

# Keston Newsletter

No. 30, 2019



Michael Bordeaux unveiling a blue plaque at the former Keston College.



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## Editorial note

*The Editor of the Keston Newsletter writes:* Keston's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations began with the unveiling of a blue plaque on the building which housed Keston from 1972-1992. Keston's President, Michael Bourdeaux, recalled those years in his address, published here.

In 1992 when the USSR collapsed and its constituent republics became independent republics, it might have seemed that its work, if not quite over, would soon be no longer needed. The Encyclopaedia project, which began in the late 1990s, is providing undreamed of details of religious beliefs in all parts of Russia. Xenia Dennen describes the work in this issue.

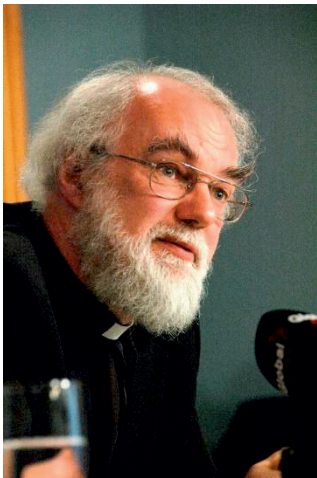
Sadly, it quickly became clear that Keston's work was not quite over, even if many changes had taken place in the religious scene across the former USSR. The need for a "voice for the voiceless" remains, as

can be seen in the articles on religious persecution in Uzbekistan and Crimea.

New voices, quite unexpectedly, have appeared: in an unprecedented display of solidarity with the demonstrators calling for civil liberties in Moscow this summer, over 180 Russian Orthodox priests signed an open letter calling for those unjustly condemned to long sentences to be released. The text of the letter itself and an article discussing how the letter arose can be found in this issue.

Xenia Dennen, who has been on sabbatical as Master of the Mercers' Company, has returned to her post of Chairman of Keston Institute and will be taking up the editorship of the *Newsletter* once more. I shall remain as a member of Keston and occasional contributor to the *Newsletter*.

*Elisabeth Robson*



Two major celebrations of Keston's jubilee take place this year: in June a plaque was unveiled on the building in which Keston College worked from 1972 to 1992 ; in November the AGM will be addressed by Rowan Williams, who is one of our Patrons. We hope all members who can will attend the AGM:

*Talk by Rowan Williams and AGM: Saturday 9 November 2019 at 12.00, the Royal Foundation of St Katharine, Limehouse, London.*

The title of Bishop Williams's talk is:  
"Why Religious Liberty Matters"

# Keston College - The Plaque 1972-1992

by Michael Bourdeaux

*Keston, Kent  
20 June 2019*



For 18 years this characterful old building next door, now an upmarket block of flats, was a hub. Hundreds of people were drawn to it. What were they looking for? They wanted information about the Persecuted Church – once called the “Church of Silence.” Now, with the technology of the time, the telex, by day – and sometimes by night – spread the translated new voices of believers to the world.

It was not only Russians whose word reached us – it was Poles, Czechs, Bulgarians, East Germans, Hungarians, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians and many others. In the heyday of Keston College – that’s what we were called – we covered about 20 languages on these premises and collected information on every country of communist Europe, with some attempt to spread wider to China, North Korea, Vietnam and even Cuba. The information which we preserved so precious was available to all and in the last twelve years it has passed to the archive of Baylor University, Waco, Texas. We are delighted to welcome today Kathy Hillman, who has oversight over our

continuing work there, and her husband John.

Who came to Keston? Principally journalists, radio, newspapers and sometimes TV. You have to remember that studying the persecution of religion by the Kremlin and other governments was considered highly suspect at the time. After all, there was a raging propaganda, often aided by western church leaders who should have known better, claiming that that such persecution was not taking place – or if it was, the situation was “improving”. As my forthcoming memoirs recount, we were not without our conflicts.

“Oh yes”, some people claimed, “what Keston writes is accurate, but they constantly emphasise the negatives”. Researchers who visited Alyona Kojevnikov’s centre of the hub, were told in decisive terms, that alongside the name and fate of the latest prisoner, we were constantly providing information about the latest proof of the *revival* of religion. Alyona and my daughter Karen, who occasionally assisted her, are both here.

With growing insistence the phone would ring – not only people requesting information, but also brave people from Russia passing information to us. In the 1970s you only had to mention the name “Irina” – and the reference was to Irina Ratushinskaya. She was a school teacher, imprisoned for writing Christian poetry, whose life was in danger owing to the appalling treatment that she was receiving in a prison camp. One day Alyona’s phone rang: “Irina is free”. When Alyona transmitted that information to the BBC,

the news became the top headline for the rest of the day.

There you have it in a nutshell. If the news came from Keston, this meant that we had verified it – and in the two decades that we were here, we were never caught out. That's quite a claim, but I have no hesitation in making it. *Keston News Service* and our academic journal, *Religion in Communist Lands*, never let us or the world down.

But how the Soviets hated it. The KGB kept files on all we did, but never undermined us. At one later annual general meeting, addressed as always by an eminent speaker, the Soviet double agent, Gordievsky, proclaimed that, while he worked for the KGB, he knew that Keston College was considered to be number two in the hierarchy of hates, the first being Amnesty International.

Among the stream of visitors, we welcomed such people as Irina, who sadly died two years ago. Anatoly Levitin wrote about the revival of the Russian Orthodox Church, and saw how we had translated the more important of his writings.

Fr Vasil Romanyuk had recently been released from prison. Before long he would become the first Patriarch of the Kievan branch of the Orthodox Church, recently recognised as an independent church by the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. History passed through this place.

Leader of the unregistered Baptists, Georgy Vins, had been in a dramatic exchange, organised by the American State Department, for a group of Soviet spies held in the USA. Georgy Vins's visit to Keston was memorable, because he broke down on viewing original documents with his signature on them, which he thought he

would never see again. We had the honour of providing the information to President Jimmy Carter, which led to his release. I shall never forget the phone call from the State Department which summoned me immediately to New York, and then Washington DC, to participate in his debriefing. I am delighted to reiterate my thanks to the American authorities today!

So many of those names have undeservedly faded into history, but demand commemoration as heroes of the faith. This is one of Keston's ongoing tasks – the names are faithfully preserved at Baylor University.

Among other distinguished guests we had archbishops of various churches, Catholic and Orthodox as well as Anglicans. Donald Coggan, Archbishop of Canterbury, unveiled an internal plaque to open our new library; Archbishop Runcie, the bishop of St Albans, came before we knew of his forthcoming elevation, to judge whether he should support us later. He became a patron.

I was served throughout the Keston years by a committed, individualistic staff. They bore the brunt of the careful research work and the obligation that we were an academic group, not a campaigning one. Accuracy of information was what we sought and then the demonstrations and letter-writing to prisoners were left to other organisations or individuals.

In this context, the name of the founder of ChildAid stands out. Jane Ellis, who died in her forties, was a brilliant researcher for Keston, ran the Moscow office at one time and also had the energy to found Aid to the Russian Church, which later became ChildAid and still works in Bromley.

Sadly, with the passage of time, several of our former team have died, most

prominently our first chairman, Sir John Lawrence, and a successor, Chris Cviic. Marite Sapiets, who is also no longer with us, covered the Baltic States and translated so many documents here – not least maintaining contacts with the Baltic countries. She lived to see their liberation. Arvon Gordon and Bob Hoare were only with us part-time, but covering China, Bulgaria and East Germany between them, they set standards for the full-time staff.

It's impossible to name all the hundred or so researchers who worked in this building at one time or another. Mike Rowe on Russian Protestants, Grazyna Sikorska on Poland, Victoria Watts on Romania, Alex Tomsky on Czechoslovakia – these are all names which should be written on the plaque, alongside many others. My second wife, Lorna, began her career here and saw the Bourdeaux family through difficult times. Sandy constantly brought new ideas to our publicity and mounted a Keston Road Show – based on true stories from the Suffering Church.

Administration – the person who tied together all the volunteers – was Mavis Perris, who died at the end of last year. Her dedication was total. My late first wife Gillian, in the early days, headed the administration and without this team of two, I think we would have fallen apart before we began.

One of Mavis's triumphs was to organise our Annual General Meetings in this very room. We always had over a hundred to listen to a succession of brilliant speakers. Some, perhaps, came because they knew they would eat hot Cornish pasties supplied direct from Cornwall, but the atmosphere was always electric. We turned no one away – we were not a secret organisation – so I found references to our AGMs in my 625-page long Stasi file, when I examined it in Berlin many years later.

They were very boring reports. This is my chance to thank those who came so loyally, and offered committed support alongside the twelve thousand or so who were on our mailing list. They sustained the work right through to the collapse of communism.



So how did Keston School become Keston College? It's a long story. In outline, I negotiated with the Diocese of Rochester, who owned the old school, which was too small for the growing local population. They not only sold it to us, but provided a substantial short-term loan. I hope they felt we repaid it not only financially, but in service to the truth. My honorary canonry of Rochester Cathedral marks this link, for which I have always subsequently been grateful.

That is not to say that the building was in good condition when we bought it. Keston School had been unoccupied for far too long. There is a photo of me sitting in overcoat and Russian *shapka* trying to work in almost-zero temperatures. I can also see

- in my mind's eye, Sally Carter, who is here today, a little older, but then a gap-year student, balancing precariously at the top of a ladder, while she swabbed aeons of grime off the wall. Moira Blacklaws held a bucket at the bottom. They open one of the chapters of my forthcoming memoirs.

Finally, I must thank the London Borough of Bromley, represented today by the deputy mayor, in retrospect for various permissions for change of use and, finally, for his enthusiasm about the plaque. But

most of all, the most heartfelt gratitude to Michael Elmer. He suggested this plaque at least ten years ago. He met opposition or indifference at various times, but persisted - and now his efforts have come to fruition. Assisted by the splendid building company, there is now a permanent memorial to an organisation which, in its dedicated way, contributed "One word of truth" (to quote Solzhenitsyn) to the triumph of freedom and democracy over oppression by communist atheism in its final two decades.

*Michael Bourdeaux is the President and Founder of Keston College,  
now Keston Institute*

*As word spread about the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations, many messages were received congratulating Michael Bourdeaux and members of the Keston team on the achievements of Keston College. Two are reproduced below:*

Dear Father Michael!  
Dear Xenia Dennen!

From the bottom of my heart, it brings me great joy to congratulate you on this memorable occasion - the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Keston College.

Grateful memory recalls images of times not so long past: the stifling, socially suffocating reality of "developed socialism" and crumpled pieces of tissue-thin paper covered with microscopic writing, detailing the suffering and pain inflicted by the heavy hand of a state that drove us into the narrow space between the Criminal Code and the Dictates of the builders of communism, and the modest hope granted to us through your voluntary emissaries, to bring our cry, our grief and what King Solomon called "hope full of immortality" to the Free World.

You were the champion of our suffering voice that was being smothered by the heavy burden of communism! Your compassionate support blunted the fury of the punitive energy of our persecutors, those storm-troopers who dared to challenge Heaven!

Together with you we held our ground in this epochal struggle against unprecedented persecutions and trials, brought down on us by a totalitarianism which proclaimed itself, in

all seriousness, as the new faith to bring down every faith in the world, clearing its blood-soaked path with stupefying propaganda and unrelenting violence.

With love and gratitude,

Alexander Ogorodnikov

Christian Seminar (on Problems of Religion and Revival)  
Moscow, 15 June 2019

Dear Father Michael!

On this momentous occasion, please accept our heartfelt congratulations to all the staff of Keston College, and especially to you. Yours was the inspiration and able leadership that yielded the unique achievements of the College for decades.

In the bitter years of our struggle against communist oppression, you raised your voice in our defence, your work lightened our burden and your true compassion shaped our fates. We shall never forget this. Your Christian endeavour was that of a man who extended a helping hand to us at a time when we needed it most. We heard your voice and the voices of those you called to come to our support. That response was enough for us to stand firm in our fight for freedom, a freedom toward which we continue to strive.

On this year of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Keston College, thank you once more Father Michael for what you did for us.

May God bless you, your family, and all those who worked selflessly for and with Keston College.

Victor Papkov  
Tatiana Lebedeva

Christian Seminar (on Problems of Religion and Revival)  
Moscow  
15 June 2019





*Resources for the study of religious affairs in Communist and formerly  
Communist countries*

The Keston Institute website, [www.keston.org.uk](http://www.keston.org.uk), gives access to all back numbers of the Newsletter, and issues of the Russian-language *Russian Review*, as well as information about research materials.

## ***Keston Institute***

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*The Keston Newsletter is distributed twice a year and is free to Keston members.*

*Full details of life and corporate membership rates are listed on the website.*

*Full-time student membership: £5 per annum*

*Ordinary membership: minimum £25 per annum*

*The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and not necessarily shared by Keston Institute and the editor of the Keston Newsletter.*



# Keston's Encyclopaedia: Religion in Russia Today

by Xenia Dennen

Of all my work for Keston Institute over the years, my involvement in the research for Keston's Encyclopaedia about religion in contemporary Russia has been the most fascinating. This project has been the main focus of Keston's work for more than 20 years: during this anniversary year – Keston's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary – it seems fitting to celebrate what is a remarkable and significant achievement.

I met Michael Bourdeaux as I finished my time at Oxford University in 1966 and began working for him in early 1967, even before the founding of Keston in 1969. After visiting the USSR a number of times in the 1970s, I was banned in 1976 and only returned after the fall of Communism in 1992 when Keston was able to open what we called “the Moscow office”: this was a flat in Moscow containing a fax machine, telephone and laptop. From here I and others built up a network of contacts and gathered information for our publication *Keston News Service*. In the mid-1990s I met Sergei Filatov, a sociologist of religion, who told me about his idea of conducting a survey in the Russian provinces of the contemporary religious situation; he showed me a number of “*spravki*” (reports) about Russian Orthodox dioceses which I took back with me to England. When I showed them to Michael Bourdeaux he was very excited and immediately wanted Keston to support Filatov's project.

Eventually, with funds gathered by Keston, field trips to Russia's provinces began in the late 1990s. I joined the team in 2000 and have taken part in 45 of these to date and shall continue to do so. The first edition of the Encyclopaedia comprising

Part I in four volumes (entitled *Religion in Russia Today*) was published in 2003-2006, while Part II in three volumes (entitled *Atlas of Religion in Russia Today*) was published in 2005-2009. Part I included information on all Christian denominations, as well as on Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, paganism and new religious movements. Part II focused on the same subject areas but was organised differently and followed a geographical principle, covering all administrative areas in alphabetical order.

With encouragement from the Encyclopaedia's Russian publisher, Keston has now embarked on a second edition, in seven volumes, also following the geographical principle but focusing on the most important current trends within religious denominations. So far volumes 1-3 have been published under the title of *Religious Life in Russia's Regions*. Research for the next volume – on St Petersburg – has almost been completed.

## Blending in

After having studied for many years the anti-religious world of the Soviet era and its persecution of religion, I found it extraordinary to find in the 1990s that I could talk openly to religious believers. On Encyclopaedia field trips I have blended in with my Russian colleagues, and apart from interviews with provincial officials dealing with religious policy which I have kept away from on Sergei Filatov's advice, I have not found conversations inhibited because I am from the UK. During these field trips I write my own record in the form of a diary. I regularly note my surprise at the way we find good food in every provincial

city we visit. I have never had to cope with Christina Dodwell's experience, described in her 1984 *Explorer's Handbook*, when she had to face a pig's ear and a crocodile egg for breakfast, "bacon and egg" in her words, or a situation recorded by Lady Anne Blunt in 1881:

"Locusts are now a regular portion of the day's provision with us, and are really an excellent article of diet... The long hopping legs must be pulled off, and the locust held by the wings, dipped into salt and eaten."

Like earlier women travellers I think carefully about what clothes to wear, and especially in winter snow to have high-quality boots on my feet. A skirt is *de rigueur* for interviews with Orthodox bishops and clergy, though unlike Mrs Cole in 1859 I have not had to worry about a long dress for which she ingeniously devised a solution:

"Small rings should be sewn inside the seams of the dress, and a cord passed through them, the ends of which should be knotted together in such a way that the whole dress may be drawn up at a moment's notice to the requisite height."

We have found on our field trips that there are remarkable variations between one area and another, between one Orthodox diocese and another; much depends on the views of a local Orthodox bishop who wields a significant influence on local government policies. I have been struck by the greater tolerance towards Protestants and Catholics among Russian Orthodox believers in non-European areas, beyond the Urals, where historically the Orthodox have not been as numerous as in European parts.

## A variegated scene

To demonstrate the extraordinary variety of religious phenomena in the Russian Federation, I have selected ten areas visited by the Encyclopaedia research team, and have divided them into five pairs which contain similarities and differences: Buryatia and Kalmykia will illustrate Buddhism in Russia; Mari El and Mordovia – paganism; Magadan and Irkutsk – Roman Catholicism; Kamchatka and Novosibirsk will illustrate the significant place of Protestantism in today's Russia; and finally Ekaterinburg and Solovki, which are places of pilgrimage where Orthodox blood was shed by Communist brutality, illustrate the continuing power of Russian Orthodoxy.

### Buryatia and Kalmykia

Buddhism in Buryatia (Eastern Siberia) was able to revive in 1990. Although Stalin in 1948 had allowed a central Buddhist organisation to exist, many Buddhist leaders continued to be arrested and only one *datsan* (temple) continued to function. We found on our two field trips to this area that in addition to a central Buddhist organisation, a number of "alternative" strands exist such as the "Maidar" movement, founded by Danzan Khaibzum Samaev who was educated at Leningrad University, received Buddhist teaching in Ulan-Bator and India, was a close friend of the Dalai Lama and head of the *datsan* in St Petersburg from 1990-1997. He was intellectually close to the West and taught his followers to revere nature and to have a deep concern for ecology. This is a movement which involves highly educated Buryats: among those members whom we interviewed one was an archivist and another a librarian who both worked for the local Academy of Sciences.

In Kalmykia, on the north-western coast of the Caspian Sea, we interviewed a scholar of Buddhism, Elizaveta Bakaeva at the Humanities Institute, and discovered that Buddhism in this culture is very different from Buryatia. Everything connected with Kalmyk religion and culture was destroyed between 1943-1957 following the deportation of the Kalmyk people to Siberia. In exile it had been impossible to observe Buddhist rituals, Bakaeva observed, and most Kalmyks had become very ignorant about their religion: a “dual” form of belief had developed, and, partly thanks to russification, by the early 1990s it was not unusual for icons to be placed beside Buddhist images, for parents to have their children baptised in the Russian Orthodox Church, and for Kalmyks to observe the main Russian Orthodox religious festivals. Until 1989 there were no Buddhist temples (called *khurul*s). A form of folk Buddhism exists today with a “White Starets” who is revered as a local god, acts as a link between earth and sky and protects the Kalmyk nation.

### **Mari El and Mordovia**

Unlike Mordovia, in the Mari El Republic the indigenous pagan religion of the Mari people (a Finno-Ugrian ethnic group) known as the Mari Traditional Religion (MTR) is regarded as an official religion on a level with Russian Orthodoxy and Islam. The Mari form 42% of the population in the Mari El Republic, some 900km south-east of Moscow. We talked to a member of MTR and to a leader of a rival pagan group, *Mari Ushem* (Mari United): both organisations revere sacred groves, though one group prays among fir trees and the other only among oaks! It is in sacred groves that a *molenie* (a religious gathering with animal sacrifices and other rites) takes place. Galina Lastochkina, PA to the MTR leader, explained that monotheism had influenced current Mari paganism; one

dominant god, she said, was recognised with a hierarchy of minor gods, a god of the sky, a sun god, a mother earth god and a multitude of spirits within nature, within trees, mountains, rivers... The MTR leader, with the Orthodox bishop and a Muslim leader, is a member of the local Council for Cooperation with Religious Organisations.

In Saransk, the capital of Mordovia (to the west of Mari El), we talked to two members of the Erzya people (also Finno-Ugrian), Raisa Kemaikina, a poet and the first pagan priestess of the Mordovian people, and to her colleague Evgeni Chetvergov, a thin, gentle old man with no upper teeth and a shiny row of metal ones below. They took us to their Centre for the Preservation of the Erzya People where I was shown a picture of a *molenie*: this involved a long line of women circling round a central structure which represented a candle. Raisa commented that her people believed in one god, the “great creator” and ruler of protective spirits, who were all feminine and helped human beings to be good. Her people venerated a spirit of the water, of the woods, of the harvest, the soil, the wind... The Erzya culture and religion were being suppressed by the authorities and by the Russian Orthodox Church, she complained: “We are a few healthy cells in a sick body, but we are accused of being extremists... There is no venue where we can meet and speak the Erzya language in Saransk.”

### **Magadan and Irkutsk**

The area round Magadan, on the Far East coast facing Kamchatka, was only settled extensively in the 1930s, when the Stalin regime decided to mine the local gold and uranium with slave labour. Many labour camps, where hundreds of thousands perished, were set up under a local government entirely manned by the secret

police. It still feels like a god-forsaken place: you can only reach it by air, since no one can arrive by sea and the nearest railway line is in Yakutsk 2000km away along a dangerous route. An extraordinary ray of sunshine hit us when we visited the Catholic Church of the Nativity, built by an Alaskan priest, Fr Michael Shields who had arrived in Magadan 27 years earlier. In addition to the church, he had built a Chapel of the Martyrs as a place of prayer for those who suffered and died in the Gulag. Below the crucifix in this chapel was a battered prayer book from the camps, a piece of barbed wire bent into the form of a crown of thorns, a rosary with beads made from bread, someone's prison number, an embroidered Virgin Mary sewn with a fish bone using threads taken from a prison mattress; stones of black Kolyma (location of the mines) granite formed a low memorial wall with small crucifixes commemorating the dead.

Fr Michael's bishop is based far away in Irkutsk (Siberia). Unlike Magadan, Irkutsk since the 19<sup>th</sup> century when many Poles were exiled there, has had a significant Catholic community, indeed the largest in Russia. The bishop is called Cyril Klimowicz, a Pole born in Kazakhstan, who lived and worked in Belarus from where he moved to Poland in 1965. His diocese is vast, 10 million sq.km: "I am a little bishop in a large diocese," he said. He wanted to promote dialogue with all: "We want to help anyone on our territory. There are many different denominations and we must not put people into cages." In the 1990s the Catholic Church in Irkutsk played a significant role leading the so-called "democrats" who were opposed to extreme Russian nationalism, with a Catholic priest acting as the "democrats'" unofficial chaplain. Many of these activists attended Catholic services although they mostly did not formally join the church, and organised the grand opening of the

cathedral in 2000, presenting a dramatised musical play to the assembled cardinals.

### **Kamchatka and Novosibirsk**

I encountered some of the most impressive Protestant missionaries in Kamchatka, members of the Full Gospel "Good News" church who were building a new centre to hold as many as 2000 people. This congregation has a particular calling to bring the Christian faith to the indigenous peoples, the Evens and Koryaks. A Koryak woman pastor, Margarita Suzdalova, told me that she had built up a Christian community of 30 in her village: "My family used to bring offerings to the spirits. I was drawn to God, and when you come to God you change completely." Her village celebrated an autumn festival when the number of bears caught and wild animals killed during the year were counted, and the villagers danced and sang: "Now we dance and sing in praise of God." Andrei Semashkin, an Aleut and champion sled team driver, told us how he had been able to reach isolated villages in the winter: he would stay with a village community for a few weeks and found that people would start to ask him why he did not swear, drink and led an honest life. It was then that he would start to talk about his faith.

A very different Protestant congregation exists in Novosibirsk, Western Siberia. This is the Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELC), a conservative branch of Lutheranism which rejects what it considers to be the liberalism of German Lutheranism. SELC's main church and seminary are located outside Novosibirsk in Akademgorodok, home to many leading intellectuals in Soviet times, in a long greyish white building made of breeze blocks with a large simple cross above the entrance. Here we talked to Fr Pavel Khramov who told us that this side of the

Urals Protestants were more tolerated than in European Russia: "We are not called sectarians!" SELC aimed to be a form of Russian Lutheranism and to fill the High Church niche, he added. It was opposed to the ordination of women. "High church practices give us our identity, but we have different kinds of congregations. Here our congregation is intellectual but in other places church members are not," he said. These Lutherans, I noticed, liked icons and wore vestments, and as we left I heard familiar Anglican chants accompanied by an electric organ coming from the chapel where Evenson was taking place.

### **Ekaterinburg and Solovki**

Ekaterinburg in the Urals is a location where Orthodox blood was spilled and which has become today a focus for Orthodox pilgrims. The Russian Orthodox Church in this area only started to develop in the decade before 1917 and so had little time to put down deep roots. Ekaterinburg was known for its anti-clericalism and anti-monarchical sympathies, and thus, in the minds of the Bolshevik leaders, was thought a suitable location for the exile of the Russian royal family. The Tsar, his wife and children were shot in July 1918 in the basement of the Ipatiev house, which was demolished on Communist Party orders in 1977. This is now the site of a large shrine, the Church on the Blood, built in 2003 which has become the focus for a Nicholas II cult. Icons of the royal family form part of the iconostasis, and the shrine shop sells a series of artefacts – plates and mugs – with images of the tsarevich and Nicholas on them, and even small bags of earth from the location where their burnt remains were buried.

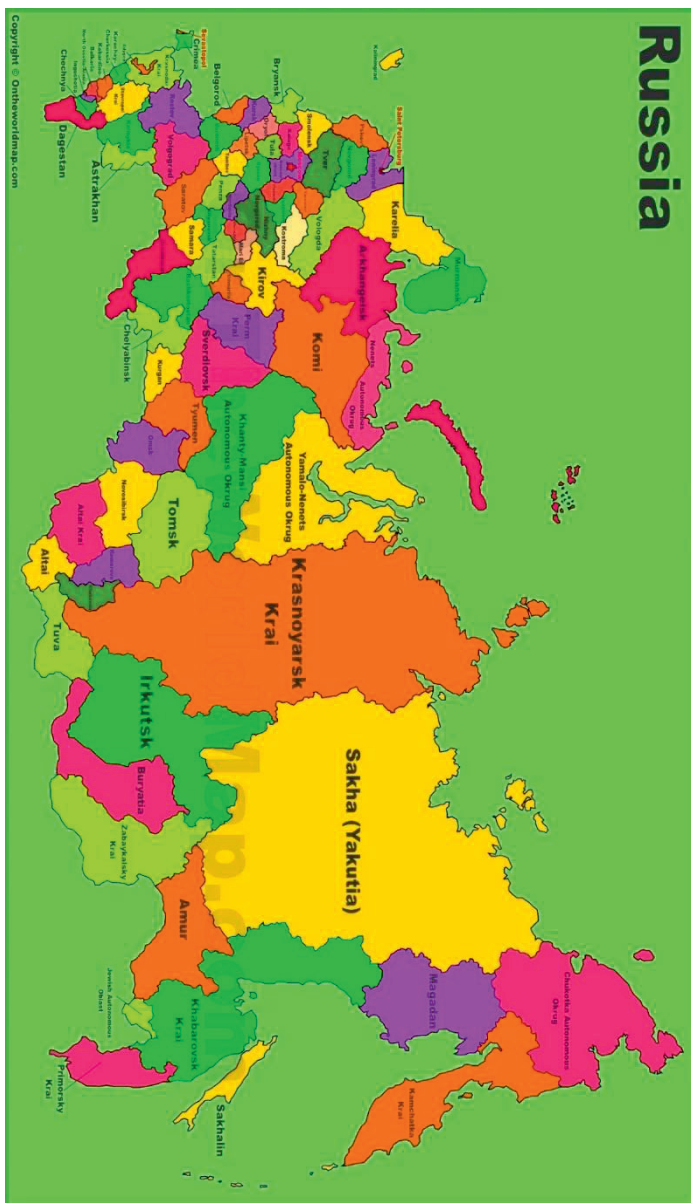
The soil of the Solovki Islands in the White Sea (just outside the Arctic Circle) is

soaked with the blood of the martyrs. The Spaso-Preobrazhensky Monastery on the Solovki Islands, which can be reached only during the four warmer months of the year, is a place of intense Orthodox spirituality. Founded in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and extensively developed in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it became a prison after the Bolshevik coup between 1923-1939. By January 1930 there were over 53 thousand prisoners there, of which at any one time at least 100-200 were clergy. The monastery was re-established in 1989 and today has a large community of monks, with usually two new novices joining each year. "Our goal," said the Prior, "is to imitate Christ. To unite our inner life with God, that is the core of the spiritual life." The monastery has become a focus for Orthodox pilgrimages and about 15,000 pilgrims visit it during the months when the islands are accessible from the mainland. The terrible suffering of the Communist period is a focus today for the redemptive work of the monastery. The Prior said: "This is a special place; we feel that Christ is close here."

### **A significant achievement**

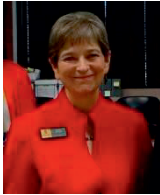
It is remarkable that the Encyclopaedia team's field trips have been able to continue for over 20 years and that, on the whole, those whom we telephone, once we have established ourselves in a local hotel, are happy to talk to us. Neither the Russian religious authorities nor local government personnel have blocked the team's work. Perhaps this is because the published volumes contain balanced, objective – as well as honest – accounts of the many areas in the Russian Federation which the team has visited; and this information may perhaps be new and thus of interest to the "powers that be".

***Xenia Dennen** is Chairman of Keston Institute and editor of the Newsletter. She has just returned to the Institute after leave as Master of the Mercers' Company.*



# The Keston Center for Religion, Politics, and Society 2018-2019 Highlights

by Kathy Hillman



*Kathy Hillman,  
Director*

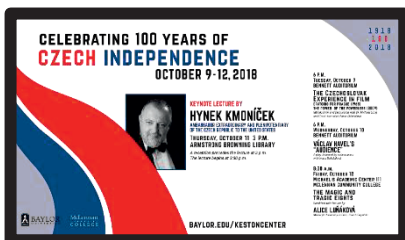
The Keston Center for Religion, Politics, and Society joins with the Keston Institute to achieve its mission and is committed to the preservation and utilisation of the library and archive held in the Michael Bourdeaux Research Center. The Keston Center at Baylor University seeks to promote research, teaching, and understanding of religion and politics in communist, post-communist and other totalitarian societies.

## Lectures, Presentations, Events, and Partnerships

The Keston Center held several events that included lectures, panels, film, drama, music, and luncheons during the academic year. Generous partners and co-sponsors from the University and the larger community made these possible.

## Celebrating 100 Years of Czechoslovak Independence: Events and Exhibition

Hynek Kmoníček, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Czech Republic to the United States, headlined a commemoration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the independence of Czechoslovakia in Waco at Baylor University and McLennan Community College, October 9-12. Presented by the Keston Center for Religion, Politics, and Society;



Baylor's Department of Modern Languages and Cultures; and MCC, the event featured:

- Film screenings of *Oratorio for Prague* (1968) and *Power of the Powerless* (2009) followed by a conversation with Michael Long, Professor of Modern Languages and Cultures, and Czech journalist Ivana Doležalová who appeared in *Power of the Powerless*
- A presentation of Václav Havel's *Audience: A Play* translated by Vera Blackwell by Steven





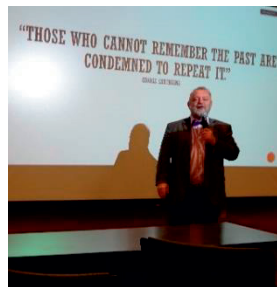
Pounders and Cooper Sivara of the Theatre Department after which Ivana Doležalová moderated a lively and engaging discussion of Havel's work and Prague Spring

- A luncheon “Celebrating a Century of Freedom and Friendship” honoring the Ambassador and his wife Indra Gumarova along with sponsors and invited guests where Justin Kroll sang Czech selections, Texas legislators Kyle Kacal and Hugh Shine presented a proclamation, and sponsors received paperweights donated by Moser Glass of Prague and the Czech Heritage Museum
- A breakfast and lecture by former MCC/Masaryk University exchange student Alice Luňáková on “The Magic and Tragic Eighties: Generational Reflections on 100 Years of Czech History.”
- Ambassador Kmoníček concluded the session and the conference by bringing the past into the present with a look into the future related to his country, the United States, and the world at large with the caveat, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

On Thursday, October 11, the Keston Center hosted a reception for Ambassador Kmoníček. During the gathering, students from the University of North Texas College of Music, supported by the Czech Educational Foundation of Texas, sang excerpts from the opera *The Cunning Little Vixen*, by Czech composer Leoš Janáček. Following the reception that included authentic pastries provided by West's Village Bakery, Ambassador Kmoníček presented his address, “Lessons on Freedom: Perspectives on the Past, Prospects for the Future.” As part of the lecture, Egle Uljas, graduate student in piano, performed two Czech Dances by Bedřich Smetana. Former United States Congressman Chet Edwards and his wife Lea Ann introduced the Ambassador and his wife.

On Thursday evening, McLennan Community College held a special dinner honoring the Ambassador and commemorating the College's 25-year exchange program with Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic.

In attendance were former Ambassador to Sweden Lyndon Olson and his wife Kay, Congressman and Mrs. Edwards, and five current or former Masaryk students ranging in ages from 20 to 80. Waco Mayor Kyle Deaver read a proclamation from the city. The Tartan



Singers, a select choir, sang several numbers by Czechoslovak composers.

The Ambassador, Ms. Gumarova, and other guests also toured the Keston Center where they viewed the exhibition “Truth Prevails: 100 Years of Czechoslovak History” commemorating the anniversary along with items related to religious persecution in Czechoslovakia.

<https://sites.baylor.edu/keston-collections/2018/10/10/truth-prevails-100-years-of-czechoslovak-history/>

Overall attendance numbered approximately 575 as the academic-focused observance attracted the larger Texas Czech community. Baylor’s student newspaper’s coverage of the event can be accessed at <https://baylorld.com/2018/10/11/czech-it-out/>.

## DIPLOMATIC FORUM

On March 21, the Keston Center for Religion, Politics, and Society, in partnership with the McBride Center for International Business, presented a Diplomatic Forum as part of the 2019 Global Business Forum. The Forum featured three highly-respected leaders with broad international experience in diplomacy. The speakers reflected on their experiences in diplomacy and the current international climate with a strong focus on ethics. Following their presentations, the panel engaged in a lively, moderated discussion with the large audience of more than 300.

Forum participants included:

**Joanne Held Cummings**, Career Foreign Service Officer of the U.S. Department of State, who currently serves as Policy Advisor to the Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve in Baghdad; **Paul Roush**, Retired Colonel of the U.S. Marine Corps and Retired



*Advisory Board Chair Steve Gardner with Panelists Roland Smith, Joanne Cummings, and Paul Roush*



*Standing room only crowd eagerly awaits the Diplomatic Forum*

Professor of the U.S. Naval Academy who served as an Assistant Naval Attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow from 1977-1980 during the time the Siberian Seven entered the compound; and **Roland H. Smith**, Member of the British Diplomatic Service from 1967 to 2002, including posts as Deputy Ambassador to NATO (1992-95), Director for International Security in the Foreign Office (1995-98), and Ambassador to Ukraine (1999-2002).

### Keston Advisory Board and Keston Council



The Keston Advisory Board met on March 22 in conjunction with the Diplomatic Forum and visit by Keston Institute Trustee Roland H. Smith. A majority of members attended. Special guests included teaching fellow Adrienne Harris and summer interns Andrea Parker and Chanse Sonsalla. Keston Director Kathy Hillman provided updates, and Roland Smith reported on the Keston Council. Julie deGraffenried described the scholarly book highlighting the Keston archive that is being published by the Baylor Press in time for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemoration. The Board participated in a hands-on exercise creating entries for the Baylor Women's Collections website. Director of International Studies Ivy Hamerly and Religion and Theology Librarian Bill Hair joined the group for lunch. Kathy and John Hillman hosted



a dinner in their home honoring the Diplomatic Forum speakers and Keston guests.

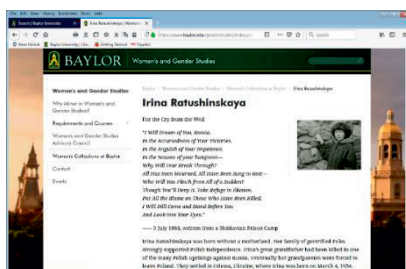
As a member of the Keston Institute Council of Management, Director Kathy Hillman attended the June 2018 meeting in Ifley near Oxford at the home of Michael Bourdeaux. During the year, she read materials and participated in the Council's work through e-mail. She joined the group in June 2019 for the summer meeting and unveiling of the plaque marking the location of Keston College from 1972-1992 and hopes to attend the Institute's 2019 Annual General Meeting in November.

### Research Activities and Visiting Scholars

Keston received more than 300 information requests. In addition to the 875 individuals who attended presentations sponsored or co-sponsored by Keston or visited the Center, four researchers and two Keston scholars extensively utilised the collection. About 170 students and faculty physically entered the archives, and the Center has become a destination during faculty interviews.

### Women's Collections at Baylor

<https://www.baylor.edu/genderstudies/index.php?id=948112>



Keston staff, summer interns, and student assistants researched and added several entries from the Michael Bourdeaux Research Center to the Women's Collections at Baylor website. These included: Charter 77 Women in Czechoslovakia, Irina Ratushinskaya, Nadezhda Teodorovich, and Unregistered Baptist Women in the Soviet Union. The online resource, which serves as a guide to research materials contained in the libraries and oral history, centralises items, highlights the contributions of women, and offers convenient searching across all disciplines.

Keston currently has seven featured entries with more on the horizon.

### Summer Teaching Fellows

For the summer of 2018, two professors and one PhD student teacher-of-record, applied for Keston's Summer Teaching Fellowships. A selection committee composed of the director



*Adrienne Harris meets Russian 2310 in the Michael Bourdeaux Research Center.*

along with Keston Advisory Board members Steve Gardner and Julie deGraffenried chose Adrienne Harris, Associate Professor of Russian in the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures, and Steven Jug, Lecturer from the same department. Harris gathered visual materials for two courses taught in Fall 2018: Third Semester Russian (Russian 2310) and Folklore and Folk Life in Russian Literature (Russian 4301). Jug revised four lessons on Orthodoxy in Russia for his Introduction to Slavic Studies (SEES 2380). He emphasised church-state relations in the Imperial Era and after the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 and included "the importance of Orthodoxy today, in terms of institutional power, cultural influence, and individual piety."

Professors Harris and Jug brought their classes to the Center during the academic year, and 2016 Teaching Fellows Julie deGraffenried and Ivy Hamerly continue to engage their students with the Keston Center and utilise class materials prepared during that summer.

For 2019, one professor, one part-time lecturer, and one PhD graduate student teacher-of-record applied to be Teaching Fellows. Two were chosen, funded by the Jim and Lou James Endowed Fund: Adrienne Harris for a second year and Charles Ramsey, Baptist Student Ministries Director and Part-time Lecturer in the Religion Department teaching World Religion

(REL 3345) and in Truett Seminary where he offers Religion and Worldviews (WOCW 7881).

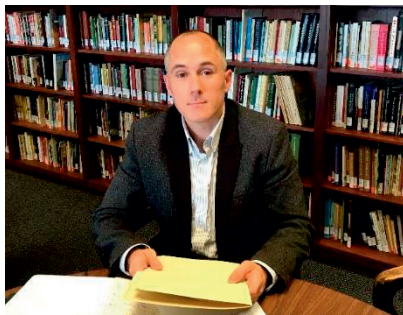
### Summer Interns

For the first time in 2018, the Keston Center offered summer internships. Andrea Parker, who in fall 2018 transitioned into a student



*Summer Teaching Fellow Adrienne Harris with her Russian students Andrea Parker and Chanse Sonsalla who both served as 2018 Keston Summer Interns.*

assistant position, held the Nancy Newman Logan Internship. Chanse Sonsalla received the Sue Margaret Hughes Internship. Both women graduated in May 2019, Andrea with a triple major in Russian, Slavic Studies, and History and Chanse with a Business Fellows major and Russian minor. Andrea was commissioned as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. in the United States Air Force where she will serve as an intelligence officer. Chanse has received a Peace Corps appointment in Sierra Leone. The selection committee credited her

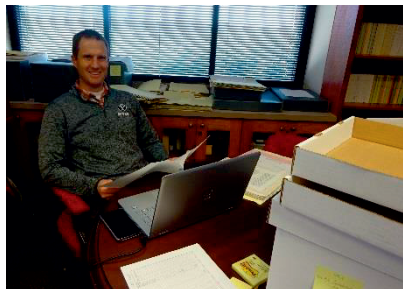


*Steven Jug*



Keston internship with providing an advantage in the decision.

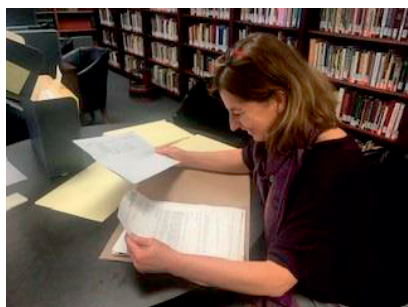
Two additional summer interns will serve during 2019. Luke Sayers, a PhD student in English who has taught in Russia, received the Dunlap Internship. He will work on the Michael Bourdeaux Papers and Zoya Krakhmalnikova for the Women's Collection. Heritage Russian speaker Camille Watson, a sophomore University Scholar and Russian minor, obtained



*Jeffrey Hardy*



*Christopher Campbell*



*Bethany Moreton*

the Logan Internship. Her focus will be on Soviet Union Registered Baptists and Anna Chertkova.

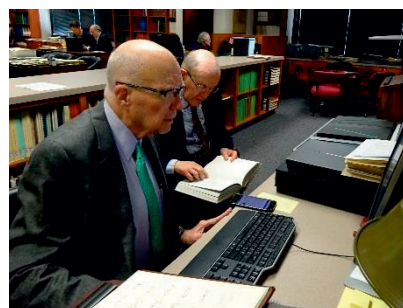
## **Scholars and Research Topics**

### Keston-Funded Researchers

- Keston 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Book *Voices of the Voiceless* (Zoe Knox, University of Leicester)



*Zoe Knox*



*Wallace Daniel*



*Julie deGraffenried*

- Finding God in the Gulag: A Religious History of the Soviet Penal System, 1917-1991 (Jeffrey Hardy, Brigham Young University)

#### Other Scholars and Student Researchers

- Russian 2310 and Russian 4301 (Adrienne Harris, Baylor University)
- History/Slavic and East European Studies 2380 (Stephen Jug, Baylor)
- Keston 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Book *Voices of the Voiceless* (Julie deGraffenried, Baylor and Adina Johnson Kelley, Baylor)
- Slouching towards Moscow: American Conservatism and the Romance of Russia (Bethany Moreton, Dartmouth University)
- Fr. Aleksandr Men' and Gleb Yakunin (Wallace Daniel, Mercer University)
- Cold War history, church-state relations under Communism and the role of religion in foreign policy (Christopher Campbell, University of Glasgow)
- Religion 3345 World Religions (Charles Ramsey, Baylor)
- Paper on the Cold War for Adrienne Harris (Eric Dunbar, Baylor undergraduate, Mar-May)
- Chinese materials (Kylie Smith, Senior University Scholar)

#### **Other Visitors and Presentations**

The Center hosted scholars, individual students, classes, candidates for Baylor faculty positions, library colleagues, and other researchers. Kathy Hillman's University 1000 cohort, and eight history, Russian, and political science classes met in the Michael Bourdeaux Research Center. Ambassador Hynek Kmoníček, his wife Indira Gumarova and others attending the Czechoslovakia Independence event, including event sponsor Clarice Marik Snokhous and her family, spent time in the archive. Ms. Gumarova, a native of Uzbekistan, recognized posters from her childhood while the Ambassador identified a number of individuals in various photographs and documents.

Additional international guests visited from Ukraine, Russia, and Germany. These included

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Pastor Roman Popov from a family of several generations of unregistered Baptist pastors. He was particularly interested in seeing the Samizdat collection, including the bulletins in which his father and uncle's names were recorded when they were imprisoned as well as handwritten hymnals like his mother wrote in every evening. She was one of the many unregistered Baptist women with an underground press in her home. Chuck and Christine Schwarz worked more than 20 years in Vienna, several Eastern European countries, and Moscow. Christine is a professor at St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia, and Chuck serves as the Associate Director for Russia and Caucuses for East-West Ministries. Tim Watson, who has lived and worked in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, spent time reading Ivan "Vanya" Moiseyev's personal journal. Another visitor viewed *Nauka i Religia*.



*Ambassador Kmoníček and his wife  
Indira Gumarova*

## Processing, Preservation, and Access

In January, Baylor opened world-wide access to the Keston Digital Archive. However, 282 items remain closed due to copyright. Another 37 issues of the *Keston News Service* received metadata and were added. Keston shared



approximately 300 electronic files, including 90 for the *Voices of the Voiceless* book, 47 for the European Union's COURAGE project, and others for various projects and research requests.

See: <http://cultural-opposition.eu/registry/?type=collections&search=keston>

Processing continued in the Center with ongoing projects and the goal of reducing the quantity of unprocessed boxes. During the year, the number declined from 46 to 36. All materials reside in library space for easy access and climate-controlled housing.

The Libraries purchased a new Integrated Library System (ILS) during the year. Preparation for migration and implementation on June 1, 2019, resulted in a 3-month moratorium on most purchasing and processing. Nevertheless, Janice Losak continued to process periodicals and send them to be bound. Her efforts resulted in the cataloging of 377 periodical titles, and the addition of 424 bound volumes to the collection. Some 322 books (468 volumes) were placed in BearCat. One manuscript and 6,940 periodical issues were also included. Two volumes of one title and ten periodicals were withdrawn leaving a net 698 titles and 7,397 volumes or issues added.

Finding aids and archives officially opened in the Baylor Archival Repositories Database (BARD) during 2018-19 include Bulgaria, China, Soviet Union Islam, Soviet Union Ukrainian Catholic (Uniate), and the Serge Keleher Papers. Eight

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additional boxes were added to each of the Poland and Soviet Union Orthodox finding aids. Currently, 21 finding aids covering 15 countries can be located through BARD. A listing and link to Keston materials continues to be active as part of the Prague Spring Archive portal, a collaboration between the University of Texas' Perry-Castañeda Library, the Center for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies (CREEES) at UT, and the LBJ Presidential Library.

See:

<http://scalar.usc.edu/works/prague-spring-archive>

## Staff

Keston retained Director Kathy Hillman and Library Information Specialists Larisa Seago and Janice Losak on staff. In addition to normal training activities and seminars, Texas Collection processing archivist Paul Fisher consulted on BARD. Tanya Clark, editorial assistant for Baylor's *Journal of Church and State*, continued processing Russian materials part-time. During the academic year, Joy Watson, a long-time missionary with Russian and German language skills, joined the staff as part-time special projects assistant.

Student assistants included senior Andrea Parker who also worked as a 2018 summer intern and sophomore Timothy Watson. A Baylor AFROTC cadet, Andrea served as Flight Commander and Wing Standard and



*Janice Losak, Larisa Seago, Victoria Royal, Kathy Hillman, Tanya Clark, Joy Watson, Timothy Watson*



Evaluations Officer. She credits Keston Advisory Board member and Baylor history professor Julie deGraffenried with her passion for Keston after writing a research paper on religious persecution during the Soviet era. A cross-culturally raised student and Russian heritage speaker, Timothy is a double Russian and Film and Digital Media major who finished high school in Kandern, Germany.

For the fifth year, the Center and Museum Studies partnered to employ a graduate assistant, and Victoria Royal spent her first assistantship with Keston. Victoria received her undergraduate degree from Mansfield University of Pennsylvania where she majored in history and political science and spent a semester studying in Bulgaria. She created the Czechoslovakia exhibit, Keston's new blog, women's collections entries, and the Bulgarian finding aid. Victoria will continue in 2019-2020.

### **Goals for 2019-2020 and Beyond**

Future goals continue to focus on increasing the visibility of the Center, strengthening partnerships, processing and preserving materials, hosting researchers, holding lectures and other events in coordination with Advisory Board meetings when possible, exploring additional funding sources, and furthering the reputation and reach of Keston. Additionally, the Keston Center plans to commemorate and celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of the Keston Institute.

Specific details include:

- Celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of Keston and launch of Zoe Knox and Julie deGraffenried's book from the Keston Archives with an event on October 15, 2019
- Observing the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Velvet Revolution on November 21, 2019
- Working with Baylor digitization and processing staff to provide additional metadata
- Reducing the number of Keston unprocessed boxes from 36 to 25
- Planning a Spring 2020 lecture, panel or another event
- Creating both on-site and online exhibitions related to the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Keston
- Conducting at least one meeting of the Keston Advisory Board
- Participating in one meeting of the Keston Institute's Council of Management in Oxford
- Partnering with the Keston Council to increase the number of Keston Scholars
- Adding at least three inventories in BARD (Baylor Archival Repositories Database)
- Extending collection outreach on campus through Teaching Fellows, Summer Internships, programs, class presentations, blogs, partnerships, and other strategies
- Expanding the contributions of Museum Studies graduate assistants and work-study students through researching and preparing entries for the Women's Collection website.

*Kathy R. Hillman is Director of the Keston Center for Religion, Politics, and Society at Baylor University.*

*The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and not necessarily shared by Keston Institute and the editor of the Keston Newsletter.*

## Open Letter in defence of those imprisoned as part of the “Moscow Case”

*For weeks this summer, and through September, Moscow citizens have been demonstrating in protest at the fixing of the elections to the Moscow Duma (City Council). First the authorities used the most frivolous of excuses to exclude any opposition candidates from the ballot; then, when the vote had taken place and angry citizens who had been denied a voice continued to protest, demonstrations were broken up by the police using violence and arrests to deter further participation. Charges were brought on the flimsiest of evidence and lengthy sentences handed out – often longer than those handed down to hardened criminals for violent crimes.*

*A quite unprecedented development is the appearance of an open letter from Russian Orthodox priests urging the authorities to review the long prison sentences and to seek peace with the protestors. Usually priests need the permission of their bishops to take part in such public action. These priests have placed the voice of their own consciences above any other considerations. There are 129 signatures on this early publication of the letter. Signatures continue to be added and by the end of September had reached over 180. — Editor*

Addressed to the Editorial Board of *Православие и мир* (Orthodoxy and the World), 18 September 2019.

Punishment should be proportionate to the breach of the law, and power places an additional responsibility on man, it does not relieve him [of that responsibility].

*“O, Man! The Lord hath shewn thee what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love*

*mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”*  
(Prophet Micah 6.8)

In fulfilling our pastoral duty of sorrowing for prisoners, we, priests of the Russian Orthodox Church, each acting in his own name, consider it to be our responsibility to state our conviction that there must be a review of the court rulings setting the terms of imprisonment of a number of those charged in the “Moscow Case”.

One of those sentenced, Konstantin Kotov, committed no acts of violence against representatives of the authorities, nor any other citizens, yet was sentenced to an unprecedentedly severe punishment. The “criminal activity” of this man was his defence of other prisoners, and that by purely peaceful means. It grieved us to learn that one of the court exhibits confiscated from him was a handmade placard bearing the words of archpriest Alexander Men: “Mercy – that is what we are calling for”, with an appeal for a prisoner exchange with Ukraine. Twenty-nine years after the murder – still unsolved – of Father Alexander, his words are still valid and are a reproach to our embittered society. The prisoner exchange between Russia and Ukraine, which took place after Konstantin Kotov’s arrest and trial, had the full support of the Russian Orthodox Church, and qualifying it as a call for unlawful acts is ludicrous.

We are dismayed by the judge’s refusal to include a video recording in the materials of the case, one that proves Konstantin Kotov’s innocence and contradicts the testimonies of the policemen, which are identical word for word. We wish to remind everyone who has given testimony or may be called upon to do so in this or

other cases, of these words from the Holy Writ: “A false witness shall not go unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall perish” (Proverbs 19:9). Bearing false witness makes a one an accessory to the trial of the Saviour, Who was also sentenced on the testimony of false witnesses (Matthew 26.60).

We hope that the others accused in this case and awaiting trial, who are not charged with violent acts (in particular Alexei Minyaylo , an Orthodox Christian who is actively engaged in social and charitable works) shall have the charges against them dropped, and that they shall be freed in the very near future.

We are categorically opposed to any form of violence by either the demonstrators or the representatives of law enforcement bodies, whose responsibility is to ensure the safety of citizens, including that of demonstrators.

With regard to the parties in the “Moscow Case”, we are perplexed by the court’s sentences in comparison with other, much more lenient sentences meted out by Russian courts to those accused of very serious crimes. We believe that a punishment should be proportionate to the breach of the law, and that the person holding the power to punish bears additional responsibilities; power does not relieve him [of that responsibility]. Otherwise, justice itself becomes a mockery and a “mass disorder.”

We wish to express the hope that Russian citizens will live with faith in the legal system, one that shall be fair and impartial irrespective of the social, economic and political status of a suspect or an accused. The court must have the power to protect citizens from arbitrary actions by executive powers and law enforcement agents, or

their existence becomes nothing more than a mere decoration and formality.

We appeal to those who are invested with legal authority and who are employed in the power structures of our country. Many of you were baptised in the Orthodox Church and consider yourselves to be people of faith. Court investigations must not be repressive in nature, courts must not be used as a means of repressing dissenters, the exercise of force must not be carried out with unjustified cruelty.

We are alarmed that most of the sentences pronounced look like simple intimidation of Russian citizens rather than fair decisions concerning the accused. The apostle Paul likens fear to a state of enslavement: “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear” (Romans 8:15), and the apostle John wrote: “ There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.” (1 John 4:18). A society of free people who love one another cannot be built on intimidation.

We call upon everyone to pray most earnestly for those incarcerated and for those in whose hands lies their fate, for Russia, for her authorities, her armed services and her people. May the Lord bless you all with His peace and grant us the strength and determination to respect and love one another.

1. *Archpriest Oleg Batov, cleric of the church of the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God in Uspensky Vrazhek, Moscow*
2. *Archpriest Alexander Borisov, rector of the church of the Holy Martyrs and Miracle Workers Cosmas and Damian in Shubino (Moscow)*
3. *Archpriest Leonid Grilikhes, cleric of the memorial church of Saint Job the Long Suffering (Brussels)*

4. Archpriest Alexander Dubovoy, rector of the church [dedicated to] the Entry into the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Bereslavka village (Volgograd region)
5. Priest Nikolai Evseev, cleric of the St Peter and Paul stavropegic church (Dublin) rector of the parish of the Holy Trinity (Cork) and the church [dedicated to] the Entry into the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Drogheda)
6. Archpriest Viktor Grigorenko, rector of the church of St Sergius in the town of Sergiev Posad (Moscow)
7. Hieromonk Ioann (Guayta), cleric of the church of the Holy Martyrs and Miracle Workers Cosmas and Damian in Shubino (Moscow)
8. Priest Dimitri Didenko, director of the Varnitskaya Gymnasium (Rostov Veliky)
9. Priest Alexii Zabelin, cleric of the church dedicated to the Rev. Andrei Rublev in Ramenki (Moscow)
10. Archpriest Vladimir Zelinsky, rector of the church dedicated to the icon of the Holy Mother of God "Joy of All Who Sorrow" (Brescia)
11. Priest Dionisii Zemlyanov, rector of the church dedicated to the holy Apostle St John the Evangelist (Tomsk)
12. Archpriest Sergii Zolotarev, rector of the church dedicated to the Great Holy Martyr Theodore Stratilates on Shirovka (Velikiy Novgorod)
13. Archpriest Georgiy Ioffe, rector of the church dedicated to the icon of the Mother of God "Satisfy My Sorrows" (St Petersburg)
14. Archpriest Dimitriy Klimov, rector of the St Nicholas Cathedral (Kalach-on-Don)
15. Archpriest Andrey Kordochkin, key keeper [deputy rector] of the Cathedral dedicated to Mary Magdalene, Equal to the Apostles (Madrid)
16. Archpriest Pyotr Korotayev, cleric of the church dedicated to St John the Baptist in the village of Ivanovskoye (Moscow region)
17. Priest Sergii Kruglov, cleric of the Spassky [Saviour] Cathedral (Minusinsk)
18. Priest Alexander Kukhta, deputy chairman of the Synodal Missionary Department of the Belarussian Orthodox Church (Minsk)
19. Priest Vladimir Lapshin, acting rector of the church dedicated to the Dormition of the Mother of God on Uspensky Vrazhek (Moscow)
20. Priest Andrey Loginov, cleric of the parish churches dedicated to the Smolensk and Vladimir Icons of the Mother of God (Nizhny Novgorod)
21. Archpriest Andrey Logutis, freelance cleric of the church dedicated to St Nicholas on Three Hills, director of the Institute of Christian Psychology (Moscow)
22. Archpriest Alexander Lykov, cleric of the church dedicated to the Transfiguration in Zhukovsky (Moscow region)
23. Priest Fedor Lyudogovsky, supernumerary cleric of the church dedicated to the Prophet Elijah in Izvarino (Moscow)
24. Archimandrite Savva (Mazhuko), St Nicholas Monastery (Gomel)
25. Archpriest Konstantin Momotov, rector of the church dedicated to St Paisii Velichkovsky (Volgograd)
26. Priest Alexander Parfenov, cleric of the church dedicated to St Jacob the Saviour Dimitriev monastery (Rostov Velikiy)
27. Archpriest Vyacheslav Perevezentsev, rector of the church dedicated to St Nicholas in the village of Makarovo (Moscow region)
28. Hieromonk Dimitriy (Pershin), expert on the committee concerning family, women and children of the State Duma of the Russian Federation (Moscow)
29. Archpriest Dionisy Pozdnyayev, rector of the parishes of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul (Hong Kong)
30. Hieromonk Feodorit (Senchukov) cleric of the Mogilev-Podolsk diocese of the UOC (MP)
31. Priest Alexander Sitnikov, cleric of the All Saints church in the city of Mezhdurechensk (Kemerovo region)
32. Archpriest Dmitry Sobolevsky, cleric of the Protection of the Holy Veil parish (Duesseldorf)
33. Archpriest Alexander Stepanov, rector of the church dedicated to the holy martyr Anastasia the Preserver (St Petersburg)
34. Archpriest Aleksiy Uminsky, rector of the church dedicated to the Life-Giving Trinity in Khokhly (Moscow)

35. Archpriest Alexander Shabanov, rector of the church dedicated to St Arseny of Tver (Tver)
36. Priest Sergy Shapkin, cleric of the Tomsk diocese
37. Priest Georgy Brylyov, cleric of the church dedicated to St Nicholas of Myra in Pokrovsky (Moscow)
38. Hieromonk Ilarion (Reznichenko) lecturer at the St Petersburg Humanitarian University. Supernumerary cleric.
39. Archpriest Andrey Selin, cleric of the Izyumsk diocese of the UOC, church dedicated to the Life-Giving Trinity in the village Volokhov Yar of the Chuguyevsk district
40. Priest Vasily Bush, cleric of the cathedral dedicated to St Nicholas (Vienna)
41. Priest Evgeny Romashkin, cleric of the Moscow diocese (regional), rector of the church of St Panteleimon, in Voskresensk, Moscow Region
42. Archpriest Dionisy Dudenkov, monastery of the Holy Mendalion
43. Priest Georgy Mikhailov, cleric of the church dedicated to the Saints Cosmas and Damian in Kosmodemyansk (Moscow)
44. Priest Pavel Ushakov, rector of the Holy Kazan church in the village Pershino, Belev diocese
45. Hegumen Agafangel (Belykh), rector of the Archbishop's House of the Holy Trinity church in the village Novotroyevka, Belgorod region
46. Archpriest Sergey Titkov, rector of the church of the Protection of the Holy Veil in the village Turlatovo, Ryazan region
47. Archpriest Konstantin Gipp, rector of the church dedicated to the Protection of the Holy Veil of the Mother of God, in the city of Zhizdny
48. Priest Andrey Mzyuk, church dedicated to St Seraphim of Sarov in Saratov
49. Archpriest Vyacheslav Baskakov, rector of the church of the Icon of the Mother of God "Joy of All Who Sorrow" (with groshes) at the V.P. Avayev Clinic in Tver
50. Priest Vasily Tolstunov, cleric of the St Nicholas Cathedral (Vienna)
51. Priest Georgy Bukin, cleric of the church dedicated to [the Prophet] Elijah in the town Aprelevka, Moscow region
52. Priest Maksim Burdin, cleric of the Astrakhan diocese
53. Priest Dinitry Saffronov, cleric of the church dedicated to the Protection of the Holy Veil of the Mother of God on Lyshchikova Hill in Moscow
54. Priest Ioann Burdin, cleric of the church dedicated to the Resurrection of Christ in the village Karabanovo of the Krasnoselsk deanery of the Kostroma diocese
55. Priest Fedor Kytmanov, staff cleric of the cathedral church of St Makary of Altai (Altai Republic, city of Gorno-Altaysk)
56. Priest Aleksey Sharov, cleric of the Ryazan diocese
57. Priest Alexander Galkevich, cleric of the St Sergius of Radonezh Cathedral in the city of Yugorsk
58. Priest Sergiy Bodan, cleric of the church dedicated to the Dormition [of the Mother of God] in Shimorskoye village
59. Archpriest Valentin Bonilya, rector of the church dedicated to [the icon of] the Sign of the Mother of God in the village Vyrets, Likhoslavsk district of Tver region (Bezhet'sk diocese)
60. Priest Andrey Grunev, cleric of the church dedicated to St Nicholas of Myra in Zayatsk, Moscow
61. Archpriest Alexander Petrenko, rector of the church dedicated to St Spyridon of Trimythous in the village Zeleny Gai in the Suma diocese of the UOC (MP)
62. Priest Grigory Gudin, rector of the church dedicated to St Sofrony of Irkutsk in the village Mamony, Irkutsk region
63. Priest Alexander Khekalov, city of Tambov, cleric of the Holy Transfiguration cathedral
64. Priest Georgy Gagarin, supernumerary cleric of the Tver diocese
65. Archpriest Vitaly Shkarupin, Volgograd diocese. Holy Trinity parish in Kamyshin
66. Deacon Alexander Zanemonets. Russian archbishopric in Western Europe (Paris - Jerusalem)
67. Archpriest Georgy Edelshtein, former rector of the church of the Resurrection in the village of Karabanovo, Kostroma region

68. Priest Aleksey Timakov, rector of the church of St Nicholas of Myra in the Transfiguration cemetery in Moscow and the St Nicholas of Myra church at the Centre for the Fight against Tuberculosis in Moscow
69. Deacon Dmitry Pavlyukevich, cleric of the Archbishop's house church, dedicated to St Nicholas the Miracle Worker (Grodno)
70. Archpriest Andrey Korenkov, cleric of the Grand Duke Vladimir cathedral in St Petersburg
71. Archpriest Andrey Lvov, rector of the parish of St Seraphim of Sarov, in Ivanovo
72. Priest Dionisy Kostomarov, rector of the St Nicholas of Myra church in Novaya Botanika in the city of Orel, leader of the youth section of the Orel diocese
73. Archpriest Vladimir Fedorov, cleric of the Grand Duke Vladimir cathedral in St Petersburg
74. Priest Nikolay Sushkov, staff cleric of All Saints church in the city of Tyumen
75. Archpriest Georgy Martushevsky, cleric of the St Alexander Nevsky church in Rogachev, Belarus
76. Archpriest Petr Bornovalov, rector of the Iveron church in the village Pokosnoye, Bratsk diocese, Irkutsk metropolis
77. Hegumen Gavriil (Kulikov), rector of the Holy Spirit male monastery in the city of Volgograd
78. Archpriest Georgy Dobrolyubov, rector of the church of the Resurrection in the city of Nikolsk, Penza district, Kuznetsk diocese
79. Archpriest Igor Kropochev, cleric of the Saviour-Transfiguration cathedral in the city of Novokuznetsk
80. Hegumen Filaret (Solovyev) rector of the (old) parish of the Resurrection in the town of Vichugi, Ioanno-Resurrection diocese
81. Priest Dmitry Ushakov, cleric of the church dedicated to the Holy Martyr Kharlampy in St Petersburg
82. Priest Evgeny Ageev, cleric of the church of the Epiphany in the town of Frolovo, Uryupinsk diocese
83. Priest Anatoly Abramov, cleric of the church of The Annunciation of the Mother of God in Raevo, Moscow
84. Priest Sergiy Tvorogov, cleric in the church dedicated to the Quick Liver icon of the Mother of God on the Khodynka Field in Moscow
85. Priest Igor Podoprigin, rector of the St Michael-Archangel church in the village Vorobyevka, Vorobyevsk district, Voronezh region
86. Hieromonk Ignatiy (Lange), rector of the church dedicated to the Quick Liver icon of the Mother of God in the town of Cherepovet
87. Priest Akeksy Zorin, rector of the church dedicated to St Tikhon of Zadonsk, city of Rybinsk
88. Priest Artemiy Morozov, cleric of the Samara diocese
89. Archpriest Gleb Vechelkovsky, supernumerary cleric of the Tolyatti and Zhiguli diocese
90. Hieromonk Prokhor (Kuksenko) inhabitant of the Holy Spirit monastery in Volgograd
91. Archpriest Dionisy Kuznetsov, cleric of the church dedicated to the Kazan icon of the Mother of God in Samara
92. Priest Mark Mazitov, cleric of the church dedicated to the Protection of the Holy Veil of the Mother of God, town of Megion of the Khanty-Mansiysk diocese
93. Priest Evgeny Lapaev, rector of the Holy Trinity church in the city of Sayanogorsk in the Republic of Khakassia
94. Archpriest Fedor Verevkin, rector of the church dedicated to the Protection of the Holy Veil of the Mother of God in the settlement Cherkizovo, Pushkin district of the Moscow region
95. Priest Antony Kovalenko, staff cleric of the church of the Annunciation in the city of Novosibirsk
96. Priest Viktor Nikishov, head of the department on work with young people in the Mogilev diocese of the Belarussian Exarchate of the ROC
97. Priest Sergiy Efremov, rector of the church dedicated to the Protection of the Holy Veil of the Mother of God in the village Vyshgorod
98. Priest Alexander Gumerov, cleric of the church dedicated to the Holy and Life-Giving Trinity in Khokhly, Moscow

99. Priest Alexander Kolatsky, rector of the church of the Dormition of the Mother of God, Koptevka, Belarus
100. Priest Sergiy Labunsky, staff cleric of the church dedicated to St Elisabeth in Opalikhha, city of Krasnogorsk, Moscow region
101. Priest Sergiy Osipov, cleric of the church dedicated to the holy martyrs Adrian and Natalia in Babushkino, Moscow
102. Priest Dionisiy Chernyavsky, cleric of the Ulan-Ude and Buryat diocese
103. Priest Evgeny Moroz, cleric of the church dedicated to St Nicholas of Myra on Three Hills, Moscow
104. Priest Filipp Parfenov, supernumerary cleric of the Chita diocese
105. Priest Ioann Koval, church dedicated to the Apostle Andrew the First Called in Lublino, Moscow
106. Priest Nikolay Savchenko, cleric of the church dedicated to Peter, Metropolitan of Moscow on Romenskaya Street in St Petersburg
107. Priest Aleksey Antonovsky, rector of the church dedicated to St Nicholas of Myra in Klenov, Moscow
108. Priest Maksim Efimtsev, church dedicated to the Don Icon of the Mother of God, village of Nachalovo, Astrakhan region
109. Archpriest Andrey Lebedev, Vyatsk diocese, city of Kirov (Vyatka)
110. Archpriest Vadim Boyko, rector of the church of the Holy Trinity, in Georgievskaya, Georgievsk diocese (Stavropol Krai)
111. Priest Nikolay Denisjuk, cleric of the parish of the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God, Orenburg
112. Archpriest Grigory Lyzhin, rector of the church of the Resurrection in Nerekhty of the Kostroma metropolis
113. Priest Anatoly Gubin, rector of the church of the Unexpected Joy icon of the Mother of God in the settlement Agalatovo, rector of the church of St Nicholas the Miracle Worker in the settlement Steklyanny, Vyborg diocese
114. Priest Antoniy Senko, rector of the church dedicated to St Sergius in Trubino village, Moscow region
115. Archpriest Leonid Tsarevsky, rector of the church of the Kazan icon of the Mother of God in Puchkovo, Novaya Moskva
116. Deacon Dimitry Grigoryev, cleric of the Saransk diocese
117. Priest Alexander Amelin, cleric of the church dedicated to the Protection of the Holy Veil in Shchelkovo, Moscow region
118. Priest Vladimir Zimonov, cleric of the church dedicated to St Nicholas in Zavatsk, Moscow
119. Archpriest Aleksiy Dubrovsky, cleric of the church of the Resurrection of The Word on Arbat of the Jerusalem Patriarchate's centre, candidate of theology
120. Deacon Roman Krinitsyn, cleric of the Vysoko-Petrovsky monastery, Moscow
121. Deacon Alexander Pushkarev, cleric of the church of the Dormition in the city of Syasstroy
122. Priest Dimitry Samsonov, church of St Stefan of Perm in South Butovo, Moscow
123. Deacon Andrey Lyubavin, cleric of the Resurrection- Herman cathedral in the city of Ulyanovsk, Simbirsk diocese
124. Archpriest Andrey Zavyalov, rector of the church dedicated to St Nicholas the Miracle Worker, village Russko-Vysotskoye, Leningrad Region
125. Priest Igor Vishnyakov, cleric of the church of the Resurrection in Zarinsk, Altai Region
126. Priest Sergiy Chekodorov, church of the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God, settlement Vyrisa, Leningrad region
127. Priest Viktor Gavrish, rector of the church of the Icon of the Mother of God "The Humanities of the Holy Mount of Athos", Moscow diocese
128. Deacon Aleksey Kass, church of the Ascension and St George, Tyumen
129. Priest Vasily Alfeev, 2<sup>nd</sup>-year student for a Masters degree at the Moscow Theological Academy, church of the MTA.

*The collection of signatures continues in social media networks*



# 'We Will All Answer Before God': Why One Russian Priest Joined A Public Condemnation Of The Kremlin's Crackdown On Protests

by Matthew Luxmoore



In his 26 years of service to the Russian Orthodox Church, Father Andrei Lorgus has heard the confessions of believers from all walks of life.

But as a crackdown on Russia's opposition continued, with prison sentences and raids on protesters' homes, Lorgus said the officials he counsels at Moscow's St. Nicholas Church - among them judges, investigators, and law enforcement officers - were torn between their Christian conscience and their duties to the Russian state.

"I can feel tension inside them, that they're reflecting on things and have pangs of conscience," he said in a telephone interview. "I simply tell them, 'We will all answer before God.'"

Last week, Lorgus was one of more than 180 Russian Orthodox priests who signed an open letter urging the authorities to scale back their clampdown and free many activists sentenced to prison for attending protests. It was an intervention in politics that church scholars say is unprecedented in Russia since the 1991 Soviet collapse.

Signatories of the letter, which was published on the website Pravmir.ru, condemned the use of force by riot police and appealed to Russia's judges and members of law enforcement.

"Court cases should not be of a repressive character, courts cannot be used as a means of suppressing dissenters, and force should not be applied with unjustified severity," the letter read, calling some of the sentences "more like intimidation of Russian citizens than fair verdicts."

The authors specifically cited the case of Konstantin Kotov, a 34-year-old software engineer who was sentenced to four years in prison after being convicted of repeat violations of the law on public demonstrations, and called for judges to reconsider all prison sentences handed down in connection with the protests.

The priests' open letter coincided with similar appeals from groups of Russian school teachers, doctors, students, lawyers, and, most recently, members of the Academy of Sciences. But while each employee of the Russian government faces repercussions for publicly expressing

political views in this way, the overture from Russian Orthodox priests seemed particularly striking to Russians both inside and outside the church.

"A letter from some 180 priests as an act of solidarity with innocently arrested and convicted civic activists is without precedent in the history of the Russian Orthodox Church," said religious expert Sergei Chapnin.

In e-mailed comments, Chapnin suggested that the letter might signal a change in mood among Russian Orthodox clergy, and that a sizeable group no longer fears voicing their condemnation of the state's clampdown even if the church itself and its leadership are not on board. Patriarch Kirill, who has headed Russia's dominant religious organisation for over a decade, has displayed loyalty to President Vladimir Putin and rarely questions Kremlin policies.



*The four-year sentence given to Konstantin Kotov was one example cited in the letter.*

### **Internal Church Pressure**

In the wake of the publication, the Russian Orthodox Church has stopped short of publicly condemning those who signed it. A spokesman told the state news agency TASS that the letter was "political" because it singled out certain defendants like Kotov. But in a September 20 report, the independent newspaper *Novaya gazeta* quoted unnamed sources within the church as saying that no concerted

disciplinary actions against signatories was planned.

Yet at least some of the priests who endorsed the letter appear to have been pressured to reject it.

On September 21, reports emerged that Dionisy Kuznetsov, a clergyman in the Volga River city of Samara, was told to request forgiveness from the Russian Orthodox Church for his decision to sign the appeal. According to a copy of the letter he submitted, which was posted on Facebook by journalist Maria Sveshnikova, Kuznetsov crossed out the word "request" and wrote "explanation" instead.

"I signed the priests' open letter without [the church's] blessing because I don't think one needs to ask permission to act according to one's conscience," Kuznetsov wrote in the letter, which is addressed to Metropolitan Sergiy, the head of the Samara chapter of the Russian Orthodox Church.

In a subsequent interview with the independent TV channel Dozhd, Kuznetsov said that he was one of several of the letter's signatories who were told to apologise. The church has denied that anyone has been instructed to disavow the letter.

Chapnin said he had not heard of other such cases besides Kuznetsov's, but suggested that other priests may be disciplined at a later stage. He said many priests had decided not to sign the letter precisely out of fear of the possible consequences.

### **Not Taking Sides**

Lorgus said there was another reason, too. He concerns himself first and foremost with the welfare of his congregation, he said, and his decision to sign the letter was a risk — he knew that members of his flock

who had confided in him as a neutral intermediary of God might now ascribe to him a set of political views incompatible with their own.

"When a person turns to me, he wants to be sure that I, as a priest, have no preconceptions about him and no political convictions," he said. "But if a priest declares his social, political, or ideological views, then people will categorize him and may no longer come."

Lorgus, who said he helped draft the open letter, insisted that it professed no hard political position, instead citing passages from the Bible and tenets of Christian teaching. He is not defending any political movement or party, he said, but defending those who are being unfairly treated.

"At the present moment, I'm on the side of those who are being beaten and humiliated," he said. "If the day comes when policemen are being tried, persecuted, or deprived of work and dignity, perhaps I'll take their side."

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*The Keston Newsletter is distributed twice a year and is free to Keston members.*

*Full details of life and corporate membership rates are listed on the website.*

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# Uzbekistan: Continuing Repression of Believers

by Mushfig Beyram  
with other reports



*When Shavkat Mirziyoyev replaced Islam Karimov as president of Uzbekistan following the latter's death in 2016, there was some hope that the decades of despotic rule and cruel religious and political repression were at an end. Many reforms were desperately needed, economic as well as political. These hopes were not fulfilled, at least in the area of civil rights and freedoms. Believers of all religions find themselves the object of suspicion and frequent investigation. Uzbekistan describes itself as a secular state and persecutes its own Sunni Muslims as well as anyone showing interest in Shia Islam, citing fears of Islamic extremism. Believers from other religions are routinely raided, searched, dragged off for interrogation and imprisoned on trumped up charges. This article looks at a few recent cases.<sup>1</sup>*

## History of religious freedom violations

Since 2006, the U.S. State Department<sup>2</sup> has listed Uzbekistan as a “country of particular concern,” a designation reserved for the worst offenders in violating religious liberty.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom<sup>3</sup>—which ascribes “Tier 1 CPC” status to Uzbekistan for its repeated cases of attacks on believers of all types—noted widespread hope in 2017 for “relaxation in the repression of religious freedom.” In 2018, however, the Commission reported that: “the Uzbek government has not yet embarked on a major deviation from its overall policy of severe restriction of religious freedom, premised on the threat posed by Islamic extremism.”

A large number of Muslim religious prisoners—some estimate as many as 10,000—“continue to serve lengthy

sentences in harsh conditions on dubious charges,” the report states.

“Also, during the year, Christian minorities experienced constant harassment in the form of raids, literature confiscations, short-term detention and torture. The most accurate picture of religious freedom conditions in Uzbekistan remains uncertain and incomplete due to intense government surveillance, intimidation and fear of reprisals among religious believers for speaking out.”

The US *Baptist Standard* (4 December 2018) picked up the story, also reported by Forum 18, of the tribulations of unregistered Baptist churches. They suffer frequent searches and arrest, often accompanied by torture, physical and mental. In one such incident military personnel and plainclothes police raided and ransacked an unregistered Baptist church in Uzbekistan’s capital city during Sunday worship. Up to 40 officials—including members of the National Guard, the State Secret Service, the Justice Ministry and Yasnobod District Police—participated in the raid in Tashkent. The military personnel and police searched the entire church facility, confiscating about 7,800 items, including all of the church’s hymnals and other books, Forum 18 reported. When asked why military forces were involved in the raid, officials reportedly said, “It is a special operation.”

Fourteen Baptist worshippers, including a 14-year-old boy, were taken by bus to the Yasnobod Police Station, where officials attempted to secure confessions that they had participated in an “unauthorized meeting.” When they refused, the Baptists were interrogated for nine and a half hours. Late evening on 25 November, police reportedly ordered the gas service to cut off the heating system in the church. The low temperature in Tashkent was 24 degrees F [-4 degrees C]. The raided church is

affiliated with the Council of Churches Baptist, a group whose members refuse to register with the state.

“I am deeply concerned about ongoing reports of efforts to harass or restrict believers as they gather together in peace to worship. The Baptist World Alliance is continuing to reach out to Baptists in Uzbekistan and across the region to determine the best way to offer support and prayerful assistance,” BWA General Secretary Elijah Brown said, according to the *Baptist Standard*.

Muslim believers can also find themselves the object of investigation and arrest. Their fate too is brutal.

Torture in Uzbekistan continues to be “routine”, as the UN Committee Against Torture put it, with cases frequently being reported by victims to Forum 18. For good reason, victims (including children) of the country’s widespread use of torture normally choose not to complain or make their suffering public for fear of state reprisals.<sup>1</sup>

Uzbekistan’s other prisoners of conscience who have been jailed for exercising their freedom of religion or belief include unknown numbers of Muslims, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and one Baptist. Many of the Muslim prisoners of conscience are known to have been banned from reading the Koran or openly praying.<sup>2</sup>

Prisoners in Uzbekistan have long been denied their right to freedom of religion or belief – for example to pray visibly, to have religious literature, or to receive visits from clergy, Forum 18 has found. These denials of religious freedom affect not only prisoners of conscience of all faiths, jailed or imprisoned for exercising their freedom of religion or belief, but also prisoners jailed for other offences.

On 21 May 2019 Forum 18 published a long account of two Muslims in prison for their beliefs.

### **Escaped to wife and children, but then extradited back**

Exiled human rights defender Mutabar Tadjibayeva told Forum 18 that "seeing that the authorities would not leave him alone", in September 2009 Khayrullo Turdiyevich Tursunov fled Uzbekistan for Kazakhstan, where he joined his wife and children. Tursunov asked the UNHCR for refugee status in Kazakhstan. "However", Tadjibayeva continued, "Kazakhstan ignored the official request of the UNHCR not to extradite him, and in violation of its international human rights obligations delivered him over to Uzbekistan".

After Tursunov fled Uzbekistan, on 18 January 2012 Investigator Akhmadov opened a criminal charge, which Forum 18 has seen, against Tursunov under the Criminal Code's Article 244-2 Part 1 ("Creation, leadership or participation in religious extremist, separatist, fundamentalist or other banned organisations"). This charge carries a maximum sentence of 15 years in jail. The charge was confirmed on 13 April 2012 by R. Abdullayev, Chief of the Search Department of Kashkadarya regional Police, and referred to Kazakhstan for Tursunov's arrest and extradition.

Tursunov was arrested in Kazakhstan on 7 April 2012 and detained in detention centres in Aktobe and Almaty for 11 months until 13 March 2013, when he was extradited to Uzbekistan.<sup>6</sup>

Kazakhstan's extradition of Tursunov violates the United Nations 1951 Refugee Convention, as did its similar extradition of 29 other Muslim men to Uzbekistan. The UN Committee Against Torture is

continuing to pursue this case.

After his illegal extradition from Kazakhstan, Tursunov (born 4 April 1975) was sentenced in June 2013 to 16 years in jail for meeting privately with other Muslims without state permission to study the Koran and pray. Shortly after his sentence, Tursunov was apparently deliberately exposed by the regime to the potentially fatal disease of tuberculosis.

The 44-year old Tursunov's health has given concern to his relatives throughout his imprisonment, and in 2016 he was apparently tortured. "Khayrullo was either tortured in prison or is in deep depression, his sisters did not know the exact reasons," Tursunov's relatives outside Uzbekistan told Forum 18 in February 2016. "But he sounded like he was saying his last goodbye to his sisters because he thought the end of his life is coming."

Tursunov's state of health later improved. But relatives told Forum 18 on 20 May 2019 that he appears to be suffering from stomach problems, for which he needs medicine which relatives buy for him.

Officials from the southern Kashkadarya Region where Tursunov comes from – possibly from the SSS (secret police) – arrived at the labour camp in Bukhara Region where Khayrullo Tursunov is being held. They tortured him physically and psychologically over a period of six hours on 17 April 2019 and threatened to extend his 16-year jail term. They were trying to extract false testimony against a distant relative who has lived outside Uzbekistan since 2006. Tursunov refused to sign the pre-prepared statement. Despite numerous complaints from the family, and contrary to the United Nations (UN) Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment which Uzbekistan has

signed, no officials have been arrested or prosecuted for torturing Tursunov. Forum 18 is aware of other cases where officials who have acted illegally also apparently enjoy impunity. No official has been prepared to talk to Forum 18 about the impunity torturers enjoy.



*Labour Camp UYa-64/25, Korovulbazar (Google/DigitalGlobe)*

Since April 2018, Tursunov's family have been trying to convince him to write to the President for a pardon. But Korovulbazar Labour Camp officers told him that "even if you write a letter it will not help you. No one will release you." The officials also laughed at him for thinking that he could be pardoned. Due to the officials' behaviour, including the session of torture on 17 April 2019, relatives say that Tursunov thinks there is no point in applying for a pardon.

The person against whom Tursunov was pressured to testify is a distant relative, Bayramali Yusupov. Yusupov fled Uzbekistan in 2006 after criminal charges of "extremism" were opened against him, he told Forum 18 from exile on 15 May 2019. "I actively attended the Kuk Gumbaz (Blue dome) Mosque of Karshi [Qarshi] and prayed at my work in a Turkish construction company, after gaining my education in a Turkish-run lycee," he stated. "The authorities claimed that almost everyone who finished a Turkish-run school and was active in mosques could be 'extremist'. I was questioned many times, long before they opened a criminal case against me." Yusupov, like others, has

been seeking a guarantee that he can return without being prosecuted, but the regime will not grant this. "In March and April 2019 up to 20 Muslim men were questioned about me, some of whom are serving prison terms," Yusupov said.

Exiled human rights defender Mutabar Tajibayeva, who is now a political refugee and lives in Ile-de-France, where she is at the head of the International Human Rights Organization "Fiery Hearts", registered and based in Paris, told Forum 18 that she thought that "the authorities are afraid that if Yusupov comes back to Uzbekistan he will speak about many of their crimes against innocent Muslims."



*Jahongir Kulijanov*

Elsewhere, Jahongir Kulijanov, a Shia Muslim from Bukhara, has been freed on parole. He was among 20 Shias detained in Bukhara in February 2017 and tortured. Kulijanov was jailed for five years in September 2017 for having works on Shia history on his mobile phone. Kulijanov must give the regime 20 per cent of any salary he earns, report to police weekly, cannot leave his home town without police permission, and must not leave Uzbekistan, relatives who wished to remain anonymous for fear of state reprisals reported. His parole will end in 2022 when his labour camp sentence ends. Police allow him to attend a mosque, but relatives pointed out "unless the authorities decide that it is lawful to read Shia history on the internet, we cannot do this".



The state Religious Affairs Committee in the capital Tashkent told Forum 18 that it does not know whether any texts about Shia Islam are legally available in the country. No charges of ill-treating or torturing suspects and prisoners have been brought against the officials responsible for the torture of the 20 Shias detained in Bukhara.

The Uzbek regime frequently uses extreme and repeated pressure – including torture – against people of all faiths exercising their freedom of religion and belief. Among other recent examples the mother-in-law of a Protestant Christian was ordered by police to physically attack her and evict her from her home. Contrary to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, no prosecutions appear to have been brought in these and other cases.

Repeated attempts – for example by Jehovah's Witnesses and Protestants – to end the impunity officials enjoy to commit torture and other illegal actions have not resulted in prosecutions or jail sentences for the officials concerned.

"I know of no cases when officials were arrested or put on trial for torture of Christians," one Protestant told Forum 18 on 20 May. "Officials violate the law, the Constitution, international obligations, and even internal regulations of the law-enforcement agencies. But they are 'not guilty' because they are doing their job."

The Protestant added: "What do you expect when the Religious Affairs Committee thinks that even the post cards we send each other on Christian holidays are extremist?"

1. This article is based on a report by Mushfig Beyram dated 21 May 2019, for Forum 18 News Service with some additional material.
2. See US Department of State/Uzbekistan for the 21 June 2019 report on religious freedom.
3. US Commission on International Freedom/countries/Tier 1 CPC/Uzbekistan has annual reports on the state of religious freedom.
4. see F18News 14 August 2012 [http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article\\_id=1732](http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=1732).
5. see F18News 7 May 2013 [http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article\\_id=1832](http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=1832).
6. see F18News 8 May 2013 [http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article\\_id=1833](http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=1833)



*Uzbekistan is a Central Asian nation bordered by five landlocked countries: Kazakhstan to the north; Kyrgyzstan to the northeast; Tajikistan to the southeast; Afghanistan to the south; and Turkmenistan to the southwest. (Public Domain)*

# CRIMEA: Persecution continues

By Felix Corley

*The investigative and reporting organisation Forum 18, has published the latest news on prisoners of conscience reported in the last issue of the Keston Newsletter as well as new, more recent cases. There is clear evidence of a continuing campaign of arrests and restrictions on believers of different faiths in Crimea, since 2014 under Russian occupation. See Keston Newsletter No.29 for the article on trials for religious "extremism".*

## **Muslim prisoner of conscience Renat Suleimanov**

On 18 May, prison officials began the transfer of Renat Suleimanov from the Investigation Prison in the Crimean capital Simferopol to serve his 4-year sentence at a labour camp (correctional colony) in the village of Kamenka near Kabardino-Balkariya's regional capital Nalchik in the Russian North Caucasus. Sometimes such transfers can take a month or longer. Kamenka is about 950 kms (590 miles) by road from Simferopol.

Once arrived at the Kamenka camp Suleimanov was, like all newly-arrived prisoners, placed in quarantine, which usually lasts about two weeks. However, in early July, immediately after the quarantine period, camp officials placed him in a punishment cell, according to his lawyer Roman Martynovsky. An official at the Kamenka camp, who did not give his name, refused to discuss Suleimanov's conditions with Forum 18's reporter.

Suleimanov, who on 11 July lost his second appeal against his four-year jail term, is planning an appeal to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

*Keston Newsletter No 30, 2019*



*Renat Suleimanov  
Family archive/Memorial*

The 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War<sup>2</sup> covers the rights of civilians in territories occupied by another state (described as "protected persons"). Article 76 includes the provision: "Protected persons accused of offences shall be detained in the occupied country, and if convicted they shall serve their sentences therein."

Suleimanov - who has been in jail since his October 2017 arrest - met with friends to study his faith in local mosques. Prosecutors accused him of being a member of the Tablighi Jamaat Muslim missionary movement, which Russia's Supreme Court has banned as an "extremist" organisation.

## **Abilev: Pre-trial detention extended**

The Russian FSB security service continues to investigate the criminal case against Rustem Enverovich Abilev (born 18 May 1984), Imam of the Khayat (Life) mosque in the village of Shturmoevo on the eastern edge of the city of Sevastopol.

FSB officers arrested Imam Abilev on 15

April as armed, masked men, most of them in camouflage with FSB insignia, raided Khayat mosque and his nearby home.<sup>3</sup> Officers seized religious literature, handwritten notes and documents, computers and mobile phones. One masked man copied files from a laptop computer.

The following day, 16 April, Lenin District Court ordered Imam Abilev held in pre-trial detention for eight weeks, until 11 June. His lawyer Lenyara Gabdrakhmanova appealed against the pre-trial detention order to Sevastopol City Court. However, Judge Danil Zemlyukov rejected the appeal on 26 April, according to court records.

At the Investigator's instigation, on 11 July Abilev was added to the Russian Federal Financial Monitoring Service (Rosfinmonitoring) "List of Terrorists and Extremists", whose accounts banks are obliged to freeze, apart from small transactions.<sup>4</sup>

On 5 June 2019, Judge Anatoly Vasilenko of Sevastopol's Lenin District Court approved Imam Abilev's continued detention at the Investigation Prison in the Crimean capital Simferopol, court officials told Forum 18 on 25 July.

The FSB investigator Yuri Andreyev is investigating Imam Abilev under Russian Criminal Code Article 280, Part 1. This punishes "public calls for extremist activity" with a maximum punishment of four years' imprisonment and a ban on specific activity for the same period.

"Local residents and activists say Rustem Abilev cannot have called for extremism," Radio Free Europe journalist Taras Ibragimov told Forum 18 in April.<sup>5</sup> "They insist he is not an extremist and don't believe the FSB allegations."

At the Investigator's instigation, on 11 July Abilev was added to the Russian Federal Financial Monitoring Service (Rosfinmonitoring) "List of Terrorists and Extremists", whose accounts banks are obliged to freeze, apart from small transactions.<sup>6</sup>

Imam Abilev earned his living as head of the dentistry department at Sevastopol's City Hospital No. 6. However, following his arrest the hospital removed his name from its website.



*Investigation Prison No. 1, Simferopol  
Google/DigitalGlobe*

Following his 15 April arrest, the FSB held Imam Abilev for several days in Sevastopol before transferring him to the Investigation Prison in Simferopol. He has been held there ever since.

### **Yevpatoriya: Raid on Jehovah's witnesses**

Russia's FSB security service is also seeking to prosecute Crimean Jehovah's Witnesses, a community Russia's Supreme Court has also banned as an "extremist" organisation. See *Keston Newsletter* No. 29 for many other earlier cases that have been reported.

On the evening of 13 July 2019, a group of friends and acquaintances gathered in a local woman's home in the western Crimean city of Yevpatoriya. Russian FSB security service officers surrounded the entrance to the stairwell of the block of flats. FSB officers then stormed the

woman's flat, Jehovah's Witnesses reported.

FSB officers interrogated those present, filming the interrogations. They also recorded the personal details of those present, seizing personal documents, discs and any printed material they had.

FSB officers singled out 57-year-old Oleg Osetsky. "As a result of the interrogation, he began to feel unwell," Jehovah's Witnesses said, "but despite this they took him to the police station and questioned him all night until six o'clock in the morning." They then released him.

FSB officers admitted to Osetsky during the interrogation that they had been keeping him under surveillance for some time. It remains unclear if FSB investigators have launched a criminal case against Osetsky.

On 4 June, Russian FSB investigators launched a criminal case against Sevastopol resident Viktor Stashevsky, accusing him of Jehovah's Witness activity. Russian FSB officials are investigating Stashevsky under Russian Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1. This punishes "Organisation of the activity of a social or religious association or other organisation in relation to which a court has adopted a decision legally in force on liquidation or ban on the activity in connection with the carrying out of extremist activity". The maximum punishment is ten years' imprisonment.

The evening of Stashevsky's arrest, the FSB raided at least nine local homes. The house searches were approved in advance

by Judge Anatoly Vasilenko of Sevastopol's Lenin District Court. "In at least one case, officers forced their way into a flat in the absence of the owners, rendering the door unusable," Jehovah's Witnesses complained. "Searches continued until deep in the night." Officers seized computers, computer hard discs, phones and tablet computers. There was a further, follow-up raid on 7 July.

The FSB Investigator handling Stashevsky's case - Lieutenant Aleksandr Chumakin - is also conducting the criminal investigation into fellow Crimean Jehovah's Witness Sergei Filatov, launched in November 2018 (see also *KN*No.29).

Earlier in 2019, Renat Suleimanov and Sergei Filatov were added to the Russian Federal Financial Monitoring Service (Rosfinmonitoring) "List of Terrorists and Extremists", whose accounts banks are obliged to freeze, apart from small transactions. Investigators had Abilev and Stashevsky added on 11 July.

### **Further restrictions imposed**

Religious communities and individuals in Crimea continue to be fined for not displaying the full name of their registered religious organisation at their place of worship, for meeting for worship without Russian state permission or advertising their faith. Forty such administrative prosecutions are known to have been brought in 2018 of which 28 ended with punishment.<sup>7</sup> The pressure on the Jehovah's Witnesses continues unabated. Individuals are being investigated, but are not yet under arrest.

*A longer version of the article, with more details of the persecution of religious organisations, is available from Forum 18 News Service.*

1. <https://memohrc.org/ru/defendants/suleymanov-renat-rustemovich>
2. [https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocity-crimes/Doc.33\\_GC-IV-EN.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocity-crimes/Doc.33_GC-IV-EN.pdf)
3. [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2470](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2470)
4. [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2215](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2215)
5. [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2470](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2470)
6. [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2215](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2215)
7. [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2441](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2441)

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The right to believe, to worship and witness

The right to change one's belief or religion

The right to join together and express one's belief

*Felix Corley is the editor-in-chief of Forum 18 News Service, which reports on religious repression in Russia, the republics of the former Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe. He is the author of several books.*

# Legacies

Keston's trustees are very grateful to all members for their continuing support and enthusiasm for the Institute's work. We are, however, a dwindling band of enthusiasts so we would be delighted if you were able to recruit new members.

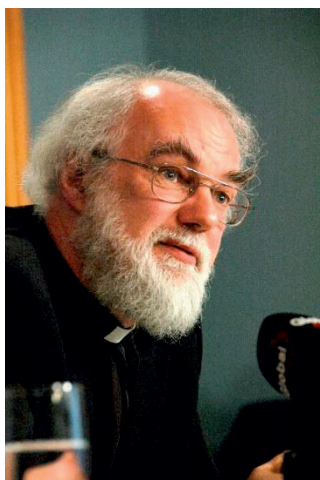
If you are thinking of remembering Keston in your Will, the following suggested form of words, which can be copied directly into a Will, may be helpful:

'I give the sum of £..... [in figures and words] absolutely to Keston College, (otherwise known as Keston Institute), Company Registration No 991413 and Registered Charity Number 314103, hereinafter called "the Charity", such sum to be applied for the general purposes of the Charity. I direct that the receipt of the Chairman or other authorised officer for the time being of the Charity shall be a good and sufficient discharge to my Executors.'

With best wishes,

Xenia Dennen (Chairman)





A major celebration of Keston's jubilee takes place this year: in November the AGM will be addressed by Rowan Williams, who is one of our Patrons. We hope all members who can will attend this event:

*Talk by Rowan Williams and AGM:*  
Saturday 9 November 2019 at 12.00,  
the Royal Foundation of St Katharine,  
Limehouse, London.

Address by Bishop Rowan Williams:  
"Why Religious Liberty Matters"

## *Patrons*

*The Rt Revd Lord Williams of Oystermouth*

*The Archbishop of Westminster*

*The Chief Rabbi of Great Britain*

*The Moderator of the Free Churches*

*The Archbishop of Glasgow*

*The Archbishop of Thyateira & Great Britain*

*Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia*