

HELP FOR REFUGEES, INC.

A tax-exempt, non-profit corporation

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We help orphans and elderly Christians (many in their 80s, even 90s) who had been imprisoned for their faith in present or former communist countries



Late Reverend Richard Wurmland with wife, Sabina

January 2020

“And the angel answered and said unto the women, **Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.**”

(Matthew 28:5)

Late Reverend Richard Wurmland spent 14 years in Romanian communist prisons. Mrs. Wurmland was imprisoned for nearly three years, also for her Christian faith in some of the same communist prisons.

From an unpublished Bible meditation by late Reverend Richard Wurmland

Fear Not!

Today, the world is full of fear and anxiety. People fear war, spouses, parents, children, former friends with whom they are now in conflict. They fear unemployment, bad crops, bankruptcy, loss of position or reputation. For short, they fear suffering.

I was kidnapped off the street and pushed into a car by the communist secret police on February 29th, 1948. My eyes were covered with glasses having metal lenses, so I should not be able see. The first thought coming to my mind, while riding in the car, was that the expression "**Do not be afraid**" occurs in the Bible 366 times, once for every day of the year, plus an extra day for leap years. (Year 2020 is a leap year! N.Ed.) After suffering 14 years of communist prison and my wife Sabina nearly 3 years, my family was ransomed for \$10,000 to the West and regained freedom.

Others may have reason to fear, but those who **seek Jesus, which was crucified** need not be afraid. We have the company of angels who minister to us. They are mighty beings who know us well, though we cannot see them usually, they see us and they are good friends on whom we can rely.

In the courtyard of the jail in which I was detained in Communist Romania, I observed sometimes cruel wars between two armies of ants. But to win, it was only necessary for one side to have as its ally a single

human being. With one foot I could crush the whole army of the enemy. In like manner, the enemies of our souls are mere dwarfs to the good angels.

Do not be afraid! Your angel knows what you seek! Saint Monica, mother of Saint Augustine, the renowned fourth century church leader, would not have been known as a saint had she not had a brutal heathen husband and had not suffered twenty years of sadness at the thought, "If my son dies today, he will be in hell." He lived in sin and had abandoned faith in Christ for a blasphemous philosophy. Suffering borne with courage, humility, love, and wisdom beautifies the soul. Monica was rewarded. In the end, her husband and the son were converted. Person for whom the tears of saints are shed will not remain lost. The church of today also has saints who do not fear.

The Russian Baptist minister Mikhail Sigarev spent over ten years in prison for his faith (written in 1977. Now 92 years old, see his recent testimony published below! N. Ed.) The Communist secret police (the KGB) offered him total freedom if he were to agree to collaborate with them and register his church with the state-recognized and -controlled church. When Sigarev refused, he was re-arrested. His trial took place in Labinsk, by the Black Sea in the Soviet Union. An atheistic lecturer, who was supposed to make Sigarev change his beliefs, stated before court: "I do not know enough to be able to talk to Sigarev. In order to maintain such a conversation, one has to know the Bible very well, and I have to admit that I did not know what to answer him. " The Communist judge wanted to silence Sigarev when he spoke in his own defense, but people in the court, unafraid, shouted that he should be allowed to speak. Sigarev said: "Because we are His disciples, we must be persecuted. All this was already written in the Word of God. I thank God that He led me so far, and that He will continue to lead me and will not abandon me," The judge sentenced Sigarev again to two and a half years of prison. When the sentence was pronounced, Christians in the courtroom threw flowers at Sigarev and sang a Christian hymn.

Lithuanian girls detained in a Siberian concentration camp for their Christian witness composed a prayer book, from which I quote:

"Jesus, You are in me; remain with me today and always. Live in me, teach me your commandments, even if they bring me sufferings.

"God of compassion, I thank You for each one who did me good, and those who don't forget me. But thank You also for those who hurt me with their hate and threaten my life."

Let us join in this prayer. The secret to not being afraid? **Seek Jesus, which was crucified!**



The Communist Jilava Prison.
Entrance to the underground cells.



Prison cell with bunk-beds with no mattress, prisoners were obliged to sleep on. Stove for show only, never heated in cold winters.



Mug-shot of Late Reverend Richard Wurmbrand when held in the Jilava prison, in communist Romania.

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father are this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” (Apostle James Epistle 1:27)

**Some pictures of Christians Imprisoned for the Faith, Helped now with your Gifts!
Read their testimonies in our past newsletters at <http://helpforrefugees.com> (third column!)**



**Christian
Stephen Ghermaniuk**
Now 85, he was imprisoned 7½ years for his faith, in the former Soviet Union, in the farthest North-Eastern extremity of Siberia, by the Okhotsk Sea. Read his testimony in the 1/2017 Newsletter.



**Christian
Liubovi Uhina**
Suffered three years of imprisonment for Gospel-spreading. She wrote: "God placed us on purpose in these prisons to be His witnesses." Read her testimony in the 1/2017 Newsletter.



**Church Deacon
Pozdniakov Nicolae**
Was imprisoned for his Christian activity 2½ years in the former Soviet Union, close to the Mongolian border. He was threatened to be shot. Read testimony in the 1/2017 Newsletter.



NAPRIENKO, Valentin
Both him and his brother Benjamin were imprisoned 5½ and 2 years respectively in Siberia for printing Bibles. Benjamin survived having been punished to be held 10 days in a freezer-cell. Read testimonies in the 1/2017 Newsletter.

**Christians Helped with Your Gifts
10½ Years of Prison for the Gospel**

THE POWER OF ONE BIBLE



Brother Sigarev Mikhail in 1983, with wife,
sister Nina Ivanovna

Sigarev Mikhail Lavrentievich, now 92, wrote: “I was born to Natalya Karpovna, an illiterate but devout mother and to father Lavrentiy Yakovlevich who died in an accident in 1940, when I was 13 years old. An elder soldier-brother was captured during WWII and died while being a prisoner. Somehow, mother told a woman-friend named Mary, that she had a Bible (a “forbidden” book during the Soviet regime, N.Ed.) but there was no one to read it. Mary came and not only read the Bible but also explained what she read. Other villagers began to come. There was a community of Evangelical Christian Baptists in Maykop. On Christmas Day of 1942, my family attended the underground service, which they liked very much, especially the words read by the preacher that the Lord sent His Son to save everyone who receives Him. Since

then, they began to attend regularly the services of the Maykop Church. My mother and elder sister repented and were soon baptized. I was baptized when 20, on the feast of the Holy Trinity in 1947. After the war, I worked as a medical orderly in the Kamchatka Peninsula and then moved to the city of Omsk, where I studied in a school for electric locomotive drivers. All this time I attended Christian meetings in the mountains of Omsk, where young people began to gather separately to study the Holy Scriptures. Official church leaders did not encourage these underground meetings. In November 1957, I met and married my future wife Yekaterina Sergeevna, who, after graduating from the Leningrad Sanitary and Hygienic Institute, worked as a dentist in the Omsk Railway Hospital. In the spring of 1966, I was ordained as an elder in the church. The Omsk unregistered church experienced severe persecution – the Soviet Secret police (KGB) disturbed and interrupted services, imposed fines, made arrests for 10-15 days and then gave long prison sentences to believers. I worked at the railway station as an electric locomotive

driver, but was demoted, to work as a locksmith. The communist authorities believed a Christian should not work in a responsible position. Even before the birth of the youngest daughter, the wife fell ill with leukemia. My old mother, Natalya Karpovna, 70, arrived at this time for permanent residence in Omsk to help with housework and seven children. In 1969, I was arrested, and then sentenced to 3 years in prison for underground missionary activities. A sick wife and seven young children remained at home, the eldest daughter being 10 years old and the youngest one only. In August 1971, when my beloved wife died, I still had to serve 6 months in the prison-colony. Neighbors and faithful friends wrote a petition to the prison authorities so that Mikhail Lavrentievich would be released for his wife's funeral, but the camp administration would not allow it. On the second day after the funeral, a KGB officer called me to talk, expressed "sympathy" and said that the city executive committee would take care of the children, to which I objected: the children would live with their grandmother. The KGB employee said, "this is possible, only subject to cooperation on your part with the KGB. After release, you will go to a registered church and will help us out (being an informer!)." I replied, "I could not do this." I was threatened they will impose a new prison-term and added, that it would not be for "my Christian faith," but "we would find a (fake) reason, and that would be a sentence to a five-year term, so that believers would turn their backs on you and we, the authorities, will put the children in a boarding school and educate them so that they will become your enemies." Sorrow overwhelmed the heart, but the Lord strengthened and gave us the strength to endure everything.

In February, the prison-term ended and I returned home. In June of same year, I was arrested again and sentenced to a new term. The enemies accomplished their threat, but the Lord did not let their plans of taking away my children, come true. From February 1972 to June same year, I was detained several times for 10-15 days only, and in June after serving 15 days, an arrest warrant was presented. I was accused having paid 10 rubles (a very menial sum) on behalf of a brother in the faith, Rogalsky Yakov, so he should be transferred due to illness. A trial was held in August 1972 lasting only a few hours. The judge found it difficult to present the "crime" of Mikhail Lavrentievich as "grave", but the prosecutor in his indictment said: "Given the special gravity of the crime committed by the defendants: giving a bribe to an official, sentencing Sigarev M.L. to five years in prison with a sentence in a maximum security prison." My mother, 73. urgently took the children to the Krasnodar Territory to my sister Tenyakova Elena Lavrentievna. After the trial, the grandmother confronted the communist prosecutor, who arrived to take custody of the children. The prosecutor shouted: "look at yourself (grandmother was short, thin), can you be trusted take care of children at this age? She replied, "Don't look that I'm poorly tailored, I'm sewn tightly" She didn't know such words before, the Lord gave the wisdom to answer that official. The prosecutor surprised, asked: "what is your education, that you answer so wisely?"

One of the children wrote later: "When we arrived in the Krasnodar Territory, the authorities searched for us in Omsk, but the Lord closed the eyes of our persecutors and kept us in His mighty hand. Thank God, we were not touched at school, everyone studied well and the complaints were only about the fact that we were not members of the communist youth organizations. The Lord has shown wonderful care for us. We had everything we needed. Grandmother always taught us that it is more blessed to give than to receive, and tried to help those who were in worse conditions than we were."

After the trial, I ended up in a prison-camp, where at that time there was a minister of the Omsk church and another brother Savchenko Nikolai Romanovich (read his widow's testimony in the March 2017 Newsletter! N. Ed.) Our meeting was joyful! How many thankful prayers we offered to the throne of grace! We prayed together for the protection of our children, and God heard our requests and prayers and extended His merciful hand over our orphans. Together we honored Sunday, did not work that day and did not attend political classes, for which we were often placed

in punishment cells but the Lord was with us and never left us. We supported each other in the difficult hours of our trials. The local church showed a lot of concern for the family. During all this time, the children of God were in charge of the family, for which I give special thanks to all. In 1977, my term came to an end, but enemies made various attempts to break my faith. I wanted to celebrate the liberation with my native Omsk church, but the enemies did not want to allow this and when freed, they sent me directly home.

From 1977, I have been living in the city of Labinsk and continued being an elder in the unofficial church. The KGB officers did not leave us alone. From time to time they came to interrupt the worship, called for interrogations, threatened with new arrests if the church did not register. On May 15, 1983, I married a sister in the faith, Nina Dorodnova. Before the marriage, I was warned that there should be no church services, loud music, singing, playing musical instruments, or sermons. Of course, such atheistic orders were ignored. Two weeks after the wedding, on May 27, I was arrested again and in August of that year was sentenced to two and a half years in prison. A lot of believers attended the trial. They came from different cities, in order to express support for myself and my family. It was a powerful witness of brotherly love between the children of God. For a long time after the trial, in the city they talked about an unusual trial of a Christian. Almost a year after the trial, my beloved mother, Natalya Karpovna, went to eternity, she was almost 86 years old. She had always supported me, prayed for me, raised my children when they were left orphans.

I served my last prison-term in the Elizavetinskaya prison compound. Security officers repeatedly made attempts to persuade me to betray and cooperate with them, but the Lord gave strength to remain faithful, for all, glory be to Him! After being released, a lot of friends gathered to meet me. We glorified God for His graces shown to us! The authorities again warned not to hold large meetings, but the children of God, listened more to God and in a large meeting they praised the Creator of all worlds for His boundless love!

I continued my ministry in the local church and in nearby churches and groups, visited many believers. Currently, due to my state of health, and advanced age, I do not carry out a ministry. My grandson accepted becoming a church-elder last year in December 2018. When possible, I attend Divine Services, pray a lot for children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, for the church, for the Brotherhood, so as not to lose the guidance of the Lord in these end-times. I live with my wife Nina Ivanovna. The Lord gave us 8 children, 40 grandchildren, 63 great-grandchildren.”

Christians Helped with Your Gifts 2½ Years of Soviet Prison for Transporting Christian Literature



“I, Romaniuk Vladimir Nikolaevich, transported about 340 pieces of Christian literature on a motorcycle, on August 25, 1984, at about 10:00 p.m. This took place in the city of Chervonoarmiyska, now Radivilov, in the Rivne region of former Soviet Ukraine.

I was detained by the police with my friends and interrogations began: from where and for whom did I bring the literature? The literature was intended for the church in the city of L’viv. On September 16th a wedding took place in the church. After the wedding, I ended up imprisoned for 50 days and constantly threatened by the prosecutors saying, “(you are interested in the “afterlife?” Don’t worry!) We will show you “afterlife!”

On December 27, I was tried by the Rivne Regional Court. On the first day of the trial all friends were let in. On the second day, no one was allowed in, not even relatives. When the

verdict was read, then all friends were allowed in. I was sentenced to two years and six months of imprisonment in a prison of general regime. KGB officers were also present at the trial. After the trial, an officer came to me saying: "If it is too hard for you to suffer, then call me and I will help you out." It reminded me of the devil's words to our Lord: "fall down and worship me!"

I served the sentence in Kopychentsy, in the Ternopil Oblast, Soviet Ukraine, Uchr. ET 322/112. In the camp I met with fellow believers, from Chernivtsi and Kiverets. We were constantly watched, but every evening we had brief conversations. We kept one Gospel among ourselves in multiple fragments. The prison guards constantly searched us. At one time they found and took such a Gospel fragment. I prayed strongly, as we needed it. Amazingly the officer returned it. I was very grateful to God. They did not return other personal letters they confiscated.

At one time I received a parcel (sent by Christians) from Holland. They called me to the head of the prison-camp, and all officers were gathered around it. Interrogations began, "who do you have abroad?" They suspected someone might have sent a Bible. They wanted to open it, but as they didn't give it to me, I asked them to return the package. When wife arrived, the parcel was opened and was given to her. It contained only cookies. I was released on May 5, 1987 and was met at the prison gate by relatives and friends.

Soviet authorities did not allow me return to my previous residence. I could not get a job and for two months I was like homeless, with no residence or work. The district police officer constantly threatened to imprison me as a vagrant. In order to get a residence and a job, the Soviet Secret police (KGB) encouraged me to cooperate with them in becoming an informer. God gave strength to remain faithful. God is powerful, He helped and I ended up hired in a job. God gave us four children. They all serve the Lord. For all the glory to the Lord that He made it possible to endure and go through this path of suffering. Glory to Him for everything. Amen."

Christians Helped with Your Gifts

Across, a **sample only** of a long list, our mission was able to compile beside other lists, of over 480 elderly Baptist Christians still alive, who suffered for the Christian faith in the former Soviet Union. The prison sentences amounted from 2 years, to as many as 18 years of communist prison. If considered together, their years of prison-sentences shown in our abbreviated table, would most likely add up to over 2,000 years of prison. The 4th and 5th column together, show year of birth and the most recent country they live in (like Ukraine, Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, etc.) We try obtain exact addresses, so we may be able to send encouraging help to those still alive.

We were able to send repeated help to about 120 such elderly Russian-speaking Christians and over 110 of other languages. Many of their testimonies you can read in the monthly newsletter. Testimonies available also on the internet. **Look up third column at:** <https://helpforrefugees.com>

409	Власенко	Валентин	Медовиак	1958	Украина
410	Больф	Андрей	Корнеев	1958	Казакстан
411	Нуркин	АЛЕКСЕЙ	ЯКОВЛЕВИЧ	1958	Россия
412	Левен	НИКОЛАЙ	ВИКТОРОВИЧ	1958	Казакстан
413	Романко	Владимир	Николаевич	1958	Украина
414	Тиссен	Давид	Давидович	1958	Россия
415	ТУРЕВИЧ	Василий	Тарасович	1959	Украина
416	Барков	Степан	Павлович	1959	Украина
417	ДРИСВЯННИКОВ	АЛЕКСАНДР	АЛЕКСАНДРОВИЧ	1959	Россия
418	СВЮРЦОВА	ЛЮБОВЬ	НИКОЛАЕВНА	1959	Россия
419	Варовин	Виталий	Федотович	1959	Россия
420	Дубицкий	СЕРГЕЙ	АДАМОВИЧ	1959	Россия
421	Лещенко	Борис	Владимирович	1959	Украина
422	Ташенко	ИВАН	ИВАНОВИЧ	1959	Казакстан
423	МАРЧЕНКО	Станислав	Павлович	1960	Украина
424	Доченко	Александр	Максимович	1960	Украина
425	Опачков	Вениамин	Александрович (Валерианов)	1960	Узбекистан
426	Саранко	Михаил	Михайлович	1960	Эстония
427	Федрева (ШВЕЦОВА)	ДИНА	ВЛАДИМИРОВНА	1961	Алания
428	ШВЕЦОВА	Анна	ВЛАДИМИРОВНА	1962	Алания
429	Богудимов	Александр	Валерьевич	1962	Эстония
430	Минков	Павел	Дмитриевич	1962	Эстония

Sample of a List of 480 former Imprisoned Christians In the former Soviet Union

Help for Refugees, Inc. PO Box 5161, Torrance, Ca. 90510, USA. Email: hfr@helpforrefugees.com, website: <https://helpforrefugees.com> (EIN: 95-3064521) is listed in Publication 78, Cumulative List of Nonprofit Organizations described in Section 170(c) of the Internal Revenue Service. Gifts to Help for Refugees are US tax-deductible.