

COMMITTEE TO SUPPORT THE ST. PETERSBURG CHURCH

William T Arnesen.t.. Edgar H Heald....Sonny O Lindvall....Leslie C Knowles
6507 Arnese'n Lane SW, Olympia, WA, 98512-2802
Phone/Fax: '(360) 786-6907....E-mail: HJAO@AOL.COM

Dear Friends and Supporters of the St. Petersburg Society,
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It is time to bring you up to date on developments in the purchase of property in St. Petersburg, Russia. There has been a great deal of effort gone into the search for a Church and Reading Room space with interesting results.

As you may guess, the purchase of property in Russia is not something that has a long and orderly history, hence the rules are being written as the process is being defined. We have had a very good lawyer helping us and he has saved us several times from getting into difficult situations. There was even one seller who did not own the property he was trying to sell us! There is also a great deal of effort on some sellers part to get money "under the table" so that taxes do not have to be paid. The members of the Society will not deal with them. After many prospective sites have been visited and even twice voted to purchase, the final analysis has yielded the result that there is just not sufficient funds at present to buy a suitable space in a suitable location. The ones that we can afford are either too far from public transportation, or not in neighborhoods where a Church is acceptable. In Russia, proximity to public transportation is very important because few people have private transportation and long walks in the winter are almost prohibitive.

In their latest meeting to discuss the direction they should take, it was decided that they should buy space for a Reading Room in a favorable central location and continue renting space for Church Services until such time that funds become available to purchase a suitable Church home. The building fund continues to grow and we now have close to \$90,000. Another development that has helped bring about this decision is that some of the bookstores in St. Petersburg have decided not to carry the textbook, probably from pressure from the Orthodox Church. It therefore becomes increasingly important for them to have their own outlet for the textbook and periodicals.

The movement continues to grow in Russia. Hildegard J. Arnesen CSB gave lectures in St. Petersburg and Ukhta in Russia, Kherson in the Ukraine, Almata in Kazakhstan, Riga in Latvia, and talks in Moscow, Kiev and Prague this year. A new clerk's assistant is in training for the Russian speaking field and is quite busy answering letters from people who hear the short wave broadcasts. Several small groups are meeting now and would like to have Hildegard come and speak to them. The Mother Church will only fund travel if there is a group meeting regularly, so Hildegard has been on her own to supply this need.

Fortunately private funds have come in to help her make these trips.

Metaphysical support is also very important. Some of the difficulties that the groups in Russia face remind one of the challenges that the field experienced in Mrs. Eddy's time. There is another committee in Olympia that works regularly on these issues metaphysically.

On behalf of the Society in St. Petersburg and the Committees in Olympia we want to thank all of you again for your contributions and support.

Sincerely and Gratefully yours,

Bill Arnesen