



# REPORTER

Reaching Millions For Christ



## **Rehab Ministry Conference** *"Thus far the LORD has helped us."*

June 17–21 of this year was marked by a special event, a conference held in the Tver region which brought hundreds of people together from more than thirty different drug and alcohol rehab centers. It was unique because most of the participants were involved in rehabilitation ministry, which is gaining momentum and rapidly growing in many cities and regions of Russia. Launching this conference, the first of its kind, has great potential, as people from various rehab centers with diverse backgrounds have an opportunity to gather, meet and learn from each other, worship the Lord, and testify about what the Lord has done in their lives.

Dima Gusev, coordinator of RCR's Pirkko Home rehab centers, and one of the main organizers of the conference, shared: "The conference was attended by about 300 people, and the majority came from three different programs: RCR's "Liberation" Pirkko Homes (14 centers), "House of the Word" (coordinator: Maxim Prudnik, 15 centers), and "Liberation" Foundation (coordinator: Evgeniy Drugov, 9 centers). The idea behind this event is to encourage people undergoing rehabilitation and adaptation, as well as the graduates and ministry leaders of rehab centers. Despite many difficulties, it was a wonderful project. Praise the Lord Jesus Christ!"

Speaking of difficulties - the day before the conference opened, one government official showed up at the conference site and told us we did not have the needed permits for such an event. What a trial that was! Hundreds of people were about to leave from as far away as Belarus, and there was a question of whether the conference would be happening at all! But by the end of the day God had resolved this issue through the efforts of the local pastor. On the second day of the conference another three officials came wanting to close things down. Again, God took care of the situation, and we were allowed to continue!

This first conference was a milestone, and it marks the greatness and glory of God, our Lord, and His mercy and faithfulness to all people. The main theme was based on the book of Exodus, and the story of how God delivered His people from the slavery of Egypt, a direct illustration of what happens today when people come to Christ, regardless if they come to Him at a rehab center or a church. At the conclusion the conference, it was appropriate to repeat the words of the prophet Samuel: *"Thus far the LORD has helped us."* (1 Sam. 7:12b).





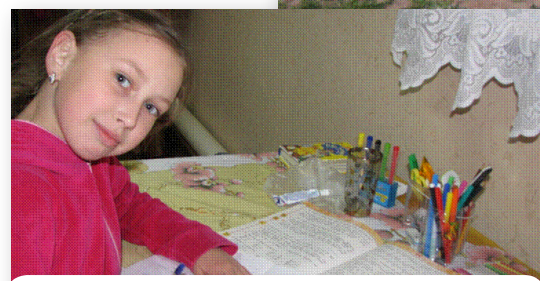
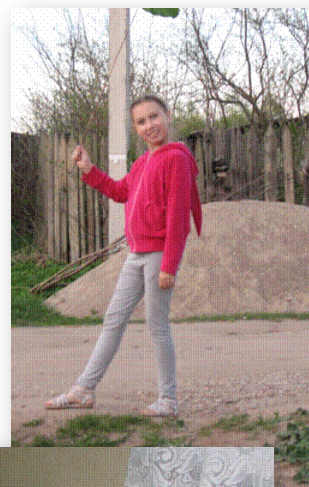
## New Program for Moms with Kids at the “Liberation” Pirkko Home

In April we started a new program for mothers with children in one of our women’s rehabilitation centers. Sometimes when mothers need rehabilitation, it would be better to keep them together with their children, rather than separating them during this time.



*Tamara and Karalina*

A woman named Tamara asked us for help with getting rid of her alcohol addiction. She has two daughters, Karalina & Daria. Her maternal rights were taken away regarding the youngest child, Daria, and now, two years later, her rights regarding Karalina are in question. In the meantime, Tamara attended the church in Vyshny Volochek, so she knew about our rehab center nearby. When a critical moment came in her life, when she lost her job and had no means of livelihood, she came to our rehab center for help. We informed the local Guardianship Services of Tamara’s desire to change and to live at the center with her daughter. The local authorities approved their stay here, and so we accepted both of them. In May, Karalina completed 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. The girl is very active, trying to help in any way she can. Tamara is very happy that she has the opportunity to go through rehabilitation while keeping her daughter with her.



*Karalina doing her school work*

At the beginning of May, we were asked to help a second woman, Rose, from Kimry, Tver region. She has also been addicted to alcohol for many years. She was deprived of maternal rights for her two sons, and now has a two year old daughter, Arina. Rose has lost a lot and wants to change. She is very thankful to God that it is possible to come to the rehabilitation center with her daughter.



*Rose and Arina*



*Nadia helps with the children*



*Moms with their children*

Nadia Kostikova (age 26) came in February, 2015, to help Marina Markov with the ministry to women and their children at Nikulino. Originally from Volokolamsk, Moscow region, she has completed RCR’s rehab program at the “Liberation” Pirkko Home in Dyatkovo, Bryansk region, and expressed a desire to help with our rehab ministry.

We plan to expand this ministry for mothers with children. To do so, we will need to remodel our building to accommodate them. We ask for your prayers about this.



## Trip to RCR's First Pirkko Home, in Emva, Komi

In late April, the Executive Director of RCR in Moscow, Alexander Zakharov, and his colleague, Natalia Chernyakova, visited the Pirkko Home in the city of Emva, Komi Republic, which ministers to believers in the prisons of that far north region and serves as a half-way house for released prisoners. This was the very first "Pirkko Home" in Russia. When it opened in 1994, the residents of the center named it in honor of Pirkko Poysti, the late wife of Earl Poysti, who had inspired RCR mission staff to spread the Gospel among prisoners.



*Vyacheslav Kozlov,  
Director in Emva, Komi*

The person in charge of the Pirkko Home in Komi is our brother in the Lord, Vyacheslav Kozlov, who came to serve here in 2008. The Lord has blessed his work; although at first, when seeing the abundance of ministry work to be done, and being aware of his limitations, he was at a loss as to how to begin! Today, this dear brother also leads a prison ministry in the Komi Republic and is the pastor of the local community church in the nearby village of Vylgort. This is where he was married and his two precious children were born.



*The Pirkko Home in Emva, Komi, serves former prisoners*

The first "eye opener" when we arrived was the very warm hospitality of the Pirkko Home residents, which was in stark contrast to the cold severity of the surrounding landscape – the sparse nature and ragged buildings. Joyfully, I realized how gratifying it was to know that our long-term efforts to establish a prison ministry in this city were not in vain; the ministry continues to bear fruit! The people living in the Pirkko Home find comfort, support, and enough time for inner changes that the Lord is making. The residents' lives and circumstances are complicated. They became believers in the Lord while in one of the numerous prisons in this region. Now here at the Pirkko Home, they study the Bible, pray together, and learn how to restrain their previous sinful habits and temperaments, and submit to Jesus Christ.

Natalia Chernyakova used this opportunity, when visiting Emva, to record five testimonies of local believers for the radio program "Choice." The programs will soon be available for listening on our Russian website, [www.rcr.ru](http://www.rcr.ru). One of them, the testimony of Emva's Assistant Director, Haidar Demkin, is on the following page of this newsletter.

Our few short days there were extended by talking late into the night. These times were saturated with Christian fellowship, as people openly shared personal experiences, counted the blessings they received from the Lord and prayed regarding mutual and personal challenges and needs, including the great need for transportation for visiting jails and prisons, and local government approval of their plans for mission work in prisons for the next year.

This year, to honor the 70th anniversary of victory in World War II, the Russian government is planning to grant a large number of official pardons, especially to women. The prison administration is requesting that people help these freed women so they would not find themselves behind bars again. The difficulty is that we need ministers to work with these women, and also a place for them to live. The brothers of the small church here have already decided that they would not refuse anyone who asks for help.

When the time came to say goodbye, it was hard and there was a strong desire to pray for our Christian brothers here. Although it was a short visit, between us there was established a thread of spiritual kinship.



*Alexander Zakharov & the small church with a big heart in  
Emva. Haidar Demkin is in the first row, center.*

- Alexander Zakharov



*Haidar Demkin shared his testimony with Natalia Chernyakova for RCR's "Choice" radio program*

***"I only have so many years left...  
I want to live them for my God"***  
**Haidar Demkin ministers at the  
Pirkko Home in Emva to those who  
came to faith while in prison**

I was born into a Muslim Tatar family. In our family the attitude towards Jesus Christ was biased and any mention of Him was not welcomed. My grandma was a devout Muslim and always prayed. From an early age my mother would intentionally sit me down next to Grandma during her prayers. Grandma would pray to Allah while sitting on a prayer rug and I sat right beside her. After that, my "education" was basically what I

learned on the streets. I was looking to hang out with older guys, those who were tougher and rowdier. My parents were working, so no one was there to watch me. I joined in the street fighting, stealing, and smoking. In school I considered myself "cool" - a tough and popular guy.

As a result of such a life, I was placed on my first probation. I was not scared, but to the contrary, I saw myself as even more tough; I was my own boss. My new friendships had corrupted the good morals that were instilled in me since childhood. Not long after serving my first prison sentence, there was a second and a third. By the age of 27, I felt at home only in prison, where I felt like a fish in water. I learned how to play poker. It was prestigious during the '90s, and I made some easy money. So started my opportunistic life – no need to work, there was always enough for a bowl of soup. Each prison term was followed by the next. Each time I thought that this would be my last time, and when I got out I would start a new life, with a clean slate, but like a circle, and I always returned to my old ways.

When I often found myself in the wrong in my dealings with others, I always found an excuse for my behavior. However, if I was treated unjustly, I rebelled and thought of myself as "a fighter for the truth." I thought that even if there were continual lies and injustice in this particular prison, if I went somewhere else it would be better. But I never found such a place, where truth is not suppressed.

I remember when the time of grace came in 1989, when freedom was given to distribute New Testaments in prisons. Shortly after that, the magazine, *The Gospel Behind Barbed Wire*, appeared, with testimonies of those who became believers while in prison. All this turned my world upside down. I read and wept - truth does exist under heaven! For the first time, while in prison, I called on the name of the Lord, "Jesus Christ, if you really exist, show me a sign. Get me out of here."

Surprisingly, the Lord did answer! I was transferred from a high security prison to one with lower security, but I did not give it much importance at the time - I had forgotten that I prayed for a sign. A year later I was released... and then got a new term for another 12 years. This was in 1993, when I was 35 years old. During the quarantine before entering prison yet again, I received the New Testament and began to read it. Between transfers, I was sent to the tuberculosis hospital. I prayed in my own words, asking God what was happening with my health, and the Lord reminded me of my former prayer, and how He had responded. I begged for forgiveness. There were no believers around me in this place. I was discharged from the hospital to be returned to prison, but the prison refused to take me back because of my reputation for being disobedient and a trouble maker. For several years I was sent from prison to prison, but was not accepted anywhere, until I ended up in Ryazan. Here Christians would come and visit prisoners. This had a huge effect on my life and my future. I was drawn to the fellowship with believers. I corresponded with some, sought spiritual literature and books, and always read the magazine, *The Gospel Behind Barbed Wire*. Then we were visited by some people from Russian Christian Radio and I was able to speak with them. A few months later, I repented and became determined to stand firm in faith, and began to grow and mature. When I was released I was baptized in a church near Moscow.

*Alexander Zakharov: After many years, we met again with Haidar at the Pirkko Home in Emva, Komi Republic, where he started ministering last year as the assistant director. There are eight brothers under his care undergoing rehabilitation. In one of our evening conversations I asked Haidar why he, at his age and poor health, chose this difficult path of serving at the rehabilitation center, to which he replied: "You know, I only have so many years left on earth and I want to live them for my God." Simple and complete. Blessings to you, dear brother.*

The full testimony of Haidar Demkin is available in Russian on our Russian website: [www.rcr.ru](http://www.rcr.ru)

