small entity that it happens to be..

But now, the challenge and higher expense of ministry is calling us to invite fresh leadership to our call and mission.

Before the next Annual meeting of the Board that meets at the Peachtree Christian Church in Atlanta next June 20-21, I will be pleased to announce that two to three new board members of high standing in their churches and who in their vision are committed to make the Great Commission a real force in the world.

Dear John

Last Monday, March 13 at 2:30 A.M. I boarded a Siberian Airlines Boeing 737 to fly from Moscow's Domodedova airport to Novi Urengoi. After a three and a half hour flight we landed at 8 AM in the bright sunshine of a brisk Siberian spring morning with a temperature of 25 degrees below zero centigrade. (This is considered "warm" weather by the locals who say that winter weather starts at 40 below.)

Taras took me to his apartment for breakfast and to sleep off the effects of missing most of a night's rest. He was anxious anxious about the weather and about a group of four men who were on their way from Salekhard

. Anatoli Marachev, Peter Khudi, Boris Ruskalamov and Nikolai Goloshchapov could not get tickets on the plane from Salekhard to Novi Urengoi, so they decided to make the trip in a Russian Uazik jeep 400 miles across the winter roads of the frozen tundra. This can be a risky trip when Boris Ruskalamov and Nikolai Goloshchapov could not get tickets on the plane from Salekhard to Novi Urengoi, so they decided to make the trip in a Russian Uazik jeep 400 miles across the winter roads of the frozen tundra. This can be a risky trip when the winds pick up and snow drifts cover the road.

As things turned out our friends did get stuck in a snow rut and ended up waiting ten hours before another vehicle came by. The driver of that vehicle took them back to the nearest depot where they found the operator of a large tractor

to taxi them back out and haul their jeep out of the snow bank onto the road. They arrived in Novi Urengoi Tuesday morning at 3 AM so I didn't see them till I woke up for breakfast well rested on Tuesday morning.

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(coto

next issue of MBL News.)



**Loading the vahtovka**



**The church in Samburg**

*Note: This letter was sent by Missionary Donald Marsden who is a full time missionary to Russia. Donald joined me on a short term mission to Russia in 1993. He returned to Russia in 1995 as a full time missionary with the Presbyterian Church. He and his wife Laurie and three children reside in Moscow.*

*Children with coloring books*



#### NEWS FROM NICARAGUA

Thom Walker's computer in Nicaragua is broken down so we will have to wait until he comes home to get a report. However, it was early this month that a friend of mine volunteered to go to Nicaragua to take pictures of Thom's ministry. He was all ready with excellent photographic equipment as well as JVC camcorder and excited about going. Steve Berg was in Nicaragua only long enough to get a few pictures on the river before he became seriously ill. Thom called from Nicaragua and we decided to get Steve on a plane and return to Savannah where he could get some medical assistance. I am thankful that Steve is recovering and that he looks a lot better. Anyway, thanks Steve for making a try at it.

Thom will return to the USA at the end of the month to raise additional funds for the work in Rama and Bluefield.

#### A FINAL NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

I will be traveling to Oregon to attend the Regional Assembly of Christian Churches meeting in Pendleton, OR. Margot and I have decided to drive out and on the way back visit some of our friends at the many churches that have been supporting MBL. Our trip will take us across to Oregon, to Washington, down the coast to Los Angeles and then head easterly through AZ and NM and TX. A stop at many churches will depend on our schedule and upon making arrangements to meet with friends. We will travel through Oklahoma before visiting Texas. For sure we will stop at Utica MS and Meridian and then go on to Atlanta for a stop; there to visit with several Pastors. Hopefully, we can tour the new aquarium in Atlanta.

May your days be peaceful and blessed by the Lord.

John Novikoff

**“Opening the Bible”**



**218 Dyches Dr.  
Savannah GA 31406-5760**

Please cut along this line-----  
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Dear Pastor John,

I want to support the work of the Mission for Biblical Literacy in Russia, Armenia, Nicaragua and also to our American Christian Churches. Therefore I want to make the following contributions to do my part.

1. I am pleased to provide \_\_\_\$ 250 \_\_\_\$500 \_\_\_\$1000 or \_\_\_\$ \_\_\_\_\_ dollars for the  
**Roger N. Carstensen Fund.**

2. I also would like to provide \$\_\_\_\_\_ to support the Mission for Biblical Literacy in  
(please check one of the following) **Russia/Armenia**\_\_\_\_\_ **Nicaragua**\_\_\_\_\_ **Israel**\_\_\_\_\_.  
**(All contributions are tax deductible)**

3. Furthermore, I would like to know how I can help with a gift to the Mission for Biblical Literacy through my will

Please send your gift to:

**Mission for Biblical Literacy**

**218 Dyches Dr**

**Savannah GA 31406 Ph 404 806 1485**

Thank You for caring