

Sing to the LORD a new song!

This phrase from Psalm 149 has become the motto for our ministry in 2010.

I've thought a lot about how this idea of *a new song* comes up not just in the psalms, but in John's *Revelation*, too - "and they sang a new song before the throne." Reflecting on this verse I recalled that sense of wonder one experiences upon coming across a new piece of music. Why is it that we are filled with such excitement at a new song? A new song carries with it the possibility of revealing something which before that moment we had not yet experienced; it gives us new strength, fresh perspective on a long-familiar truth.

Additionally, I have noticed that it feels we are caught wandering in circles through our worship times; we repeat the same songs, at times week-in, week-out. Through many years the church in Russia has succeeded in winnowing its song-service down to that set of songs which truly reflect our faith, that are beautiful not only in their musical content, yet also in the message carried in their text. That set, however, is not large. The church is once again in need of a fresh breath of hymns that can inspire us to live by faith, praising our Lord and Savior.

The year began with starting a process of searching for new songs - songs which are suitable for congregational singing, while at the same time are inspiring, enjoyable, and meaningful. For me, it was also important that these songs should retain their original emotional content once fit with a text in Russian. One of the more important criteria during the selection process was that the song fall within one of the following categories:

1. Traditional hymns of the church
2. Contemporary songs
3. Corporate (congregational) singing
4. Songs by Russians



Once the songs were all chosen it was time to set to editing all the material I had gathered: compose a Russian text, create the musical text in a digital format, type-set for proper printing, etc.

The result of this effort was 15 completely new hymns for the church in Russia and Ukraine. In addition to these new songs, 26 songs of varied familiarity were compiled and edited for use by the Russian-speaking church.

All these songs were included in the songbook for this year's Singing School, an annual gathering of representatives of various congregations from Russia and Ukraine (this year brought together almost 100 participants from 41 congregations). During Singing School participants not only heard these new songs, they also learned the songs in multiple voices and received instruction in congregational singing from the excellent teachers at the school.

At Singing School we also succeeded in recording these songs, sung in chorus by the students. Compact discs with this recording will be sent out not just to those congregations represented at this year's school, but also to those congregations that show interest in learning new hymns. The sheet-music and recordings are likewise accessible on the school's official web-site: www.singingschool.ru (this portion of the project remains in progress.) The site also makes available PowerPoint slides of the songs' text for use by those congregations that wish to use them. Also, the text alone is offered for those congregations wishing to make their own songbooks.



In the near future we plan to join two *Shag Very* ('Leap of Faith') seminars in Crimea, each of which has 300 registered participants. There we will be able to share discs, give lessons, and introduce new songs. Also, we have already been invited to return to Tallinn, Estonia to continue the lessons begun last year with the congregation of that city.

Beyond executing our primary task (i.e. the introduction of new songs into the life of the church), we spent quite a bit of time and energy on the planning and organization of a spring 2010 trip to the USA, where our vocal ensemble *Psalom* had the chance to participate in two major events: Pepperdine University's 2010 Bible Lectures; and the International Symposium of Sacred A Cappella Music *The Ascending Voice II*, hosted also on the Pepperdine campus.

During the Bible lectures, the director of church relations for the university presented us with a placard in recognition of our ministry to our Lord and His church through music. At the symposium one of our songs, which is written on the text of the first psalm, received special honors in a contest of songs for congregational singing. For more details about the trip please see the previous newsletter at

<http://www.psalom/home/ministry.html>



We continue to maintain relationships with congregations of other Christian movements. The groups which make use of our music include, at the very least, two Catholic choirs (one in Moscow, the other in Novosibirsk) and a few Baptist assemblies in Novosibirsk, Saint Petersburg, and Tomsk. Lina has continued mentoring in a *cappella* singing for the praise team of the church *Voskresenie* ('Resurrection') in Pushkin (a suburb of Saint Petersburg), and she remains the choir director at Saint Petersburg Christian University.



One of the positive results of our activity in this area has come in the form of an offer from the administration of Saint Petersburg Christian University. We have begun discussing with them our involvement in the formation of a program dedicated to the development of music ministry and worship in evangelical churches. This comes as a unique possibility for developing our ministry. During the year ahead we plan to very seriously consider this partnership.

In 2010 we continued editing of songs based on psalms for inclusion in a joint project with Austin Graduate School of Theology and Abilene Christian University – "Timeless – Ancient Psalms for the Church of Today". More than 10 songs based on certain psalms, written by Konstantin Zhigulin with translation by Brothers Mark Shipp, Glover Shipp and Brad Cawyer will be included in this publication.

In 2010, three of K. Zhigulin's songs were selected for inclusion on the DVD "Searching for Truth" produced by World Video Bible School. 5.000 copies of this DVD will be sent out into the Russian-speaking world.

Additionally, 500 audio CD`s with new songs, recorded during the 2010 Donetsk Singing School were distributed throughout the church in Russia and Ukraine.

In November and December Konstantin and Lina visited congregations in Estonia, where the church held a short seminar of classes in singing and worship.

We thank the Lord for the chance to serve Him, praising His holy Name in song! We thank every one, who has considered it profitable to the Lord's work to sacrifice of himself so that our ministry could exist and grow! It is thanks to you that we have come to the rich realization that our ministry is actually not 'our own.' It is the church's ministry, in which we, in joy, are able to participate.

Konstantin and Lina Zhigulin, 2010
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