

Newsletter from the MBL Office Moscow, Russia

February - March - April 2004

Presently our ministry in Russia has two major directions:

- Outreach to women (through publications of Christian women’s magazines - “Sestra” (“sister”) in Russian and “Duster Ayots” (“daughter of Armenia”) in the Armenian language, women’s clubs, conferences and workshops)
- Outreach to children and especially orphans (through vacation Bible schools and various activities – programs at schools and churches).

In February through April 2004 we were working on publishing our Spring issue of “Sestra” and “Duster Ayots”, prepared and led First Interdenominational Prayer Breakfast for Women-leaders, Galina Obrovets was invited to speak and present the magazine and our ministry at the Russian Evangelical Alliance conference, to students of the Russian-American Christian University, round table at State Duma and big conference for Christian teachers.

Our plans for May and June-July: organizing VBS for 175 children (orphans and children with disabilities) in Ekimovichi in June and 75 orphans in Shatalovo(Smolensk Region) in July. In first two weeks of August we are planning a mission trip in the South of Russia.

We need your prayers for the summer projects!

ROUND TABLE MEETING IN THE STATE DUMA

On February 26, 2004 in the State Duma there was held a “round table” on “Demography and protection of women’s reproductive health. The role of social organizations”. Alexander Chuev, who is the deputy of the State Duma and the vice-chairman of social and religious organizations’ Committee, was in charge. The initiative of the meeting belongs to the Catholic Social organization deals with family’s health “Homo Amans” (A person who loves.).

Chuev said in his speech the following: “Mass abortions, that take away lives of about two million unborn children every year became a tragedy for modern Russia. Those who are pro abortions don’t call them a murder. They prefer to use another names: not “a child” but “an embryo”. Because once called unborn child a human being, one should acknowledge his right to live as well as all other rights that belong to him as a human being. In 2003 the Government of Russian Federation passed a resolution “About the list of social possible cases of artificial pregnancy breaking”. The resolution



excommunicated the most outrageous cases of pregnancy breaking. It is not sufficient but still is a real victory of life protection movement supporters. We will keep working on this problem in order all children in Russia become desirable, and society and law do everything possible to support mother’s life and health as well as child’s ones. We are able to and should take care of them both”.

Galina Obrovets, the director of the Russian Center of the Mission for Biblical Literacy, and Anna Nerkararyan, our Armenian coordinator, were invited to the meeting to share their opinions on the lifted problems and support efforts of Christians in bringing Christian morals and ethics to the Russian society.

Our Russian team (from left to right): Olga Kulgavuk, in charge for working with readers, sales and subscription manager, Galina Obrovets, director, Rimma Gromova, accountant, Tatiana Stepusuk, part -time secretary.



Our winter and spring issues of “Sestra” magazine



WE ARE UNITED BY GOD'S LOVE

On March 12, 2004 The Moscow Center of the Mission for Biblical Literacy organized prayer breakfast for Christian women leaders from all denominations for the first time.

On March 12 in Moscow café "Breeze" there was held an Interdenominational prayer breakfast. 50 Christian women came to the meeting. Such fellowship is one of the first ones in Russia of this kind. There were gathered women whom God has called for special ministries. Leaders and co-workers of Christian publishing houses, organizations and funds; theologians, nuns and teachers of theological schools; Christian psychologists, mothers of many children,

pastor's wives, and representatives of Christian media were there. There also was the only man on this unique women's meeting – the director of Christian evangelical churches' Council in Russia Victor Nikitin. At the beginning of the meeting he invited all sisters for prayer about the president and the government of Russia, about the further economical development and stabilization in the country, about the distraction of anti-Semitic moods and decreasing of terrorist threat, about solving international conflicts and nations' welfare in Russia. Sisters from Orthodox, Catholic, and evangelical protestant churches led the other prayers. During three hours they prayed for such issues as moral and social decay in our society, compassion that would fill their compatriots, blessing and stability in families. Women also prayed about good conditions for children to be born and brought up in, and also about orphans, abandoned and homeless children.

Sister Ignatiya (Russian Orthodox Church): *"We all need to grow in Christ and love Him as a foundation of our faith. We may keep our traditions and religion's uniqueness, but we have to love one another and unite around Jesus Christ".*

Galina Maslennikova (Catholic Church): *"We are branches of one huge tree. We have one root".*

Evgeniya Karbysheva (Evangelical Christian Church) *talked about the necessity for establishing a single prayer movement, the primary goal of which would be a prayer about spiritual unity, love, and brotherhood. "Let our today's first little candle turn into a bright prayer fire of all Christian women in Russia".*

Everybody was inspired and united by wonderful songs about Christ's glory and Church as His beloved bride. But the most important thing about this meeting was an atmosphere of unity, mutual understanding, and love to God. The very fact that such unity became possible called tears of joy out of sisters' eyes. Women didn't want to leave immediately after the meeting was over. They kindly greeted each other and shared their new impressions. Each woman received a copy of the new issue of Christian Women's magazine "Sestra" published by the Russian Center of the mission for Biblical Literacy.



Responses to the Prayer breakfast:

"I am thankful to God for the opportunity to be here. I got to know lots of useful things for myself. I am sure I will use them in my future ministry in the Salvation Army. Most of all I am impressed by the prayer program – I've never met such kind of versatility! My great desire is to carry the message to our women of how much God needs us".

Victoria Lalac,

Salvation Army Officer of Command of Eastern Europe, in charge for women ministry.

"I felt rather skeptical about this meeting initially. I expected it to be one more official setting. But in fact the prayer breakfast was filled with great warmth and unbelievable harmony. There were gathered women each of whom is a Mother of her Christian ministry; they relate to their service as to their children; they appeal to God like to their Father. It is delightful to see so many sisters devoted to their ministry. I was very pleased to have fellowship with them".

Anna Shirochenskaya, Director, "Triada" Publishing House.

"This is an embodiment of inner faith, those spiritual expectations and even those spiritual prophecies that were "flying in the air" about ten years ago. They start to acquire visible forms only now. In the face of women these forms are beautiful! It is delightful to see so many energetic, active, talented Christian women taking care of important and complicated problems. I experienced great intellectual, emotional, and spiritual pleasure".

Victoria Mazharova, Master of Theology, writer.

"God Himself organized this meeting through Galina Obrovets. This prayer gathering is like a source of a river, which will give a start to a great stream. It is not accidentally, that our first prayer meeting of this kind took place in a little café called "Breeze". I wish this breeze becomes a huge wave that overflows the banks: we, Russian women, should join in united prayer. Women-leaders from different Christian denominations are gathered here. But in the Body of Christ we are one. We are united by love. Our goal is to inspire entire Russia for prayer first and then for creative spiritual work".

Evgenya Karbysheva, Leader, International interdenominational Prayer ministry (Rostov-na-Donu).



An article from the latest issue of Christian Women's magazine "Sestra" written by Anna Ilyinichna Ryabova, 82 years old, mother of two daughters, she attends the Presbyterian Church in Nahodka city (Russian Far East).

She was brought up in an orphanage. Her father was killed by "kulaki" in soviet times. Her mother got burned in a house. At the age of twenty Anna went to front. There she served as a nurse, a hospital attendant (took the wounded from the battlefield) and a driver. She drove from Leningrad to Berlin. Since this issue is published in Spring and every May we celebrate victory in World War 2 this article is a commemoration of all who gave their lives in the war.

What a joy! We are already in Berlin! Two of my friends and I, we entered Berlin driving "Katyushas"! Victory!!! War – is a field of death. But we didn't want to kill; we wanted everything to go in peace. I believe in God since childhood. I always prayed. I used to say before a battle: "Lord, help us to release our country..." I had wounds and suffered from pain. That's why I often appealed to God and asked for His protection. I have been addressing God all of my life.

It was so terrifying on war! I remember, once I was taking eighteen wounded men from a battlefield. All of them cried: "Drink, drink..." It was artillery preparation going on there – fire, smoke, crash... Nothing was visible.

Together with the hospital attendants I bandaged the wounded and helped to load them into a car. All this was accompanied by whistling bullets. There was one German soldier that lied motion-lessly. We were supposed to render some medical help to Germans also. I bound to him to find out whether he was alive or not. He suddenly took a knife and hurt me with it. My blood stroke like a stream. I got filled with wrath and offence. Then I took a gun and shot him. Sometimes I brought equipment and food on my car, but more often I took wounded men on it from a battlefield to hospital. It was September 1944 when once I came loaded to one detachment. It was encircled. The soldiers were amazed to see me and asked: "How have you possibly managed to come here?" 333 people were concealing themselves in a trench. I noticed the two deceased over there. It had been already 3 days as the soldiers had had no a single drop to drink. So, those guys tried to get some water. A river separated Russians from Germans. I had some water for my car. I gave it all to the soldiers. The commander of the detachment had forbidden anyone to go to get water from the river. Shooting without a trial



was a punishment for disobedience. But everybody was already quite dried up. Then I persuaded another young woman to help me to get some water. We took two ten-liter cans and crawled toward the river. We got to it and first quenched our thirst. Then we tried to get a little bit up. A German soldier was standing in front of us. He suddenly cried in German: "Children! Don't shoot. I am also a father; I also have "kinder" (children). Take the water quickly and get out of here!" The German soldiers appeared in a distance. We crawled back.

Everybody was provided by a half glass of water. The order was broken. The commander asked: "Who brought the water?" Everyone was keeping silence. The commander repeated the question. Then I answered that had been us who had brought the water. I also added that they could shoot us for that if they pleased; God would judge between us. Then a deputy of a political work leader came in. He wondered what had happened. When he found out the case, he wrote down our names and announced: "A medal for courage!" I thought then: "Lord! Thank You!" When I had been coming to this detachment I prayed: "Lord, I can't find them, show me the right way!" And

A MEDAL FOR COURAGE

God helped me to find that detachment and protected me. No harm was made to me.

I lived in Berlin for some time after the war was finished. Many Germans told us they had just been fulfilling the Hitler's command. They also had been against the war and had no clue why they should have been fighting. I forgave them. We even attended the same church... I asked God to forgive me my sins.

There were a lot of suffering on the war as well as in my life: my first husband died during an earthquake in Dushanbe together with our son. Then my house got burnt... I experienced different sicknesses... But Jesus suffered for my sake even more. He suffered for all people. He wants us to live in peace; He wants war – the most terrible thing – don't ever occur. He died for each of us. He is GOD of the WHOLE WORLD. Jesus Christ has resurrected – this is a miracle!

I wish to people to live friendly, to treat each other in good manner, not to quarrel. I would like the war, like the one that happened in 1940, never occur again. What a great number of people died or were injured there... Even now so many people die without war. Every time I pray I ask Jesus Christ to give people a sound reasoning.

Anna Ryabova

TO YOU – WITH LOVE

Overview of questionnaires sent by the readers of the magazine “Sestra”

It is said in Proverbs 14:24: “In all toil there is profit...”. Our profit – is reader’s love, respect, interest, and appreciation.

According to a questionnaire that was recently held, our magazine is read by people from different cities (even distant ones, such as Yakutsk), of different age (from 22 to 74 years old), and confessions (Orthodox, Catholics, protestants and others).

The major part of our readers (88%) are women primarily (62%) in the age rank from 35 to 50 years old. Almost everyone who underwent the questionnaire said she reads our magazine “from cover to cover”. Among educated readers (40%) the most popular articles are those published in “Spiritual Legacy”, “Christianity and Culture”, “Treasures of Christian wisdom”, “Christian Civilization”, and “Faith and Science” sections. The other category of readers like the sections “Miloserdie”, “Podvijniitsiy veriy”, “Destinies”, “Little Bible Dictionary”, “Good Peaces of Advice”, and others. The sections “Family and the Bible”, “Little Sister”, and “Choose Life” where, by the way, the articles about family planning are published, are interesting to readers of 25 – 40 years old.

Our respondents are mainly subscribers of our magazine. But there are a lot of other readers who get it from friends and acquaintances. We are very glad of this matter of fact, since the quantity of our readers goes in this case up.

Ostrovskya V.I. from Miytischy town of Moscow region and Furletova E.V. from Moscow wrote that 25 people read the magazine with them; Marina Agadjanyan said 30 more readers join her; Rachlinkulova Z.R. told it was hard for her even to say how many people read the magazine with her because “each edition goes from hands to hands”.

The readers like the way the magazine is designed. They consider icons and pictures of great artists the most attractive type of artistic design. Our readers have their favorite authors. They say the articles of those authors are especially deep and penetrating.

It is a real pleasure for us to read letters where it is written the following:

“Due to God, I got acquainted with you “Sister”, and I am very glad about it. It is great that Lord doesn’t forget

His daughters, and sends His Word and His people!”
Borodulina N.D., Perm’.

“Thanks to people who publish this magazine. Its content lifts up my soul and inspires me”. Maria Prioymisheva, Moscow.

“The magazine is very interesting. Keep up the good work”. Elena Furletova, Moscow.

“Thank you for your great work on God’s field”. Bogachoyva L.P., Karatuz, Krasnoyarsk area.

“Thank you for caring about us, women”. Lipina N.A., Moscow.

“I think the content of every edition of the magazine is spiritual food for a Christian”. Kanaeva Y.M., Moscow.

“There is a good balance between all themes in the magazine. Everything published there is of present interest. People of different age can find something useful for themselves”. Belmachyova M.V., Moscow area.

“I give the magazine to my non-christian acquaintances to read because there is a lot of important and interesting information that you can never find in other editions of this kind”. Dement’ev V.A., Moscow.

Some of our readers suggested topics they would like to read about in the magazine. We’ve taken into account several of them in our last edition and created new sections – “Poetry Page” and “Little Paper Ship”.

Dear sponsors, thank you for your love, support, and belief in our mutual business – to carry “the true light which enlightens everyone...” (John 1:9).

at our office



Anna Nerkariryan, our Armenian coordinator



Please pray for these orphans!



Galina speaks to students of the Russian-American Christian University on April 21, conference for teachers – March 26 and Evangelical Alliance conference on April 1, 2004