

COMMITTEE TO SUPPORT THE ST. PETERSBURG CHURCH

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To: Contributors to the St. Petersburg Church fund
Re: Religious freedom in Russia

Dear friends,

As you are no doubt aware, the Russian Duma recently passed a law restricting religious freedom in Russia. Only religious organizations which existed 15 years prior to the law will be allowed to register. Registration allows them to own property and hold meetings openly.

There was a Christian Science church in St. Petersburg before the communist revolution and they continued after the revolution trying very hard to be accepted by the communists. The result of their efforts was that they were all sent to prison in Siberia. You may have read about the only survivor, Olga, in the November Journal. As a result of their efforts to register with the communists, there exists a great deal of documentation in the archives of the St. Petersburg government, and the current Society has obtained copies of these documents and submitted them to the current authorities to prove the existence of the Christian Science church more than 15 years prior to the new law. We were to hear about their decision around the first of December. We have just heard that the decision is being made on a country-wide basis, and will take more time.

The Society in St. Petersburg asked us some time ago to support them metaphysically in their search for a church space. A committee was formed by members of First and Second Church, Olympia and I believe that their work has been effective because each prospective site did not work out. Had they purchased a site, and do not receive legitimization, the property could be confiscated. I have heard of one instance where the police moved in and confiscated a church building, drove the people out, and turned it over to the Orthodox church.

We may be seeing a bit of a resurgence of the old communist ways, and I think that we need to deal with this before it goes any further. We invite you to help us metaphysically support the Society, and all sincere seekers of Truth in Russia, to gain their religious freedom.

As I sat down this morning to write this letter I checked my e-mail and received a letter from the Keston institute in Russia. We have relied heavily on them to keep us informed. I hope that I am not burdening you by enclosing a copy of this letter, but I thought that you might want to know of their work and their needs

Sincerely,

William T. Arnesen

