

# CAREE Communicator

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## A DOUBLE ISSUE

This is a double issue of the *Communicator*. Much has been going on that we need to communicate to you.

As you all know, for about two years now CAREE has been diligently wrestling with the question of its future. First, we dealt with whether to continue CAREE or not (decided in the affirmative at the annual meeting on March 10 & 11, 2000 [and reported in the Spring/Summer 2000 issue of the *Communicator*]). After that, a number of people collaborated to propose a shape for that future (also reported in the Spring/Summer issue). Most recently, we held a meeting at which the resultant proposal was discussed and decisions were made as to how to proceed into the future.

The fall issue was delayed, to allow it to follow up on the proposal which was discussed in early November. We dealt with that proposal on November 3, 2000, in Maryknoll, New York, at a joint meeting of CAREE and the Eastern regional of the American Society of Missiology; the conference focused on mission in Eastern Europe. At CAREE's meeting, significant decisions were reached--ones which mean CAREE will go into the future invigorated and with specific avenues of service to and for Eastern Europe. Some of the details needed to be confirmed afterwards, and that took some time; so, the fall issue was delayed further. Beyond that, with the busyness of other academic responsibilities, I could not get the newsletter out before the end of the calendar year.

I decided to combine that delayed fall issue with this winter one, so that we could include the report of Rev. Charles Mercer about his service with the Moscow Chaplaincy Program. Rev. Mercer has served CAREE faithfully as treasurer for the last few years, but (as the last issue of this newsletter indicated) he spent eight months, beginning May 2000, serving as interim chaplain. He returned in January 2001. He has recently contributed a report on the work he did there. In it, he offers a wide overview of the kinds of service this long-standing chaplaincy offers in Moscow, and the limitations within which it must work. I trust that you will enjoy this update on his service there, with the insights into contemporary life in Moscow it reflects.

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## CAREE AND THE FUTURE

As all of us realize, the situation in Eastern Europe is dramatically other than what it was when CAREE was established. For most of the forty-plus years CAREE has been in existence, we offered support and encouragement to churches and Christians confronted throughout the

region with the opposition of Communist regimes. Whatever other differences might have obtained in the various regions, Eastern Europe knew that common front. With the collapse of the Communist bloc, though, that particular unifying trait has disappeared. However, the need of churches and Christians in Eastern Europe for encouragement and support has continued; indeed, with the multifaceted nature of the issues, problems, and questions now facing the churches and Christians throughout the diverse region, that need has only increased.

Recent discussions within CAREE recognized all this. Deliberations led to the decision to continue our organization but to devise a plan for our future service that would take cognizance of the changed Eastern European situation and seek to offer relevant and insightful help for the pursuit of peace, justice, and reconciliation throughout Eastern Europe. The proposal below was presented to the business meeting of CAREE at the conference in early November 2000.

**A FUTURE FOR CAREE**  
**(Proposal submitted by the**  
**CAREE Continuation Committee**  
**November 4, 2000)**

Over the last several months, the CAREE Continuation Committee has engaged in frequent discussions. These have led to the following proposal for the future of CAREE:

*AS BACKGROUND:*

It became evident from the discussion on September 21, 2000, at the Europe Forum of the Church World Service and Witness (CWSW) unit of the National Council of Churches (NCC) and its future prospects that CAREE, or a concerned group that would succeed it, is more necessary than ever for ecumenical relations with that continent. CWSW will be organized in the future according to functions rather than areas. The future of the NCC is problematic. The area forums will be consultative rather than programmatic, and they will need all the help they can get to influence these two agencies to relate to church life and witness in various areas of the world--in our case, Europe--as a whole, and ecumenically. To this end CAREE should work closely with the Europe Forum.

*PROPOSAL FOR THE FUTURE OF CAREE:*

1. The Continuation Committee of CAREE proposes the following activities for CAREE for the next few years:

- a) An annual meeting to be held in conjunction with the Europe Forum once a year, which will explore in greater depth some critical aspect of (North) American-(Eastern) European church relations and common ministry. We would try to bring in guests from Europe as speakers to this end. We would hope that members of the Europe Forum would plan to include this meeting in their schedules, but we would also advertise it among our members and others interested.

Paul Wilson has agreed to be primarily responsible for this part of our program. The first session would probably be held in the autumn of 2001.

- b) Focus on scholars and students concerned about Church life and Christian witness in Eastern Europe. To this end, those of us who are members of professional societies--as, e.g., the American Society of Church History, the Society for Slavic Studies, the Society

of Christian Ethics, and others--might try to organize sessions in this area at the meetings of these societies and bring students and teachers into the CAREE community.

- c) Over the longer term, we would try to organize a summer seminar for theological students in Europe (possibly in Prague) which will bring them into contact with Christian church leaders and scholars in that part of the world. This will take negotiation and advice from over there, and probably a foundation grant.

Bruce Rigdon, who has had long experience with such seminars, will draw up a proposal for this; the proposal should be ready by mid-November, 2000.

2. As to leadership of CAREE, since no one is ready to take the presidency alone, we propose a team composed of Paul Wilson, Bruce Rigdon, and Charles West. With these will be associated Jim Payton as Executive Secretary, Walter Sawatsky as Editor of *Religion in Eastern Europe*, and as consultant Leonid Kishkovsky as chairman of the Europe Forum.

How much of an executive committee we need in addition to this, and who should serve on it, also needs to be discussed. All this will require some by-law changes.

4. Financially, we have three sources:

- a) Membership dues.

- b) Church contributions. (We have a tentative promise from the PC[USA] and the ELCA for \$500 each in the next year. The UCBWM has supported us to this extent in the past and may continue to do so. The Brethren and the Mennonite Central Committee have helped us in the past and may do so again. Other churches which have formerly supported CAREE can also be contacted.)

- c) Surplus subscriptions to *Religion in Eastern Europe* (due to the fact that Princeton Theological Seminary covers our mailing costs).

To these may be added such foundation grants as we may receive for specific projects.

## **REPORT ON THE NOVEMBER 3, 2000 BUSINESS MEETING**

The above proposal was discussed at the CAREE business meeting, held November 3, 2000, in Maryknoll, New York. The following relevant decisions and observations were made:

Walter Sawatsky, Charles West, and Paul Wilson reviewed the background to the proposal, beginning with the decisions reached at the 11 March 2000 CAREE Annual meeting, through the intervening months, and the meeting of the Continuation Committee in September 2000 (in conjunction with the Europe Committee/Forum meeting of the CWSW).

The meeting recognized that the proposal would entail a restructuring of CAREE, to focus on particular (related) initiatives, with the membership of the Executive Committee being composed of the leaders of particular initiatives, plus *ex officio* members. The meeting discussed the proposal.

Paul Mojzes advised the meeting that, after this academic/fiscal year, he will be able to devote more time to academic work (since he will be leaving academic administration), and that this will enable him to become more actively involved in the work of CAREE again. The meeting welcomed this news.

He also informed the meeting that a letter of invitation from the President of Macedonia has led to a conference being planned, to be held in Macedonia in the fall of 2001. Paul is closely involved with this. If the project continues to go forward, Paul will be involved, and a related conference might be held at the same time. Paul will work on this, with a view to possible CAREE participation. The meeting welcomed this information and possible

opportunity.

After discussion, the meeting voted to adopt the basic approach of the document, “A Future for CAREE” [as presented above], with the addition of the information about the Macedonian Conference mentioned immediately above as a fourth field [“d.”] for the proposal]; this field would be under the oversight of Paul Mojzes.

This will result in a leadership team for CAREE of four persons: Paul Wilson (for the annual meeting, in conjunction with the Europe Forum), Bruce Rigdon (for the summer seminar for theological students), Paul Mojzes (for the Macedonian conference project), and Charles West (as the moderator for the team).

The *ex officio* members of the CAREE executive committee will be: Walter Sawatsky (editor of *Religion in Eastern Europe*), Fr. Leonid Kishkovsky (chair of the Europe Forum), and Jim Payton (executive secretary of CAREE). {Editor’s note: we overlooked the office of treasurer in this discussion. At CAREE’s next meeting, we will rectify this oversight; now that Charles Mercer has returned, he will resume those duties and serve on the Executive Committee.}

The Executive Committee of CAREE will from now on consist of the leadership team, plus the *ex officio* members.

Jim Payton, as executive secretary, will look into drawing up the changes necessary in the by-laws and the procedure for amending them to accommodate this change.

Walter Sawatsky brought forward a request for funding support, in the amount of \$1500, for a venture by reputable church leaders within the Russian Orthodox Church, for a study center for a “church in mission” approach. Upon discussion, the meeting voted to approve this request.

Jim Payton noted that our mailing list had shrunk to barely over 200, but that we need 200 addresses to maintain our mailing list rate privileges. He proposed that we remedy this by including two classes of graduate students in our mailing list--North American graduate students studying Eastern European history and/or religion, plus Eastern European graduate students studying in North America. These students would receive *Religion in Eastern Europe* and *CAREE Communicator* at no cost during the duration of their studies--with the hope that this will entice them to become members and get involved in CAREE once their studies are completed. The meeting approved this proposal. Jim will be in touch with others to secure names for this list.

## IN CONCLUSION--AND YOU

As you can see, we accomplished a great deal at this meeting. CAREE has been successfully retooled to advise about and respond to the current situations in Eastern Europe. The meeting went well--indeed, all present commented on the sense of renewed vigor and confidence we all felt with this new vision for CAREE’s service.

We trust that you will sense the possibilities, too--and that you can see yourself involved in and supporting them. With the various avenues which are opened up in this new structure, there is much to do. CAREE continues to need you.

In a few days, I will send you a letter inviting you to renew your membership in CAREE. (Those of you receiving our publications *gratis* as graduate students or by other special arrangement will not receive that letter.) In this way, you can join with CAREE in this service, continue to receive our mailings (including *Religion in Eastern Europe* and this newsletter), and

be in line to participate in some or all of the above activities.

Unlike so many organizations, our rates have not gone up. Over the next few days, think about what your small membership fee (\$25 [\$20, if retired] or [if you also choose to receive *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* also] \$45 [\$40, if retired]) will allow CAREE to do in continuing to pursue peace, justice, and reconciliation in Eastern Europe. Once you have considered that, I trust you will be eager to join or renew your membership--and will send in your check. Together, under divine blessing, we of CAREE can make a significant difference for our brothers and sisters in Eastern Europe.

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## **THE MOSCOW PROTESTANT CHAPLAINCY-- AN ECUMENICAL MINISTRY IN RUSSIA**

Now in its 40<sup>th</sup> year, the Moscow Protestant Chaplaincy is a unique ecumenical ministry in Russia. Begun during the Cold War in 1962 to serve the religious needs of American embassy personnel, it has expanded to include English-speaking people from 34 countries who come from over 20 religious traditions.

The legal basis for the Chaplaincy dates back even further to a 1933 agreement between President Roosevelt and the Foreign Ministry of the USSR which provided for three chaplains-- Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish--to provide religious services in the then atheistic USSR. A Catholic Chaplaincy was the first to be established, and a Protestant Chaplaincy was begun in 1962. The Jewish Chaplaincy has never been implemented.

Protestant Chaplains have come from one of the supporting US denominations. Today these are the United Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church USA, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Reformed Church, and the American Baptist Churches. Chaplains are supported by the sending denominations, and the Moscow congregation covers local expenses. While the Embassy provides no financial support, it accords the chaplains "technical worker" status, which enables them to own and operate a car with diplomatic license plates. The apartment, which serves as parsonage and church office, is also on the Embassy list of apartments for which they negotiate the rent. This rent is paid entirely by the Chaplaincy.

Originally services were held at the ambassador's residence, Spaso House, and then within the American Embassy Compound; however, at the time of the Gulf War security procedures made it difficult for people to attend the services, so the decision was made to rent a hall outside the Embassy. Having outgrown several locations, MPC presently worships in a hall rented from the Federation for Peace and Consent at 36 Prospect Mira, close to the Prospect Mira Metro Station on the Ring Line that encircles central Moscow.

It was our privilege to go as the Interim Chaplaincy Team to serve MPC for eight months while the search for the present team of John and Noel Calhoun was conducted. We were especially struck by the desire of the church to find leadership that would help them "do God's work in Moscow." It is important to see MPC first of all as an ecumenical, international worshipping community. Its significant ministries are an expression of this worshipping community's faith.

## *Worship at Moscow Protestant Chaplaincy*

The Sunday worship service is held at 10:30am, but shortly after 9am volunteers begin to arrive to prepare the hall for our worship. These are mostly members of the Young Adult Student group (YAS) who bring out and arrange 180 chairs, prepare the pulpit and altar, distribute hymnals and bulletins, and serve as ushers. Care is taken to carefully polish the candlesticks and cross, and iron the altar and pulpit cloths so that they will be free of wrinkles from being stored during the week. The congregation that gathers is quite different from the usual American congregation. There are more men than women. In a survey we took one morning we found that 85% were under 40 years of age – Charles was the oldest person at 70 years! Usually \_ of the congregants were from Africa and Asia, while \_ were American or Western European ex-patriates associated with embassies or business ventures, and Russians.

This is a transient congregation; members who have attended for 10 years are rare. One new member is a doctor from Nepal who came to Russia to engage in postgraduate specialization. He is on the staff of the Presbyterian Hospital there, and is waiting for his family to join him. Twelve additional MPC students are studying to become doctors—7 are from India and 5 from Africa. They must cope with difficult living conditions, in addition to challenging studies in the Russian language.

MPC's worship service reflects the richness of our different traditions. The Common Lectionary is followed, and lay readers read passages from the Old and New Testaments. A Psalm is read responsively, with responses sung by the choir and congregation. We stand for the reading of the Gospel by the pastor. Greetings and farewells for people who are visiting for the first time or leaving for new assignments are a part of each service, and petitions are gathered for the morning prayer as we seek to sustain our members for another week. A tea fellowship is held after the service as our diverse members mingle and share with one another.

## *Students and Refugees—The Food Sharing Program*

One of MPC's ministries is to respond to the needs of students and refugees from Africa and Asia worshipping in the MPC community through its Young Adult and Student (YAS) program. During Soviet times, young people from developing countries were encouraged to come to the Soviet Union to study with the expectation that they would return to their countries as ambassadors of socialism. Since the end of the Soviet Union, the value of these scholarships has decreased and many privileges have disappeared. Although fewer in numbers, many still come because conditions in their homelands are so desperate. Some hope that Russia will be a bridge to the West, but this is a false hope.

Once in Russia they spend the first year in intensive language study, and then pursue their course of study. Students from Africa experience serious and constant racial discrimination, and assaults from "skin-heads" and even from the police. Members are often harassed and physically abused. In addition, Professors in the university are grossly underpaid and often supplement their income by inviting bribes for good grades. All this adds up to a very stressful environment. Many become discouraged because there seems to be no way out, and to return home is unthinkable.

Some have to give up their studies and register with UNHCR as refugees. Others become refugees after finishing their studies because their lives would be in danger if they returned home. They lead an often-desperate existence awaiting resettlement opportunities that never seem to come. While there, we contacted UNHCR to advocate for swifter and fairer processing and have continued this advocacy in the U.S. with American resettlement agencies. We recently received the good news that MPC refugees from Sierra Leone and Liberia are newly listed for resettlement interviews in 2001.

MPC offers a haven where they find people who care about them, and where their faith is encouraged and they can share their gifts. YAS helps to meet the social and fellowship needs of students and refugees. The Chaplaincy also provides counseling as they seek to cope with problems in Russia and at home.

Through the Food-Sharing Program 200 students and refugees receive a \$5 bag of food twice a month. These bags contain basic items from which many meals can be prepared. Contributions from church groups and concerned people help defray the annual cost of \$24,000.

### *The Soup Kitchen Ministry*

Following the economic crash in 1991-92 the members of MPC reached out to help people for whom there was no safety net, and the first Soup Kitchen was organized. The devaluation of the ruble in 1997 further devastated people dependent upon government assistance. Elderly pensioners, for example, found their pensions to be worth less than \$30 a month—not enough to provide even a daily meager meal. The need for the Soup Kitchen Ministry continues.

MPC registers people who are referred from Russian Social Service Organizations and serves 1500 meals a day in 4 locations. Meals are prepared by Russian food facilities, and the church supplies volunteers who coordinate and serve the meals. Each meal consists of soup, a main course, bread, and a beverage and costs 57¢. The cost of the program is over \$250,000 a year. Grants and contributions to support this program are always being sought. MPC is grateful to the many individual, church and business contributors in the US and around the world.

Who comes to MPC's four soup kitchens? They are people who have been left behind in Russia's uneven thrusts towards a market economy. Many are widowed "Babushkas" with little or no government support. Some are professional people like engineers, professors, and doctors whose pensions were reduced to a pittance in Russia's fragile economy. Others are people with disabilities, veterans, and single heads of household who had relied on government assistance. MPC must be careful not to evangelize through the Soup Kitchen Ministries, but its volunteers exemplify Christian service. Rarely shy about asking questions, the people who enjoy the meals have learned that it is MPC and churches in America who make their warm daily meal possible.

What do they think of the Soup Kitchen Program? We asked them last summer. In response they said, "Thank you for feeding old people in Russia in these troubled times." "Please don't leave us." "Why can't our president help us?" "God Bless you."

As for the attitude of Russian Social Services officials--one region thanked MPC with a public acknowledgement of MPC's generosity. In another region, a new social services official quizzed one of the Babushkas after visiting the soup kitchen because she found it hard to believe that there is no charge and that religion does not have an entry fee. All regions continue to affirm the need for the meals.

Soup Kitchen diners enjoy being served restaurant-style by the international cadre of volunteers. It is a bit of dignity that eludes them in their daily lives in Russia. Over 400 volunteers from more than 12 countries and Russia serve the meals throughout a year. The volunteers are staff or spouses from embassies, travelers from U.S. churches, employees of international corporations or their spouses, refugees, or students.

This program of service is made possible by generous donations from church groups and individuals (primarily in the US), and grants by denominations and foundations. We pray that this partnership will continue strong in the years ahead.

For more information go to: [www.user.cityline.ru/~mpc](http://www.user.cityline.ru/~mpc)

Charles and Marie Mercer  
Interim Chaplaincy Team, May 00 – Jan 01

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## A WEBSITE YOU MIGHT ENJOY

CEWERN is an organization in England which shares much of the vision CAREE has had for work in and service to Eastern Europe. Due to financial cutbacks and diminished financial support, CEWERN has regrettably had to stop publishing its fine newsletter, *East-West*.

However, this loss has been rectified, in part, by the fact that CEWERN has recently developed a website. It offers information on the organization, information on upcoming events, summaries about recent ones, some papers which have been presented, and links to other sites (notably, that of the Keston Institute).

In particular, the report on the 12 October 2000 CEWERN meeting contains two fine, concise papers: one by Geoffrey Hosking on "The Russian Orthodox Church in its Historical Context," and the other by Fr. Theodore van der Voort on "The Russian Orthodox Church Today."

You can visit the website at: [www.cewern.org.uk](http://www.cewern.org.uk)

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## NEWS FROM AND ABOUT OUR MEMBERS

We received word that one of our members, **Carnegie Samuel Calian**, has recently been significantly honored. Dr. Calian is a Protestant scholar who serves as President and Professor of Theology at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. He has written three books on the interface of Western Christianity and Eastern Orthodoxy, in addition to participating in ecumenical conversations and projects over

the past years.

On October 24, 2000, Dr. Carnegie was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Sibiu in Romania, on recommendation of its Faculty of Theology, in view of his long and distinguished academic and ecumenical contributions to dialogue with Orthodoxy. This is only the

second time a Protestant scholar has been so honored by the University of Sibiu and its Theology Faculty. Congratulations, Dr. Calian!

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During the fall term of 1999, **Dane Gordon** taught philosophy at American University in Blagoevgrad and at the New Bulgarian University in Sofia. In fall of 2000, he

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To all those who are familiar with the history of the Balkans over the last century, the recent outbreak of fighting in Macedonia is a frightening prospect. With all the disputed irredentist claims--by Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbs, and Albanians (plus the Macedonians themselves, of course)--on that beleaguered land, we all should pray and hope for peace asap.

lectured in Russia on religious issues and philosophy of religion. With David Durst of American University in Bulgaria, Dane is currently editing a book on the countries of Southeastern Europe entitled *Civil Society in Uncivil Times*. It consists of chapters from writers in Serbia, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Kosovo, Greece, and the USA. It should be out with Rodopi this year.