

COMMITTEE TO SUPPORT THE ST. PETERSBURG CHURCH

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To: Contributors to the St. Petersburg Church fund.

Re: Registration under the new laws, and efforts to find a church space.

Dear friends:

This morning we finally heard about the status of registration of the Society as a recognized religion. In my December 7, 97 letter I mentioned that the Society was attempting to prove that the church was in existence for 15 years with documents from the archives of the government. These were not accepted because the first church was entirely made up of foreigners and the services were in English and German. Russian services began only after the revolution and with the current services only add up to about eight years. The Ministry of Justice did tell us that the Society can register now for one year and renew the registration each year. It is not clear whether this temporary status would allow them to have lectures or class instruction until they have been meeting for 15 years and are then granted permanent recognition. Since the Society is legal in its current status until 1999, they have decided to seek legal help from the Christian Legal Center in Moscow and try to attain permanent recognition. If that does not happen, they will register year by year. They have high hopes that they will attain permanent status. (The Mormons, for example, have already been registered as a recognized religion.) Your continued metaphysical support in this endeavor is greatly appreciated.

The people in the Ministry of Justice have been very friendly, and have encouraged the members of the Society to go ahead and purchase space because they believe that Christian Science will be recognized. They have looked at quite a few spaces but have not found a suitable one yet. Two days ago we received a five page e-mail description of spaces that they have considered and rejected for various reasons. This whole process is entirely new to them since property has only recently become available for individual purchase. I would like to quote the last part of their e-mail because it will tell you of their progress much better than I ever could:

"Having analyzed the situation and taken into consideration
the
recomendations of our deeply respected Mrs. Arnesen, we came
to the
conclusion that as Christian Scientists, we need to address this
question

metaphysically, spiritually. First of all, we need to learn to love each other, to respect different opinions. We must realize that church is not a material, but a spiritual idea, that it is a temple of Christ, Truth. As Mary Baker Eddy writes, 'Church. A structure of Truth and Love; whatever rests upon and proceeds from divine Principle.' God loves us and has already prepared a place for us. Our task is to reach such a level of spirituality, love, healing work, holding services so that it may manifest itself in form of appropriate property. Our recent metaphysical meeting was devoted to this topic. Besides, we need to make our own possible contribution to our church, even financial, despite the difficult financial situation of our people, knowing that God always gives necessary means for a good cause."

"We are happy that the Christian Science Society of St. Petersburg has made a big progress in its spiritual development, that it dynamically grows and is one of the main centers for dissemination of Christian Science in the vast space of the former Soviet Union. We will do our best to justify the trust we've been given. 'Our church is built on the divine Principle, Love. We can unite with this church only as we are newborn of Spirit, as we reach the Life by bringing forth the fruits of Love, - casting out error and healing the sick.' (MBE, page 35)"

"We sincerely express our love and tenderness to all who has helped and is helping us. May God bless you."

"Sincerely, on behalf of members of the Christian Science Society,
St. Petersburg, Gennady Shervanyov, Board Chairman..... Philipp Veselovsky, First Reader."

Hildegard and I will be going to St. Petersburg in August and will help in the

search for a church space. All of the members there must work very hard during these times of transition, and very few members have automobiles, hence it requires considerable time to visit sites with public transportation, so we may be able to help them look at more spaces. Your metaphysical support in this area would also be greatly appreciated.

We will let you know as soon as there are further developments.

Sincerely,

William T. Arnesen