

Во Христе!

C H U R C H E S ' O F C H R I S T M O N T H L Y E D I T I O N

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Our opinion can differ from the opinion of people who's articles you'll find in this newspaper.

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A word from an editor

Jesus said: «I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it» (Mt.16:18).

This verse tells us not only about the Christ's church conquering the powers of Hell but also that the evil powers will be trying to overpower the church.

All of us are witnesses of this struggle and some times we also participate in it. This confrontation between the church and the powers of Hell began a long time ago - as soon as the church was found. And the most powerful weapon that the evil one has used and is using today



is division.

And it would've seemed that a church that stands for autonomy is an easy prey for the evil one. But it is not so. It is autonomy that makes the church into an unsinkable ark with only Jesus Christ as its head.

And in all times disunity could

be overcome by getting to know each other more closely. Today we have more opportunities to stay in touch than early Christians had. And even though nothing can substitute communication face to face, getting to know each other through this newspaper could also be a good way of sharing lives with each other.

Lets continue our friendship through the "In Christ" newspaper.

Grace and peace.

March 3, 2011

Church news

Andre Sklyarov: Christmas in one of the congregations in Barnaul

That Sunday service did not have a usual sermon. Instead, brothers and sisters were reading various verses from the Scripture, singing songs and praying and sharing the



Lord's Supper all together. And when we finish with that we had a 15-minute break, after which our children presented a skit and read some poems. Also adult brothers and sisters read Christmas poems, one of the sisters sang a Christmas song and



our choir sang a couple of songs dedicated to this event.

After all that we had a Christmas trivia and the winners got prizes. We also gave gifts to all who were present that day, and both guests and church members could take some books and brochures for free. At the end all of us were invited to share some food prepared by the loving



hands of our sisters.

We had 72 people present that day, including friends and relatives of the church members and brothers and sisters from another congregation in Barnaul and from the congregation in Novoaltaisk.

Dino Roussos: Donetsk-Gorlovka-Mariupol

Trip to Ukraine for Natasha's Funeral

We were shocked and saddened by the sudden death of Natasha, our dear sister and colleague in the Ukraine. Natasha managed the EEM office in Donetsk and did an excellent job of publishing and distribution of EEM Bibles, books and other materials.



She was a warm and pleasant person, to work with. We will miss her. We pray for her husband Niko and other family members, that they will receive comfort. Also, that the right replacement will be found, for her position at EEM.

Natasha and Niko came to Greece last June, to attend the church conference in Corinth. They spent an additional week touring

and enjoying Greece. We are so thankful for that experience that God blessed her with.

I was invited to attend and speak at Natasha's funeral.

On January 5th, I flew to Donetsk, Ukraine through Kiev to attend the funeral. Everywhere there was a lot of snow, and the funeral took place in the yard of the EEM offices. Sasha the preacher in Donetsk, was the coordinator of the funeral. Church members sang songs, Richard Baggatt, Mike Armour, Dino Roussos and several others expressed their love to the family and talked about eternity. They encouraged all of us to be ready, to be with the Lord at any time.

Dino's Speaking for the Church of Christ in Mariupol, Ukraine

After Natasha's funeral, I was invited by the preacher of the church of Christ in Mariupol, Ukraine, to speak to their congregation during their SPECIAL MEETING on Christmas day, January 7th. Christmas in Ukraine and Russia takes place 13 days after our Christmas.

This year I had the privilege to celebrate two Christmases.

The church in Mariupol is growing and I was amazed to watch their nativity play, in which more than 30 children and young people of the church had put to-

gether. Although the production was in Russian, I was able to understand the program and I thank the Lord for all those working hard to put together such an excellent performance.



Praise the Lord for the church in Mariupol They asked me to speak about the meaning of Christmas and the many blessings that Christianity has brought to humanity and the world in which we live.

Church of Christ in Tomsk, Russia. How it all started

You can share
some news
about *your*
congregation in
our next issue
of the
newspaper

Church of Christ in Tomsk, Russia, was founded in 1994 as a result of an evangelical campaign of the Metro church of Christ, Denver, Colorado. The church here in Tomsk is not in direct subordination to the founding church; it's autonomous and self-regulated.

Our congregation deliberately does not number itself among any of the existing denominations, but tries to fit into the simplicity of the first century Christians that we see in the New Testament.

The fact that the church has no denominational trend does not mean that it has no traditions as well. On the contrary, it does, and the origin of them is in the Restoration Movement that started in the USA in the eighteen century. James O'Kelly (1735-1826), Abner Jones (1772-

1841), Elias Smith (1769-1846), Barton W. Stone (1772-1844), Thomas Campbell (1763-1854) and his son Alexander Campbell (1788-1866) made a substantial contribution to the development of principles on which the church stands.

Among the most important principles are the following:

Jesus Christ is the only head of the church. We stand for the autonomy of each congregation and object to any type of hierarchy and centralized authority.

Our only creed and standard is the Bible, i.e. the Old and the New Testament. We object to any other creed or standard and stand for the Bible as exclusive highest authority and we hold it as completely sufficient for Christian faith.

We choose to speak where the Scripture speaks and to keep silence where the Scripture is silent. We accept only those beliefs and practices that we see clearly stated in the Scripture.

It's not only a privilege but also a duty of each Christian to have their own view and freedom of conscience.

The privilege and the duty of each Christian is to use the name "Christian" and deny any other group or denomination names.

The main criterion in determining membership is the living faith that has fruit of Christian godliness and other fruit of the Holy Spirit.

There should be in necessary things unity; in uncertain things freedom; in everything compassion.

As we vary from our "mother" church in Denver, so churches that are akin to

us have their own characteristics.

We, however, do not consider ourselves "the only" or "the best" or "the correct" Christians and we have fellowship with Christians who

are of other traditions, for in spite of historical, cultural and traditional differences all of us belong to Christ and He belongs to God (1Cor. 3:23).

The source: <http://church.tomsk.ru/index.php?cat=content&id=history>



One of the house churches

Natalie Wood: Columbine church of Christ, Colorado, USA

One Sunday morning everything was going as usual. My husband and I came to church, got the bulletin upon entering the assembly hall, sat down in "our" spot and I opened the bulletin to read it in the few minutes I had before the beginning of the service.

I was awakened by the question that the article directed toward each person, so in my case toward me: "Why did you get up this morning?" I hungrily shifted my gaze along the article thinking to myself: "Yeah, why DID I get up today? Hm... I haven't really thought about it... the day has began and so I got up."

I went on reading: «Was it just to get the children off to school, or to go to work, or was it just because you were tired of staying in bed? Has your life deteriorated to the point of routine? Many are finding life a drag. It has lost its meaning and purpose. All there seems to be are routines to go through, schedules to remember, and appointments to keep. And usually in the rush to do all these things we have forgotten the purpose behind them - or maybe there never - any real purpose in them. Surely there is some reason for getting up in the mornings. So many people are finding that financial success, prestige, and power do not bring release from the root problem of emptiness. Life has lost its meaning and boredom has set in. We try to fill the void by joining clubs and committees, by staying busy with things that are trivia, and by staying in the crowds

so that we don't have to face the emptiness alone. But, we've found that all these things do not help, but only leave us frustrated. We even find that the worst emptiness and loneliness is that which we experience in a crowd. People are around us, but the vacancy we want filled is within us.

It was after the suicide death of Marilyn Monroe, the famous movie star, that Joe DeMaggio, one of her former husbands said, "Marilyn had everything to live with, but nothing to live for." That is the condition; of many of your friends and maybe even yourself - everything to live with, but nothing to live for. We have the nice homes, the fine cars, the good jobs, and all the luxuries of life - all the things to live with, but nothing to live for. All of the things that one can accumulate can never be the purpose for life. Things are not what make's life bright. Things do not give purpose to life. Things can only give purpose when used for the benefit of other.

Only when there is a purpose in life, is there joy at getting up in the mornings. Only where there is a goal to be striven for, is there understanding behind the club meetings, the schedules, and the appointments. In and of themselves these offer nothing toward satisfying the craving that comes from deep within.

Well, if these things do not give reason to get up in the mornings, what does? If the routines of life have become just that - a routine, then what is needed? The routines, meetings, committees, and

clubs are not in themselves the problem. In truth, they can be meaningful, if they contribute to one's overall purpose or goal in life.»

While reading through the article, I kept thinking: «This is exactly how I feel and think!» It is amazing how in somebody else's thoughts we can recognize our own. This article was written by our preacher who from his own life experience knows about routines, joys and sorrows of life. When I finished reading I thought: «God is my help and with His help I also can have joy every morning and meaning in my life!»

«I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.» John 10:10,11.

Joy and peace to you in the Lord!



PS. Greetings to you from the Columbine church of Christ, with which my husband and I assemble. You are in my prayers.

**A Cup of Coffee.
Allen Webster**

A group of alumni, highly established in their careers,

got together to visit their old university professor. Conversation soon turned to complaints about stress in work and life. Offering his guests coffee, the professor came in with a large pot of coffee and an assortment of cups - porcelain, plastic, glass, crystal, some plain looking, some expensive, some exquisite - telling them to help themselves to the coffee.

When all the students had a cup in hand, the professor said: "If you noticed, all the nice-looking expensive cups were taken, leaving the plain and cheap ones. While it is but normal for you to want the best for yourselves, that is the source of your problems and stress. Be assured that the cup itself adds no quality to the coffee in most cases. It is just more expensive; in some cases it even hides what we drink."

"What all of you really wanted was coffee, not the cup, but you consciously went for the best cups ... and then began eyeing each others' cups. Consider this: Life is the coffee. Jobs, money and position in society are the cups. They are just tools to hold and contain life, and the type of cup we have does not define, nor change the quality of life we live. Sometimes, by concentrating only on the cup, we fail to enjoy the coffee God has provided us. God brews the coffee, not the cups ... enjoy your coffee."

"Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am".

Philippians 4:11

Konstantin Zhigulin: A short story of a long trip

At the end of January we started our trip to the USA that lasted for three weeks (it was *Psalom's* eighth trip overseas). Where have we been? What have we seen and heard? What have we been thinking and praying about?

Last fall our ensemble got an invitation to participate in a symposium organized by the Calvin Institute of Worship in Michigan. Fifteen hundred participants came to this symposium from all over the world - Asia, Africa, Europe and the USA.

The symposium was dedicated to worship in the church life today. *Psalom* participated in one of the classes focused on the tradition of singing Psalms during worship.

The weather in Michigan was similar to the one in St. Petersburg. There wasn't as much snow there as in Russia, but still it was white all around. And even though the temperature wasn't as low as in St. Pete, it was still cold.

When the symposium was over *Psalom* presented some songs before several congregations in Michigan and then we flew to Texas hoping to enjoy some warm weather there. But it wasn't to be - it was snowing there (which is not like Texas at all) and it was SO cold that some pipes in the houses started to freeze. The next day after

our arrival DFW airport was closed, schools canceled all of the lessons and all of the people were recommended to have a day off. In a way snow for Texas is a disaster (like a flood for us). So because of that one of our presentations got canceled and another one was postponed for a week. Although we were feeling a little down, we tried not to give up but use this time for rehearsals - we needed to get ready for the recording that was planned for the end of our trip.

The record we made will be used for the project called *Timeless - Ancient Psalms for the Church Today*. Mark Shipp, our brother in Christ from Austin, is in charge of it. The idea of the project is to make Psalms that were put to music available for the church to sing today. In the songbook, along with the songs of other composers, will be some of the songs that I wrote.

The first issue of this songbook and the CD with all of the songs will be done by Abilene Christian University. The opportunity to participate in such a project is a



great blessing and joy for us.

Besides our participation in the symposium and the recording we had several presentations in various congregations. Those presentations consisted of two parts. During the first one we presented new songs before the congregations, during the second one we invited everybody to sing alongside us - that was always an inspiring time when there no longer was a line between the performer and the listener and all of us together, in one accord, were praising God proclaiming His grace and mercy and salvation.

We are very thankful to our Lord for this opportunity to praise Him with our brothers and sisters from



other countries seeing again and again that Christ is the Lord and Savior for people from all nations, tongues and cultures.

During our trip, as it usually happens, we were concerned about many things: our children who stayed back in St. Pete, our future and the possibility to continue the ministry of worship development in Russia and

abroad. We were praying for Sasha, Luka's niece, who was getting ready for a surgery and for another Sasha, the member of our ensemble, who was on the verge of making some significant decisions in her life. We also met with longtime friends and made new ones.

One thought kept coming to my mind - the church is alive. And the fact that in our Christian life we often face difficulties, misunderstandings, sicknesses, weaknesses, and selfishness does not mean that there is no compassion, mutual help, self-sacrifice and love - all of which we see in our Lord Himself in whom we believe and stand.

We especially want to thank one of the sisters from Neva Church of Christ, Anya, who stayed with our children while we were gone, and one of the brothers, Sergei, who set his work aside in order to meet us at the airport. And we thank all of the members of our congregation for their prayer-support.

May our God bless us and grant us peace!

Konstantin Zhigulin,

Psalom's composer and
mastermind,

www.psalom.org

In your opinion, how should autonomy of the churches be manifested in their unity? And how congregations can be united as the Body of Christ while remaining autonomous?

Paul Watson's answer (skype-conference on February 22): This is a very important questions. Unity of a congregation and unity among autonomous congregations is something that we need to strive for and is also something that is very hard to obtain. One of the things that can help churches unite is them helping each other as churches did in the NT time - we can see that from the example of Paul collecting money from various Gentile churches for the church in Jerusalem. Another thing that can help churches be more united is personal connections among people in congregations. One more advice that I can give is to avoid judging people in your own congregation and in the other ones. Paul in Romans 14:19 tells us to pursue those things that bring peace and mutual edification. Also we need to remember that we are all one in Christ, and as Paul said in Ephesians 1:22 God put all things under the feet of Jesus and put Him as the Head of the Church. I could say much more, but let us remember what Psalms say: "how good and how pleasant it is For brothers to dwell together in unity!"