



REPORTER

Preaching the Gospel in the
Russian Language since 1946

RCR Ministry: "Count Your Blessings, Name Them 1 By 1"

By the grace of God, and support from many of you, the ministry of RCR continues to fulfill the command of Christ to "go and make disciples." We'd like to share with you some of the statistics from our ministry in 2018:

Prison Magazine – 55% of our ministry budget

- 45,000 magazines were printed last year
- 612 missionaries were sent packages of magazines, 6 times during the year
- 90% of prisons in Russia received our magazine – it is the ONLY Christian magazine sent to prisons on a regular basis
- 1,394 individuals have regularly received our magazine over many years
- 1,512 letters were answered personally by us
- 5,000 80-page supplement booklets with prisoners' testimonies, poems, drawings & stories were printed and sent to subscribers

Pirkko Homes - 25% of our ministry budget

- 10 centers or locations; 3 of them have a women's home as well as a men's home
- 14 leaders ministered at the centers, along with 20 assistants
- 332 people turned for help to our rehabilitation centers
- 59 successfully completed our program, both rehabilitation and adaptation

RCR Studio - 20% of our ministry budget

- 136 video programs were recorded
- 48 guests visited our studio to do recordings
- 1275 hours were spent editing programs
- 7200 DVDs were recorded and distributed
- 1st time in 22 years - we remodeled our RCR recording studio



New Correspondence Center in Vladivostok

At the end of 2018, I had a meeting in Vladivostok with Pastor Alexander Yakushenko, who actively uses our prison magazine, *The Gospel Behind Barbed Wire*, and DVDs with RCR's programs in his prison ministry work. He literally burns with the desire to save people who are serving time for their crimes and inspires other ministers in Vladivostok to jointly visit prisons and prisoners. The fruits are obvious - his church opened a rehabilitation center for released prisoners, and many who came were people Alexander had taken care of personally while they were still in prison. We need more interaction between our two ministries, so in February 2019 RCR opened a new correspondence office for our magazine in Vladivostok, in addition to those in Novosibirsk and Komi. We would like to share Alexander Yakushenko's testimony with you.

- Alexander Zakharov, Executive Director of RCR in Russia



Alexander Yakushenko: from a rebellious heart to the great ministry of God in the Far East of Russia



The most incredible turn in my destiny occurred when the most amazing book of life fell into my hands - the Bible. At that time, back in 1994, I was in a remote place in the northern Amur Region in a high security prison. Being convicted and sentenced to a long prison term, I plunged into the prisoner world. I often violated prison rules, suffered "for the common cause," rebelled, and cut my wrists.



Once, for one of my violations, I landed in solitary confinement. Suddenly the guard opened the door and asked, "You do not sleep? Read this!" and threw the New Testament to the bench where I was sitting, explaining, "This was passed out by the believers who came to visit the prison." So for the first time, the Word of God fell into my hands. It was on this night that I, not understanding whom I was addressing, said, "If you are, change my life. I will follow you."



Through the Bible, I met Jesus Christ, who healed my rebellious heart and cleansed my soul. I left the old way of life and bad habits, stopped playing cards for money, distributed my winnings, forgave other card debts, and began to pray and meet with believers. Because of this, there was a very big uproar among the criminal bosses. It could have all ended badly for me. One even swore to slaughter me, in a note he personally wrote to me. But at that time my heart and mind were filled with other things; I read the Bible and learned to walk in "new ways."

We formed a group of believers, and began to study the Word of God together and apply it in our lives. One day, out of my passion for Christ, I even organized a program on the internal prison radio... and so began my public ministry to God. In the evening, after work at 8:00 pm, I came to the radio room, where I could speak to the whole prison, and began to urge everyone on behalf of the Lord to reconsider their lives and turn to God. Two hours of broadcasting caused a commotion all over the prison. Unfortunately, I was not allowed to continue going on the air very many times. There were other ways to talk about God: our behavior and having the courage to preach. Wherever it was possible to go, I went both to those in solitary confinement and to other cell blocks. I took an accordion player and a grandfatherly military veteran and went to the barracks. They sang hymns as best they could, and I preached as best I could. And you know, our Christian community multiplied as in the book of Acts.

I also had my own requests of God, which I did not tell anyone. The old rebellious lifestyle severely damaged my health. Spending a lot of time on the concrete floor in isolation, I acquired many health problems; one of them was infertility. I was told that I would never have children. I almost came to terms with this, but turning to the Lord, I thought maybe He could change this, too. *(continued on next page)*

RCR Studio – Feedback from “Vera 24” TV Channel

Thank you for your ministry on “Vera 24”! We are pleased that our joint work expands the boundaries of the Kingdom of God! We receive a lot of feedback on your “Choice” and “Conversations with Alexei Smirnov” programs:

“May the Lord bless you! You do important work by telling how He works in people’s lives.” - Ekaterina (Ukraine)

“Well done! You’re doing such an amazing program! Every story, every life is a testimony of God’s power. Thank you and bless you!” - Maxim (Tyumen, Russia)

“I liked the ‘Choice’ program with Asya Frolova; I was very touched by her testimony.” - Rimma (Omsk, Russia)

“Thank you for the encouraging testimony! I really like the program “Choice”! Bless you! May as many people as possible accept salvation!” - Tamara (Tula, Russia)

“I thank God for you. I like your program with Smirnov, where current issues are addressed.” - Olesya (Astrakhan, Russia)

“Thank you for preaching, for your loyalty and ministry. This is a great blessing! Greetings to Pastor Alexei Smirnov.”
- Nikolay (Kazakhstan)

Meanwhile, I realized that as a Christian I should be baptized and make a covenant with God! But how could I do that? My brothers and I prayed, and I went to ask the authorities. The warden politely listened to me and said that they would invite the priest and they would baptize us in a fire barrel. But I told him that we need to be baptized in a river, like Jesus Christ, by total immersion. So in the autumn we agreed on baptism in the local river in the snow forest of the taiga, which by then was covered with ice and frost (-30 C / -22 F). Thank God, brothers from Tynda came, made a hole in the ice and waited for us to be taken out of the prison under escort. Before that, we prepared: we prayed, and I fasted for eight days - I wanted to be cleansed before entering into a covenant with the Lord. We asked for new sets of white underwear, in which we wanted to step into the hole, as a symbol that God cleansed us and made our sins white as snow! Eight of us were baptized. Two moments are clear in my memory: when the commander shouted and they tied a rope to my leg so that I wouldn’t run away through the ice hole. And the second, that Pastor Sergey stood in the ice hole the whole time, while we were coming one at a time for our turn to be immersed. This has become an unheard of event for the whole prison!



The markings on the photo say: “Takhtamygda 1994, my baptism.” In the center, an arrow is pointing to Alexander. The “ice hole” in the center is also labeled, and the name of the river.

Upon being freed, I found the House of Prayer (the local church) and joined the ministry. There I met a beautiful sister who became my wife. The Lord has given us six children! I once dreamed of coming to prison in a different capacity as a “new” person, and I believe that my desire coincided with God’s will and the doors of the prison opened... and then more and more did! God helped, and our prison ministry began in the Far East of Russia. We managed to visit



Alexander preaching at a prison in Yakutia.

all the correctional institutions of the Far East with the preaching of the Gospel - in Magadan, Kamchatka, Yakutsk, Khabarovsk, and the Amur Region. In 2002, we began to receive and use the magazine *The Gospel Behind Barbed Wire*, which literally became our assistant and co-worker in the prison field. I can’t even count the number of people with whom I prayed the prayer of repentance, how many started a new life, and how many changed their lives during these 22 years. All this, thanks to the fact that God once bowed my knees and my heart!



- Alexander Yakushenko, pastor of the Evangelical Church in Vladivostok

News from the Nikulino Pirkko Homes (Tver Region)



Praise the Lord! Prayers are heard! We prayed a lot for work and for good relations with local residents, and God answered. Since the beginning of winter we have not been at home for a single day; there has always been work. Previously, we sat for two or three months without any income at all, barely making ends meet. Now the locals in the village are hiring us to repair their houses, fences, etc. - this is a real blessing for us!

Now there are eight men in rehabilitation and three graduates who have nowhere to go: they have no

relatives who will accept them, there is no work for them yet (one is disabled, another has health problems as a consequence of using drugs). I, Igor, have one assistant for the men's ministry, Alexei. Dima, a kind and faithful brother who loves the Lord, is doing an internship after rehabilitation and wants to be an assistant as well. He will soon be baptized, please pray for him.



Our women's ministry is now down to only two women in the center. One of them, Irina, a church member from the Moscow Region, came to help. She loves the Word of God very much and wants to study it with the women, but she has poor health and does not have the strength to look after new people. Another woman, Tanya, is addicted to alcohol and needs to be saved. She is already getting closer to God.

Marina Markova says: "I currently do not have a helper. I used to cope well without an assistant, but now that we live in a separate house in the neighborhood and have two small children, I cannot always look after the girls too. My previous assistant

left two months ago and on February 16th she married a graduate from our center."

Pray for an assistant in the women's ministry. We could even have several helpers so that we can take mothers with children again (extra care and time are needed for babysitting the children while their mothers are studying the Bible). Pray also for the spiritual birth of everyone who is undergoing rehabilitation. We also have some needs: a kitchen for the men's house where graduates now live, and a fence around our family's house."



- Igor and Marina Markov, leaders of the men's and women's rehab center in Nikulino

Presenting Earl Poysti's Sermons in New Ways

In December 2018, we began to distribute printed sermons by Earl Poysti on the Yandex Zen platform under the heading "Secrets of the Bible." We believe that the timeless relevance of the preaching of the Gospel and the colorful, attractive design will reach people among this audience of 15 million users. We ask Russian speakers to join us through one of these apps: WhatsApp, Viber or Telegram at +79671909523, so we can notify you when new items are posted. With an increase in daily views, we will also get the right to post RCR video programs here.

Also please pray that God would provide funds for a new 2019 supplement to *The Gospel Behind Barbed Wire* magazine. In this collection, we plan to publish some of Earl Poysti's sermons along with fitting artwork.

