

Preaching the Gospel in the Russian Language since 1946



REPORTER

The Ministry of RCR During the Coronavirus Pandemic



The coronavirus pandemic did not bypass the ministry of RCR. Employees were forced to work from home and some of the Pirkko Homes faced significant restrictions. This was a new challenge, but we believe that God is sovereign over everything and we are encouraged by that.

Studio & Media Ministry – Our video channel became a blessing for many people during this time of anxiety. Thank God, the quarantine didn't affect our programs in any way! Our video channel already has 1.5 million views per year, and about 3,000 comments and reviews on social networks. Through our video programs, new people subscribe to the magazine and learn about the Pirkko Home rehab centers, and we make new contacts with unbelievers and correspond with them. Also more than 100 illustrated sermons by Earl Poysti are available in print on Yandex Zen (a very popular site in Russia). So far, 160,000 people have read some of these sermons and left 5,100 comments.

Prison Ministry & The Gospel Behind Barbed Wire - Because of the pandemic, visiting prisons is not allowed, but Christian prisoners have become more active - they are independently conducting meetings and small group Bible studies. "We're very grateful for your magazines. We read them in our prayer room and pass them around for everyone in our cell block to read." "We gather and study the Bible twice a week and watch DVDs of RCR's programs. Thanks for the help."

Pirkko Homes – Our rehab centers continue their work, but some have significant restrictions due to the isolation requirements. Although most centers cannot accept new people right now, three can, if they take precautionary measures. Since our adaptation center is at Ruchiyok Christian Camp, which is closed for now, the men were transferred to the Kimry Pirkko Home temporarily, where they are still allowed to work and have been an encouragement to those in the rehab center there.



Introduction: *October 9, 2020 marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of our founder, Earl Poysti, and we would like to share a few details with you about his parents and the spiritual legacy he inherited. Last time we shared about Earl's father, Nikolai Poysti, and now we would like to tell you his mother Martha's story.*

Miracle on the Volga River – Martha Poysti “For God so loved the world...” (John 3:16)



We all know John 3:16, but do we believe it? That God loves the whole world? That he loves all nations equally? This truth was once difficult for me to accept.

When I was a child, missionaries would visit our church and I was always interested in finding out more about the countries these missionaries talked about, and often thought about how much I wanted to become a missionary.

I experienced the most joyful day of my life in 1914. In a small Swedish Methodist church at home in Finland, the Lord gave me new life. I realized that my sins were forgiven, and that I was His child. And I immediately understood that when the Lord calls us to

Himself, He wants us to take the Good News to others. I thought in my heart that maybe the Lord wanted me to be a missionary in some country where they didn't know the Lord. This thought brought me great joy. Then another thought suddenly pierced me: “What if the Lord wants to send me to Russia?” That thought frightened me, and I tried to chase it from my mind!

In 1915, a young missionary, Nikolai Poysti, visited our church and told us about his work in Russia. His heart burned with God's love for the Russian people. I liked the missionary – but not his message. As time went by, I became better acquainted with this missionary and in 1916 he became my husband. I also began to understand that even though I didn't want to go to Russia, now I would have to go there with my husband.



My husband's heart burned with desire to return to Russia to continue preaching the Gospel. In March 1918, at the height of the Russian revolution, he said: “We have to go to Russia! I feel that the Lord is definitely calling us there!” By then we had a small child, and I objected: “How can we go to Russia now, with our child, at such a terrible time?” But he assured me that the Lord would take care of us. The members of our church also protested, saying, “You won't be allowed to preach the Gospel there anyway; they will shoot you or you will starve to death. You are out of your minds!” But my husband was very stubborn, and whenever he sensed something was God's will, he would not give up and nobody could dissuade him... so we packed our bags and left for Petrograd (St. Petersburg).

When we arrived, we discovered that the rumors we had heard about Russia were not exaggerated. It was much worse. There was extreme hunger, and people were being shot right out on the streets. I saw three elderly officers killed right in front of my eyes. The worst thing was the awful starvation. Food was rationed. Our daily ration was 1/8 of a pound of bread per person. Our child's ration was two eggs and one pound of cereal for an entire month.



I would carefully measure the tiny piece of bread we received each day and divide it into three portions for our three meals. That was all the food we had. So often I was tempted to eat it all myself. One couldn't find food to buy for any price. Our child could not survive on the rations she received, and how my heart broke as I watched her starve. But in spite of everything, my husband continued to minister at the church. He would come home tired and hungry, but of course I had nothing more to give him.

But spiritually, the Lord blessed us greatly. We had large meetings, and often Nikolai would preach out on the streets. Many people gave their hearts to the Lord during that time. But in my heart, I constantly murmured against the Lord. Often at night, while my husband and daughter slept, I would get up, get on my knees before the Lord, and pray: “Lord! Why did You call us here? Isn't there any other place in this world where we could preach the Gospel? Why do I have to watch my own child starving to death?” I would always hear His gentle voice telling me: “I left My heavenly home and came down to this sinful earth to save you, a poor sinner. And now you aren't willing to be here to tell others about the salvation that you have found in Me?” But I just couldn't reconcile myself with the thought that I had to be in Russia.



After several months, Nikolai told me that he felt it was God's will that we leave St. Petersburg and move farther south in Russia where they also need preachers and where food was more plentiful. At that time there was a law in effect that prohibited anyone from leaving St. Petersburg without special permission. And permission was only granted to members of the Communist Party and those who were ill. We didn't fall into either category, so there was little hope of being able to leave. But we believed that if it was God's will, He would open the way. We prayed, and Nikolai went to get an application for travel. When he arrived, there were two long lines - one for Communist Party members and one for those who were ill. He asked the Lord to show him which line to choose, and got in the line for Party members. When his turn came, the official asked for his Party membership card. He answered, "I am not a Party member." She looked at him with big eyes and asked, "Then who are you? What is your name?" When he gave his name, she looked at him again and said, "Oh, Pastor Poysti! I know you! I have been to your meetings and I have enjoyed them so much! I will try my best to get you permission to leave." She disappeared into an adjoining room, and returned with a piece of paper - the permission to leave! The paper didn't state any lies; it simply said that we were missionaries and that we had permission to leave St. Petersburg. Nikolai came home rejoicing! It took only a few days to sell our belongings, and we boarded the train, which was filled far beyond capacity, to Nizhny Novgorod, on the Volga River.

The following day we boarded the overcrowded boat that was to take us down the Volga River to Tsaritsyn (Volgograd), normally a two-day journey. But we were on the boat for two weeks and never made it there. Civil war was raging along the Volga River. We heard gunfire from the advancing armies, and could not stop on either side of the river. We ran out of food. Then at midnight, a soldier from the Red Army knocked on our door and said the fighting was so heavy that the boat would have to turn back. We could return on the boat, or stay here, but the closest city, Samara, was 30 miles away. We decided to disembark, thinking that if we were going to die of hunger, we would die here.

The ship left, and we were on the shore in the dark. I sat on a rock and tried to protect my daughter from the cold wind and rain. In my heart I continued to complain to the Lord, "Why do we have to be here? Why do I have to watch my little baby dying of hunger?" My husband could not bear to watch as our baby and I cried, so he walked away.

Nikolai walked about a mile and a half along the river, then stopped, knelt down and prayed, "Lord, You called us to Russia to preach Your Gospel. And in Your Word You promised that You would take care of Your children. Now You see that we are in this wilderness and we are dying of hunger. I ask You, send us some food for our child. You provided food for Elijah, surely You can send an angel or a raven to bring us food." When he raised his head, he saw a human figure approaching from a distance. Later he would say "I couldn't tell if it was a man or a woman." When the being stood next to Nikolai, he said, "I know that you are looking for food for your child. Take this!" He left a package in Nikolai's hands, turned around and disappeared.

When he came back, my husband told me how he received this package. I was almost afraid to open it, knowing it was a gift from an angel on high. Inside was a wonderful warm porridge, wrapped in snow white paper. I tried it. It was sweet and delicious! I gave some to my daughter, and when she had enough, there was some left over for my husband and myself. Our Lord is so wonderful! He knew just what my child needed at that moment - not a piece of bread or meat, but that wonderful, warm, sweet porridge. May He forever be praised!

My husband found a man in a little hut out in the forest who had fled the fighting in the city of Samara. He had made a little raft of logs tied together, and as the army retreated we floated down the Volga River with him to Samara.

We traveled on to Siberia and came to the city of Irkutsk, where living conditions were better. There was enough food, but my little girl, who had suffered so long from starvation, was not able to recover and went to be with the Lord. As I knelt beside her open grave, I spoke to the Lord, "I know, dear Lord, why you took my child from me. It was because my heart wasn't right with You. And I know my heart isn't right towards the Russian people. Lord, I can't do it with my own strength, but I am asking you to do a second miracle by this little grave. Fill my heart with love for the Russian people; help me to always be faithful to Your will."

While I was kneeling there, a dear Russian brother came up to me, put his hand on my shoulder and said, "Dear sister, don't cry! Soon the Lord will return and then you will see your dear daughter." At that very moment, the Lord filled my heart with such love for the Russian people. I saw in that dear brother the entire suffering Russian nation, and I was ready to hug them all. From that day on, I have always said that I am a Swede by birth, but my heart is Russian.



My mother's testimony was recorded a few years before her death in 1971. Mother spent her whole adult life in ministry to the Russian people and always encouraged Father, me and my siblings in the ministry as well. Her life testifies to God's faithfulness in difficult times and has been a great encouragement to me. I praise the Lord for her inspiring legacy, - Earl Poysti

RUSLAN ZYABBAROV: *God gave me a second chance*



My name is Ruslan; I am 33 years old. I was born and raised in Ulyanovsk, in a simple Soviet family. My father is Muslim, and my mother is an Orthodox Christian. As a young boy, I was a good student and went out for sports. When I was 13 years old, some older friends offered me drugs. I knew this was a bad thing to do, but I could not refuse. I really liked them right away. Drugs and alcohol made me very aggressive and cocky. The same friends persuaded me to join one of the criminal gangs of our city. I began to engage in street robberies - to take people's money and cell phones. I was expelled from a technical school in my 3rd year there. At the age of 18 I joined the army and my girlfriend gave birth to my son, but after returning from the army, I continued to live the same old lifestyle. Having a baby boy did not stop me from partying. I did not live with my girlfriend and son, and as a whole, I did

not help them in any way, nor did I participate in raising my child. Drugs consumed my life, my relatives and girlfriend started to turn away from me. I began to realize that I did not have the power to stop using drugs on my own. My parents began to take me to drug treatment clinics, and even turned to sorcerers for help. But nothing helped me.

Once my mother suggested that I go for rehabilitation at a Christian rehab center in Ulyanovsk. I agreed to go. In 2016, a youth conference was held on the property of the Christian camp, where the rehab center was located. There I turned to God in a prayer of repentance. After repenting, I began to look at the world differently. I stopped cursing and smoking; I felt joy and relief. I spent a year and a half in rehabilitation. After that, I went to the Light of the Gospel church, because graduates of rehab centers could live and work there, and help in church ministries.

I began to prepare for baptism. Thinking that now there would be no problems or temptations in my life, I was less attentive to God. Then a conflict changed everything - a drunk man pounced on me in the street, and wanted to provoke me into a fight. I did not fight him, but I could not cope with my emotions... after this encounter, I drank alcohol to relieve the tension. That was a mistake. I began to fall back into the abyss from which God had pulled me. The "seven evil spirits" really did enter into me, as it is written in the Gospel (Matthew 12:45). Again, alcohol and drugs began to take over my life. Even my mother told me that it would be better if I died, and she cried; she no longer wanted to see me slowly killing myself. This went on for six months. But God continued to have mercy on me.

In November 2017, the pastor of the church where I had begun to prepare for baptism told me that I needed to go through rehabilitation again. I agreed. He took me to the Rumyantsevo Pirkko Home. It was difficult for me in



the rehab center, but I had a firm desire to find mercy in the eyes of our Lord and return to the joy of fellowship with Him. And this joy has returned! I desire to follow God, and not stray from the right path. At the center a desire also grew inside of me to serve God and the people who are like I used to be.

After finishing the rehabilitation course, I stayed for an internship at the ministry school at Rumyantsevo. God blessed me abundantly; I made peace with my parents, and still have a very good relationship with them. My girlfriend lives her own life, but I still see my son sometimes.

In June 2019, I was baptized in a church in nearby Istra, Moscow

Region. Currently I continue to serve at the Rumyantsevo Pirkko Home as an assistant leader. I thank God that I am alive, that He gave me a second chance, and for sobriety, the church, a new family and new friends, the work that He entrusts to me, and that He teaches me to love!

Note from Nodari, leader of the Rumyantsevo center: *Ruslan is my assistant. He is a good organizer and is responsible for scheduling life in and around the center. He's a brother who is ready to help and support people in difficult times, to pray with each and every person, to persuade guys who want to leave the program to change their minds and stay. In the early morning, I almost always find him on his knees in prayer or with the Bible in his hands. Without a doubt, brother Ruslan is a man who still has a lot to learn, but today, if they asked me: "Who would I single out from the people in this ministry and with whom would I go into battle to save drug addicts and alcoholics?" Of all my associates and co-workers, I would call brother Ruslan.*

