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Rebuilding the Temple : Methodist Worship in Post-Soviet Russia

When I was living in Moscow as a student back in 1991, I regularly used to travel on the trolleybus past a large open air swimming pool. In the late nineteenth century a huge church, capable of accommodating 10,000 worshippers, was built on this site. In the 1930's Stalin had it blown up as part of his secularization campaign. The church was rebuilt over two years (from 1995-1997) and now the Russian Orthodox Cathedral of Christ the Saviour dominates the Moscow skyline once again.

The Methodist Church in Russia has a similar history. Methodism also had a visible presence in Russia in the nineteenth century. In May 1889, Pastor Bengt August Carlson began to travel from Finland to St. Petersburg every month to serve the Swedish population there. In August, he started renting a preaching room in the city and by November of that year a small Methodist congregation had been formed. This consisted of seven members, including one local preacher who conducted worship when Pastor Carlson could not be there.

In October 1907, Dr. George A. Simons began work as a resident pastor in St. Petersburg. A year later, on the first Sunday in November 1908, the Bethany Diaconal House was opened. This work was directed by Sister Anna Eklund, who had been trained by the Bethany communities in Hamburg and Frankfurt. She was joined by four other sisters who served by offering nursing care and humanitarian aid.

In 1909 the Methodist Church in Russia was legalized and by 1910 five hundred people were attending worship services in St. Petersburg. These were held in six different languages (German, English, Russian, Swedish, Finnish and Estonian) and there were also week night Bible-Study groups and a Sunday-School. In 1913, a hymn-book was published containing 100 well-known hymns in Russian translation. This was followed by a worship-book in 1924.

By 1927 there were forty preaching places in and around Leningrad (as St. Petersburg had by then become known); and there was also a Methodist presence in Siberia - due to the influx of Korean refugees escaping from the Japanese occupation of their native land (1910). However, by 1937, the Stalinist regime had forced the Methodist work in Russia to cease.

In the *perestroika* era – which literally translates as *rebuilding* – Methodism began to be rebuilt in Russia.

In 1989, Vladislav Spektorov, a native of Samara, became a Christian after meeting with the Russian-language Methodist congregation in Tallinn, Estonia. He consequently started a Methodist community in his home town and the United Methodist Church in Samara was officially registered in 1991.

In June 1990, Chang Son Kum, a member of the Korean-American United Methodist Church began a prayer group in Moscow, where he was living at the time. This grew into the first United Methodist Church in Moscow (now known as Central United Methodist Church) and in December 1990, the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) appointed Eng Chol Cho, from the New York Annual Conference, as pastor of this church.

Also in June 1990, an American Methodist pastor, Dwight Ramsay came to Sverdlosk (now Yekaterinburg) on a tourist visa and brought with him copies of the Bible in Russian. As a result of his initiatives a United Methodist Church was officially registered in that city in October 1990.

In 1991, GBGM launched the *Russian Initiative*, whereby American congregations could offer humanitarian aid to people in Russia. This project later developed into a programme to re-establish a visible Methodist presence across Russia.

In November 1991, the Council of Bishops appointed Rudiger Minor to be Bishop in the CIS and the Eurasia Episcopal Area was officially established in August 1992. Today this Area is served by Bishop Hans Vaxby and consists of over 100 congregations and Bible-Study groups spread over five Annual Conferences (Ukraine and Moldova, Southern Russia, Northwest Russia, Eastern Russia and Central Asia, and Central Russia).

This paper primarily relates to the Northwest Russia Annual Conference, focusing especially on Pskov United Methodist Church in the Western District (where I have been serving as Associate Pastor since August 2003), and also on the St. Petersburg District. I want to explore four aspects of Methodist worship as a way of looking at the extent to which the Wesleyan heritage serves the present age in post-Soviet Russia. These four aspects are as follows:

- the place of worship
- the time of worship
- the music of worship
- the words of worship

### The Place of Worship

People of faith have always felt the need to mark out particular places as the point of encounter with God. Abram built an altar at Shechem to mark the place where the Lord had appeared to him (Gen. 12:7). Jacob constructed Bethel (House of God) after his dream of a ladder reaching to heaven (Gen. 28:10-22). By the time of the exile, the presence of God had become so closely associated with the Temple in Jerusalem that the people of Israel felt unable to worship anywhere else (Psalm 137).

In Russian culture, having a building is an important sign of validity. Methodism is often seen as a dangerous sect and meeting in a church member's apartment or rented premises only serves to reinforce this impression. Also, a church cannot be officially registered without a juridical address (i.e. not a private address).

In the St. Petersburg District there are nine United Methodist congregations. Six of these meet for worship in rented premises – in the church buildings of other denominations in three cases! Two congregations gather for their Sunday service in the pastor's apartment and one congregation has its own (uncompleted) building. All but one of these congregations has a juridical address.

Pskov United Methodist Church began meeting in the pastor's apartment in 1992. When we outgrew this space, we started meeting in the concert hall of a local music school. On Saturday evening this facility was used for discos and it became increasingly impossible to create a worshipful atmosphere on Sunday mornings when surrounded by empty beer bottles, cigarette stubs and remnants of dry ice. The congregation therefore began to rent space in a children's Arts Centre. This room was normally used for dance classes during the week and had

full-length mirrors and a bar along one wall. The reflections in the mirror made the preacher feel as though the congregation was twice as large as it actually was! In the summer of 2004, the church was told that these premises would no longer be available to them and we returned to the music-school.

Here there was no storage space provided and we had to carry all that we needed for worship and Sunday-School with us each week (altar cross and candles, hymnbooks and worship books, Bibles, offertory bags etc, etc.) It was also not uncommon – especially around Christmas and New Year – for us to be told at short notice that the premises were needed for a party and that we would need to make alternative arrangements for our worship service that week. It was therefore a real cause of celebration when we were able to start worshipping regularly in our own sanctuary, which was officially dedicated by Bishop Hans Vaxby on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2005.

In the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow there is an exhibition about its history. There one can see pictures of how the Cathedral looked before it was razed to the ground, and it is clear that the new Cathedral is a reconstructed copy of the original building.

Russian Methodists had no model of what a Russian Methodist church should look like. The early Methodists in St. Petersburg met in private apartments and rented premises until they acquired their own building in 1914. This “House of Prayer” could accommodate 200 people but the dream to build “*a central building with a spacious hall for worship services*” ( Kimbrough 93 – my translation from Russian) was never realized.

The Senior Pastor in Pskov had visited Methodist churches in Germany and Hungary as well as Pskov’s partner church (Christ UMC) in Memphis, Tennessee. She had photos from these trips which were shown to the architect as the plans were drawn up. The sanctuary is recognizably Methodist – plain walls with a central altar and pulpit to one side. On the altar stand a large wooden cross, two candles and an open Bible.

These furnishings are common across the St. Petersburg District too. Even those congregations which meet in rented premises make sure that a holy table is the visual focus of their worship.

Russian Methodist churches are reconstructions of Western models and lack the onion domes and icon interiors which have traditionally marked out places of worship in Russia. Methodism is counter-cultural to the Russian Orthodox custom of standing throughout the service and of women only being allowed inside the church if their heads are covered and they are wearing a skirt and not trousers.

Nevertheless, Russian Methodists also bring their own culture into their place of worship. At Easter, a basket of decorated eggs will be placed on the altar. At Harvest, people will bring jars of pickled cucumbers, mushrooms and jam - the produce of their own *dachas* (out of town allotments). In Pskov, the older members of the congregation are keen to have a separate prayer room somewhere in the church building where an icon can have central place.

Another way in which Russians enculturate their place of worship is by the name that they give to it. It was noted above that when the Methodists acquired their first building in St. Petersburg it was called a “house of prayer” (*molelni dom*). Ozhegov’s Dictionary of the Russian Language (1991) defines *molelni dom* as “*premises for religious gatherings, services and prayer (mainly for members of sects and non-Christians)*” (my translation from Russian). “House of prayer” was used either by or about Protestants to distinguish their “churches” from the Russian

Orthodox Church – rather like the word “chapel” was commonly used in England to distinguish non-conformist places of worship from the parish church.

The English word “church” can be translated into Russian in two ways. (The Polish word *kostyol* is also used but only for Roman Catholic places of worship). One word – *tserkov'* – is normally used to describe a body or people rather than a place of worship. It is the word used for the Russian Orthodox *Church* and the United Methodist *Church* when reference is being made to the denomination as whole rather than to a specific building. It is also used when, for example, asking someone if they go to church. It is used frequently in the Russian translation of the Pauline epistles and the letters to the seven churches in Revelation. The other word – *khram* – is used to describe the building. It is the word used in the Bible for the Jerusalem temple (and by St. Paul when he writes that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit – 1 Cor. 3:16) It is also the normal way of naming a Russian Orthodox place of worship. Since acquiring their own building the Methodists in Pskov have begun to talk about it as their *khram*.

It is also worth noting that Russian Methodists often give their churches a particular name – rather like Russian Orthodox churches are usually named in honour of one or more of the saints. All of the Methodist churches in the St. Petersburg District have names. One of them is called Bethany – in memory of the diaconal house served by Sr. Anna Eklund – and the others are called Aspiration, Charity, Christ the Saviour, God’s Inspiration, Holy Trinity, Martha and Mary, Mercy, and River of Life. This way of identifying themselves seems to be something Russians have taken from their own culture as Methodist churches in the West tend to be named simply after the location in which they are situated.

A more anecdotal illustration of the cultural differences between Russian Methodist worship and its western counterpart concerns Women’s World Day of Prayer in 2004. I sent an email greeting from the women of Pskov to all those I knew in other parts of the world who would be sharing in this act of worship. I explained that in Pskov we would be gathering for this service in a private apartment, and that, as it is customary in Russia to remove one’s shoes upon entering a home, we would be worshipping in our slippers. One of the people who received this email was the religious broadcaster and well-known Methodist laywoman, Pauline Webb, who happened to be leading the daily service on BBC Radio 4 that day. She included the text of my email in her script but her producer removed the reference to slippers because she did not think that it was appropriate for people to be given an image of people shuffling to worship in such footwear!

### The Time of Worship

Russian Methodists who use rented premises for their worship services may have little or no say in the time of day which is offered to them. They also face the pressure of transforming the room into a “holy space”, conducting a dignified act of worship, and then clearing everything away again within their allocated time slot.

However, a more significant issue for the timing of Methodist worship in Russia is the fact that the Russian Orthodox Church still observes the Julian calendar. This means that December 25<sup>th</sup> is an ordinary working day because Christmas Day is not celebrated until January 7th. It also means that Western and Eastern Easter sometimes fall on the same day (on average about once every three years) but are more often anything from between one to five weeks apart.

The Worship Book of the Russian United Methodist Church (which will be explored more fully in the section about the words of worship) contains a *Calendar of Church Dates*.

There is a footnote explaining that “*this calendar takes into account the traditions of the Western and Eastern church. It is used by most RUMC churches.*”

The calendar basically follows the same format as the *Calendar for dating Easter and Related Holy Days* in *The United Methodist Book of Worship* (1992). However, there are two differences in the heading. Firstly, the RUMC calendar puts Advent in the first column whereas the UMC calendar has it in the fourth and final column. This is because the RUMC calendar takes the liturgical year as its starting point (beginning in Advent), whereas the UMC calendar starts with the secular year (beginning in January). The second difference is that the RUMC calendar refers to Ash **Sunday** instead of Ash Wednesday. This reflects the fact that, for the Russian Orthodox, Lent begins on Monday and not on Wednesday.

A more major indication of the impact of the Russian Orthodox calendar on the timing of Methodist worship in Russia is that the date of Easter (and therefore also Pentecost) in the RUMC calendar is given in accordance with the Eastern Church. Even though only 2% of the Russian population is considered to be practicing Orthodox Christians (observing the basic requirements of church attendance and fasting etc.) the rhythm of the church year has a major impact on secular culture. The run-up to Lent (*Maslenitsa*- Pancake Week), for example, is marked with popular street festivals and, once Lent has begun, restaurants and government canteens introduce special Lenten menus. The Methodists in Pskov attempted to swim against the tide one year and celebrate Easter according to the Western calendar. However, this was an experiment which is unlikely to be repeated because church members found that the goods which they needed for their fasting and feasting were not available at the appropriate time. Russia (thankfully!) has not yet succumbed to the Western practice of Easter eggs appearing in the shops as soon as Christmas is over. Russian Methodists have therefore decided that in the timing of their Easter celebrations it is best to follow the local culture rather than the tradition of their fellow Methodists in other parts of the world.

The RUMC calendar assumes that Christmas will be celebrated on December 25<sup>th</sup>. In practice, this is a very moveable feast. As mentioned above, December 25<sup>th</sup> is not a public holiday in Russia. Therefore, unless it falls at a weekend, it is not easy to gather people together for an act of worship. It is also important to note that, during the Communist period, many of the traditions formerly associated with Christmas (the family meal, the decorated tree, the exchange of gifts etc.) were transferred to the New Year, and these show little sign of being restored. This means that Christmas itself –whenever it is celebrated - has lost some of its rituals. In Pskov, we tend to have our main Christmas service as close to December 25<sup>th</sup> as possible – but the Sunday closest to January 7<sup>th</sup> also has a strong Christmas feel to it. We then move on to the Covenant Service in the middle of January - which coincides with the so-called Old New Year (the New Year according to the Julian calendar).

### The Music of Worship

Whatever time of year or day Methodists meet, it is customary for them to sing! In his preface to *Mir Vam* (Peace to You), the first official hymn-book of the Russian United Methodist Church, Stanley Kimbrough refers to the relationship between Ivan Stepanovich Prokhanov and George Simons. Prokhanov (1869-1935) is the leading author of Protestant hymns in the Russian language. He published twelve hymnbooks and personally wrote or translated over one thousand hymns. Prokhanov was based in St. Petersburg, where he founded the Russian Evangelical Association in 1905. George Simons, the first resident Methodist pastor in St. Petersburg, was also a hymn-writer and he edited the Bulletin of the Russian Evangelical Association. In 1913, Simons published a Methodist hymnbook which consisted of one hundred hymns. None of these, however, were written by Russian authors. They were all translations from other languages, sung

to the original tunes. In 1925, the hymnbook *Pesni Siona* (Songs of Zion) was published for the Methodist community in Siberia. This included a significant number of hymns written by Russian authors, including the work of Ivan Stepanovich Prokhanov.

Many of these hymns also found a place in *Mir Vam* which was published in 2002. This collection contains 290 hymns. (There are actually 297 items in the book but three are prayers of John Wesley, one is the Covenant Prayer, one is the Apostles' Creed and two hymns – *Rejoice the Lord of King* and *And can it be* – appear twice set to different tunes). Twenty eight of these hymns owe their existence to Prokhanov. He, for example, is responsible for the Russian translations of *For the beauty of the earth* (F.S. Pierpoint), *Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation* (Joachim Neander), *All hail the power of Jesu's name* (Edward Perronet), *How sweet the name of Jesus sounds* (John Newton) and *Rock of Ages* (Augustus M. Toplady).

A further forty seven hymns in *Mir Vam* are attributed to the Baptist Pastor, Daniel Jasko. He translated a wealth of well-known Protestant hymns into Russian – including *Amazing Grace* (John Newton), *A Mighty Fortress is our God* (Martin Luther), *O come, o come Emmanuel* (9<sup>th</sup> Century Latin), *O Little Town of Bethlehem* (Phillips Brooks), *The Old Rugged Cross* (George Bennard), *Come, Ye Thankful People Come* (Henry Alford), *Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow* (Thomas Ken) and a number of Wesley hymns – *O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing*, *Christ the Lord is Risen Today*, *Love Divine*, *Rejoice the Lord is King*, *Lo He Comes With Clouds Descending* and *A Charge to Keep I Have*.

It would be wrong to give the impression, however, that *Mir Vam* is simply a collection of translations. It also contains the work of contemporary composers and writers from within the Russian United Methodist Church. Lyudmila Garbuzova, the Editor of *Mir Vam*, wrote the music for three hymns by Russian authors as well as composing settings for two Wesley hymns – *And can it be* and *Let Him to Whom We Now Belong*. (It is not known who translated these hymns into Russian.) Garbuzova also adapted and harmonised existing Russian melodies to accompany three hymns written (not translated) by Ivan Stepanovich Prokhanov and a text based on the prayer of the Zadonski Monks. In all, nineteen of the hymns in *Mir Vam* are set to Russian melodies and there is also one Ukrainian tune and a Kiev chant.

The Russian translation of Charles Wesley's *Thou Hidden Source of Calm Repose* is set to music by Dmitri Bortnianski (1751-1825) - and it is this same tune, known as *St. Petersburg*, which accompanies this hymn in *The United Methodist Hymnal*. Bortnianski was one of the first founders of the Russian classical music tradition and a leading master of choral spiritual music. Both *Mir Vam* and *The United Methodist Hymnal* also contain a tune by Alexei Fyodorovich Lvov (1798-1870) – albeit set to different words. (This tune is called *Russian Hymn* in *The United Methodist Hymnal*). Lvov was a violinist and composer and wrote the music to *God Save the Tsar* which was the State Hymn of the Russian Empire from 1833-1917. The fact that *Mir Vam* also contains two hymns set to music by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky and one hymn written by the famous Russian poet, Mikhail Yurevich Lermontov is further evidence of the influence of the indigenous Russian culture on this collection.

Irina Mitina, the Pastor of Resurrection United Methodist Church in Voronezh in the Central Black Soil District of the Southern Russia Annual Conference, wrote the words and music for three of the hymns in *Mir Vam*. She also provided the Russian translations of a number of existing English-language texts, including Charles Wesley's *Truly Baptized* and the Afro-American spiritual *Let Us Break Bread Together On Our Knees*. Her setting of the Lord's Prayer is sung in Pskov every time we celebrate Holy Communion.

Lena Kim, the Director for Evangelism and Church Development of United Methodist Church in the Eurasia Episcopal Area, is also a gifted musician and song-writer. None of her work appears in *Mir Vam* (because Lena's songs are stored in her head and she was under too much pressure of time to write them out in the required musical form) but she has released two discs of her own compositions – one of which was recorded together with the Christian Rock Group *Nimb*. The young people in this group are all members of the United Methodist Church in Samara.

When asked whether she felt like a second Charles Wesley when writing songs for the people called Methodist in Eurasia today, Lena replied as follows: “*When I write songs, I do not feel that I am a second Charles Wesley. I feel that I am a rock and roller who repented, accepted Christ, and now writes songs for these same rock and rollers ... The hymns of Charles Wesley are based on theology and their texts are well thought out. My songs are the experience of my heart. They are based on emotion and on Scripture – but mainly on emotion. Nevertheless, I really love the hymns of Charles Wesley. It is a shame that there are so few of them in our hymnbook, and a shame that most of these hymns have been adapted to fit Russian tunes.*” (Email from Lena Kim - 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2007 – my translation)

Lena's work requires her to travel frequently across Eurasia and part of her ministry is to introduce new music to the Methodist people wherever she goes. This is the way in which hymns were made available to emerging congregations in the years before *Mir Vam* was published. When Methodists gathered together for Annual Conferences, training seminars and youth camps etc they shared with one another the hymns and songs they had learnt in their own congregations. Pskov United Methodist Church published their own booklet of 33 *Christian Hymns* in 1995, gathering together the texts they had gleaned from a wide variety of sources. This was followed by a larger collection of 164 hymns and songs in 1997.

The 1995 Pskov booklet is arranged in no particular order and contains no Wesley hymns. The 1997 collection has nine main sections: God the Father (16 items), God the Son (29 items), God the Holy Spirit (4 items), Holy Scripture (3 items), The Church (16 items), Favourite Hymns (79 items), Special Occasions (5 items), Praise and Response (6 items), and six choral Amens. The God the Son section is divided into four sub-sections: Jesus Christ (10 items), Birth (5 items), Suffering (8 items) and Resurrection (6 items). The Church section has four general hymns about the church followed by a section on the Kingdom of God (3 items) and a section on Service and Mission (9 items). The Special Occasions are the Harvest Festival (3 items) and Funerals (2 items). The translations of four Wesley hymns are included: *Love Divine* (God the Father section), *Hark the Herald Angels Sing* (Birth), *Christ the Lord is Risen Today* (Resurrection) and *Jesus, Lover of my Soul* (Favourite Hymns).

*Mir Vam* (2002) is divided into four main sections: Praise and Thanksgiving (71 items), the Christian Calendar (47 items), God's Grace and the Christian Life (102 items), and Life in the Church (77 items). Praise and Thanksgiving is divided into four sub-sections: The Holy Trinity (30 items), God the Father (12 items), God the Son (23 items) and God the Holy Spirit (6 items). The Christian Calendar is divided into seven sub-sections: Advent (4 items), Christmas (18 items), Lent (3 items), Holy Week (7 items), Easter (7 items), Trinity (5 items) and Harvest Festival (3 items). God's Grace and the Christian life is divided into ten sub-sections: God's Grace (4 items), Invitation and Awakening (5 items), Repentance (4 items), Salvation and new Life (24 items), Faith and Hope (18 items), Love (10 items), Holiness (3 items), Prayer and Supplication (25 items), Eternal Life (6 items) and Peace and Justice (3 items). Life in the Church is divided into eleven sub-sections: The Church of Christ (7 items), Unity in Christ Jesus (4 items), The Mission of the Church (5 items), Holy Scripture (2 items), The Sacraments – Baptism (3 items) and Holy Communion (6 items), Opening Hymns (8 items), Closing Hymns (5

items), Worship Service (26 items), Ordination (2 items), Christian Marriage (2 items) and Hymns of the Wesley Brothers on Texts from Holy Scripture (7 items).

The hymns in this final section are *Rejoice, the Lord is King* (appears twice set to different tunes), *Jesus, thy blood and righteousness, A charge to keep I have, Lo, he comes with clouds descending, Give us this day* and *Jesus, lover of my soul*. A further nine Wesley hymns are also included in *Mir Vam: O for a thousand tongues to sing* (Holy Trinity), *Hark! The Herald angels sing* (Christmas), *Christ the Lord is Risen Today* (Easter), *And can it be* (Salvation and New Life), *Jesus, Lover of my Soul, Thou hidden source of calm repose* (Faith and Hope), *Love divine, all loves excelling* (Love), *Truly baptized* (Baptism) and *Let him to whom we now belong* (Holy Communion).

It can be seen from this survey that the *Mir Vam* reflects both the Wesleyan and Russian cultural heritage of the Russian United Methodist Church. The inclusion within this relatively small hymn-book of a wealth of global music – such as Taize chants and Afro-American spirituals – witnesses to the fact that Russian Methodists also have a deep sense of belonging to the wider World Church. Bishop Rudiger Minor writes that *the goal was to offer the churches a means of Methodist identity that at the same time would be inclusive of other traditions (orthodox, international, contemporary) – to open our eyes for God’s manifold church and world and to be useful for non-Methodist people too*. (Email – 11th June 2007)

### The Words of Worship

Visitors to Pskov are often surprised and delighted to find how many of the hymns they can sing along to in their own language. Some of the power of the Wesleyan hymns, however, is inevitably lost in the Russian translation and I want to illustrate this with two examples. The first is the hymn *A Charge to Keep I Have* which has provided the theme for this twelfth Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies: “*to serve the present age, our calling to fulfill*”. Here is the English text of the first two verses alongside my own translation of the Russian version:

|                                  |                                       |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| A charge to keep I have:         | It is my duty to labour,              |
| A God to glorify;                | to praise the Creator for everything, |
| A never-dying soul to save,      | to search for people who are lost,    |
| And fit it for the sky           | and bring them to God;                |
| To serve the present age,        | Not to grumble when serving,          |
| My calling to fulfill; -         | not to cry before the enemy,          |
| O may it all my powers to engage | to fulfill the will of God            |
| To do my Master’s will!          | With all my heart and soul.           |

The Russian translation of *And can it be* stays much closer to the original than this 50/50 version. However, the last two lines of each verse (which are all different in the English text) are reduced in the Russian version to the same words each time: *His love, His love, I will praise again and again*.



The necessity of setting the words to music obviously impacts on the text of a translated hymn. The words of prayers and liturgy, however, are not required to fit a particular metre and it is these to which we now turn.

*Come, worship the Lord* – the Worship Book of the Russian United Methodist Church – was published in 2004. There are two versions of this book – one for pastors and one for members of the congregation. The main difference between them is that, in the pastors’ version, the words said by the pastor are in large print and bold type whilst in the other version it is the words said by the congregation which are highlighted in this way. Unfortunately, this variation in format means that the page layout of the two versions is not identical. Another difference between the two versions is that the pastors’ version contains additional notes about the practicalities of conducting the respective services – drawing attention to the liturgical colour, the timing/frequency of the service and to the work which needs to be done in advance (e.g. visiting bereaved relatives, meeting with couples to prepare them for Christian marriage, alerting the congregation ahead of time to the serious demands of the Covenant Service.)

In the preface to *Come, worship the Lord*, Bishop Rudiger Minor draws attention to the fact that when we gather together to worship God we do so as part of the Universal Church. We use words and texts that have been handed down from generation to generation. We sing hymns and songs which come from many different countries. We are united in Holy Communion with all God’s people on earth and in heaven. Bishop Minor also writes that *Come, worship the Lord* will enable people across the Eurasian Area of the United Methodist Church to worship together, and that we worship in the same way as our United Methodist brothers and sisters across the world. He then goes on to make the following important point: *However, our liturgical texts are not simply a translation. They reflect the Christian experience and theological tradition of our country and people, uniting us with the roots and spirit of the Eastern Christian Tradition* (my translation).

Immediate evidence of these words is provided by the texts of the two Creeds which are printed on the opening pages of *Come, worship the Lord*. The Apostle’s Creed appears first - and this is the statement of faith most commonly used by the Russian United Methodist Church, and indeed by the United Methodist Church worldwide. (It is also printed in *Mir Vam*.) On the opposite page is the text of the Nicene Creed which is the statement of faith sung at every celebration of the Orthodox Liturgy. In accordance with the tradition of the Eastern Church, the *filioque* clause is omitted. These texts therefore illustrate the way in which the Russian United Methodist Church reflects in the words of her worship both her Russian and her United Methodist heritage.

On the pages after the Creeds appear the texts and notes for eleven different liturgies in the following order: the Sunday Service; the Sacrament of Holy Communion; the Sacrament of Holy Baptism; the Reaffirmation of Baptism; Reception into Church Membership; Covenant Renewal; Christian Marriage; Funeral Service (Christian Burial); Ordination and Induction; the Dedication of a Church Building; and the Blessing of a Home. At the end there is a calendar giving the dates of the primary Christian festivals from Advent 2002 through Pentecost 2025 and a calendar of lectionary readings (based on the Revised Common Lectionary).

Most of the liturgies and notes clearly originate from *The United Methodist Worship Book*. I will therefore restrict my comments to those texts which, in the words of Bishop Minor already quoted above, *are not simply a translation*.

In the notes concerning the Sunday-Service an additional comment has been added to the section on intercessory prayer. In the Russian language, the word for *Lord* is *Gospod*.

Derivatives of this word are used to translate the English titles *Mr. (Gospodin)* and *Mrs. (Gospozha)*. The Russian notes state that *when praying, it is necessary to avoid the use of such titles as 'Gospodin' and 'Gospozha' because Christians acknowledge the supreme dominion of the Lord (Gospod) Jesus Christ alone.* (my translation). My own observations when listening to Russians pray without using a written text is that there are certain set formulas which are used almost without exception. The prayer normally begins *Dear Lord, our Heavenly Father* and ends with a Trinitarian formula – *in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit*. When I tried to begin my prayers with less patriarchal imagery I was initially told that I was using the Russian language incorrectly! With time, people have begun to accept and even echo alternative ways of addressing God.

The liturgy for the Sacrament of Holy Communion is basically a translation of *Service of Word and Table 1* in *The United Methodist Worship Book*, but I want to draw attention to two significant differences. Firstly, the Russian text has Biblical texts given in brackets throughout the Eucharistic Prayer to indicate the source of the words being proclaimed. This reflects the fact that Bibles have only relatively recently become freely available in Russia, and Russians are therefore not as Biblically literate as those who have been hearing and reading Biblical texts all their life. Secondly, the Russian text has some additional words at the end indicating that the remaining bread and wine will be taken to those who could not be present because they are sick or in prison, so that they can also be united with Christ and with His whole church. This illustrates one of the points made in the introductory comments to the sacrament of Holy Communion (written especially for *Come, worship the Lord*): *Unity in the Body of Christ and the responsibility of Christians for one another and the world find special expression in the liturgy: in the mutual forgiveness of sins, in the exchange of signs of reconciliation and love, in prayers for one another, in united Communion, in the offering of the Bread and Cup to those who are sick or in prison.* (my translation).

The Baptism and Membership liturgies are similar to *The United Methodist Worship Book* – although there seems to be a more frequent use of the word *grace* in the Russian version! There are also some introductory notes written especially for *Come, worship the Lord* drawing attention to the Biblical basis for both adult and infant baptism, and affirming that baptism is a sign of membership of the universal church. The notes for pastors recommend that the adult liturgy should be used for those over fourteen years old since this is the age at which Russians receive a passport.

The liturgy for Covenant Renewal is also clearly drawn from *The United Methodist Worship Book* – but it is worth noting that an alternative translation of the Covenant Prayer (*Lord, make me what you will*) is also printed in *Mir Vam*.

The liturgy for Christian Marriage is entitled *Brakocochetanie*. This is deliberately different from the Orthodox name for this liturgy – *Venchaniye*. Both words translate into English as *wedding ceremony* but the word *Venchaniye* can also be translated as *coronation*. *Venets* is the Russian word for *crown* and an integral part of the Orthodox ceremony is for crowns to be held over the heads of the bride and groom. These crowns represent the crowns of the martyrs and symbolize the fact that married life is not easy and requires great sacrifice. The Methodist liturgy does not incorporate this tradition and the service is basically a translation of the Service of Christian Marriage in *The United Methodist Worship Book* – with some additional introductory notes written especially for *Come, worship the Lord* and emphasizing the Biblical basis of marriage.

The Funeral Service owes more to the Russian Orthodox tradition than to *The United Methodist Worship Book*. The title given to this liturgy – *pokhoroni* - literally means *burial* as it

is not usual for Russians to be cremated. The text is clearly not simply a translation of either the United Methodist or the Orthodox rite but incorporates elements of both. The Bible passages included in the service are those used in *The United Methodist Worship Book* whilst some of the prayers are from the Orthodox tradition (eg *Lord, have mercy* repeated three times as a congregational response in the prayers and *Holy God, Holy and Strong, Holy and Immortal, have mercy on us.*) The conclusion of the service is definitely based on Orthodox practice. Directions are given that *the pastor covers the face of the deceased with a shroud.* (It is assumed that the coffin will be open in accordance with Russian tradition.) *After this the pastor takes a fistful of sand or earth (prepared earlier) and sprinkles it on the shroud in the form of a cross three times.* Whilst the words accompanying this action differ from those in the Orthodox rite, the action itself is considered by many Russians to be the most significant part of the funeral service. Father Paul Adelheim, however, a Russian Orthodox priest in Pskov, told me that this moment owes far more to culture and folk-religion than Orthodox theology!

The Ordination and Induction service is basically a translation of *The Order for the Consecration of Diaconal Ministries and the Ordination of Deacons and Elders* from *The United Methodist Worship Book*.

The liturgy for the Dedication of a Church Building combines elements of *A Service for the Consecration or Reconsecration of a Church Building* with the *Act of Dedication* from *A Service for the Dedication of a Church Building Free of Debt* from *The United Methodist Worship Book* (although the statement that the building is free of debt is omitted!) It is indicative of the importance given to acquiring a place of worship (as seen in the first section of this paper) that this particular liturgy should be included in *Come, worship the Lord* when a whole range of other liturgies in *The United Methodist Worship Book* (e.g. Seasonal Liturgies, Daily Prayer and Healing Services) were omitted.

The final liturgy in *Come, worship the Lord* is the Blessing of a Home. Since this immediately follows the liturgy for the Dedication of a Church Building, I wondered whether this had been included as an alternative to that for those congregations that worship in a private home. However, this was not the intention of the Editorial Committee. In Russian culture the blessing of a home is considered to be very important and this translation from *The United Methodist Worship Book* was therefore offered to meet that need.

## Conclusion

In the exhibition hall of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow, there is a painting of a person diving into a swimming pool. In the water, one can see the Cathedral building. However, it is not clear whether this is a reflection or whether the Cathedral has literally been submerged by the flood-waters of a new age. For me, this diver symbolises the people called Methodist in Russia. They are people who are not content for the place, time, music and words of their worship simply to be a reflection of United Methodist practice in other cultures. They are people who also want to plumb the depths of their own culture and bring to the surface their own models of what “church” should look like. In this way, as this paper has sought to illustrate, the Russian United Methodist Church fulfills her call to serve the present age by offering worship which is both recognizably Russian and recognizably Methodist.

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