

MS-495, The Miami Valley Episcopal Russian Network (MVERN) Records

Collection Number: MS-495

Title: The Miami Valley Episcopal Russian Network (MVERN) Records

Dates: 1995-2014

Creator: The Miami Valley Episcopal Russian Network (MVERN)

Summary/Abstract:

Records include meeting minutes, correspondence, financial records, documents about the organization's mission and projects, and publicity files (mainly newspaper articles). The Miami Valley Episcopal Russian Network (MVERN) of the Diocese of Southern Ohio is a unique ecumenical project between Episcopal and Orthodox Churches. Thirteen churches in southern Ohio, including eleven Episcopal churches and two Orthodox churches, have formed a parish partnership with St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church, located in the village of Sablino, Russia, thirty miles south of St. Petersburg. From its founding in 1997 until 2014, MVERN has contributed twice to the enlargement of St. Nicholas Church, donated humanitarian supplies and funds in support of this outreach ministry, and sponsored 23 exchange trips for almost 340 American and Russian youth, laypersons, teachers, and clergy.

Quantity/Physical Description: 2.09 linear feet

Language(s): English

Repository:

Special Collections and Archives, Paul Laurence Dunbar Library, Wright State University, Dayton, OH 45435-0001, (937) 775-2092

Restrictions on Access: There are no restrictions on accessing material in this collection.

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Preferred Citation:

[Description of Item, Date, Box #, Folder #], MS-495, The Miami Valley Episcopal Russian Network Records, Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio.

Accruals: Periodic additions are expected.

Other Finding Aid: The finding aid is available on the Special Collections & Archives, Wright State University Libraries web site at

http://www.libraries.wright.edu/special/collection_guides/guide_files/ms495.pdf. It is also available in the OhioLINK Finding Aid Repository at <http://ead.ohiolink.edu/xtf-ead/>.

Processed by: Ximena Chrisagis, December 2014

Arrangement:

This collection is arranged into 3 series:

- I. Administrative
- II. Projects
- III. Publicity

Historical Note:

The Miami Valley Episcopal Russian Network (MVERN) of the Diocese of Southern Ohio is an unique ecumenical project between Episcopal and Orthodox Churches. Thirteen churches in southern Ohio, including 11 Episcopal churches and 2 Orthodox churches, have formed a parish partnership with St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church, located in the village of Sablino, Russia, thirty miles south of St. Petersburg. MVERN's mission emphasizes fostering a spiritual and personal relationship between St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church in Sablino and the churches participating in MVERN. MVERN accomplishes its mission through prayer, education and informational exchanges about the partners' respective cultures and traditions, visits of clergy and lay people (adults and youth) between Sablino and MVERN member churches, and support with finances, equipment, and supplies, as appropriate. From its founding in 1997 until 2014, MVERN has contributed twice to the enlargement of St. Nicholas Church, donated humanitarian supplies and funds in support of this outreach ministry, and sponsored 23 exchange trips for almost 340 American and Russian youth, laypersons, teachers, and clergy.

In 1991, following the break-up of the Soviet Union, the Russian Orthodox Church was again free to function and experienced a resurgence in activity. However, it was faced with thousands of desecrated or destroyed churches and a critical shortage of priests.

Patriarch Alexei II, Patriarch of Moscow and of All-Russia, appealed to the American Episcopal Church for help in restoring and revitalizing the life and ministry of the Russian Orthodox Church. During a visit in 1993 with The Most Rev. Frank T. Griswold, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, Patriarch Alexei stated "*I give great importance to personal contact....*" Presiding Bishop Griswold replied that the Episcopal Church was ready to share some of its practical experience and repeated his deep appreciation for the Russian church's "*rich experience of prayer and spirituality . . . gifts we very much need in the United States.*" Continuing he said: "*We are not interested in the slightest bit in any kind of proselytism because we support and respect the ministries of our churches.*"

In response to this request, the Foundation for Professional International Exchange (FIPE) designed the Parish Partnership Program to bring people together to build personal relationships and create mutual understanding and support between American Episcopalians and Russian Orthodox. Under the leadership of a small group of laypersons and clergy, MVERN began in 1997. FIPE's president, the Rev. Jackson Wilson, linked this new partnership with St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church in Sablino, Russia.

Fr. Nikolai Aksenov is rector of St. Nicholas Russian Othodox Church in Sablino. His ministry encompasses the entire region including a Youth Center, an orphanage, a school for developmentally disabled children, hospitals, schools, and, until recently, a huge women's prison. Source: This organizational history was quoted/excerpted directly from the web site of the Miami Valley Episcopal Russian Network (<http://www.mvern.org>, accessed 15 December 2014) and the organizational mission documents in MS-495, with only a few minor word changes.

Scope and Content:

Series I: Administrative, includes mission statements and bylaws, meeting minutes, correspondence, financial records, and a few other files relating to the administration of the organization that do not fit into any of the aforementioned categories.

In the early years of the organization, the minutes often referred to “planning” or “steering committee” meetings or they did not indicate a specific type of meeting at all. In the 2000s, the minutes began to differentiate between board meetings and executive committee meetings. For greater simplicity, the minutes are filed by calendar year rather than fiscal year. In order to avoid classifying any of the minutes incorrectly, the minutes were generally filed according to the name that appeared on the majority of documents for that year, e.g. “Meeting Minutes”, “Planning Meeting”, or “Steering Committee” [Meeting]. For the years in which there were clearly separate minutes for Board Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings, those minutes were separated into their own folders, but still arranged by calendar year.

Although the minutes cover the date span of 1996-2013, there is not a complete run of the minutes for these years. There appear to be at least one or two minutes documents missing for each year, but the years of 2011 to the present seem to lack the most. For some of the meetings, an agenda is available, but a copy of the actual minutes is not. When available, the agenda are interfiled in the same folders with the meeting minutes.

Some financial documents were filed with the minutes because of finance reports being given during the meetings. When they were found this way, they were retained with the minutes. However, there were also a number of financial reports that were not interfiled with the meeting minutes, so separate “Financial Reports” files were maintained for those documents. The correspondence files and financial records are not currently voluminous enough to make up their own series or subseries, so they are filed after the meeting minutes and labeled with the date ranges they represent.

Two of the files at the end of the Administrative Series do not really fit into any of the three currently existing series of these records, “Photographs of Members” and “Member Deaths”. The “Photographs of Members” file consists of paper printouts of photographs of two members from an e-mail message. Apparently, no other member photographs were filed in this way. These two files came labeled that way by the organization when the files were accessioned, and they were retained and placed at the end of Series I, even though they are not administrative.

The Administrative Series ends with files related to specific visits to the U.S. and/or correspondence from individual Russian members/partners (including Fr. Nikolai Aksenov and

Dr. Igor Tolochin). These files are labelled with each person's name. Although not strictly administrative, they form a good transition into Series II, Projects, which covers many of exchanges in which these partners were involved.

Series II, Projects, includes files relating to MVERN's mission and outreach. The bulk of these files relate to youth and adult exchange trips sponsored by MVERN. This series also contains some files related to other events and fundraisers (e.g., 18-month Russia calendar).

Series III, Publicity, mostly consists of newspaper clippings and articles (sometimes written by participants themselves) relating to MVERN's sponsored trips.

Subject Terms

Places:

- Miami River Valley (Ohio)
- Sablino (Russia)
- Tosno (Russia)

Subjects (General):

- Episcopal Church -- Ohio.
- Orthodox Church -- Ohio.
- Russian Orthodox Church – Russia -- Tosno

Material Types:

- Minutes (administrative records)
- Correspondence
- Financial Reports
- Newspapers

Collection Inventory

| Series I: Administrative | | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------|--|---------------------|
| <u>Box</u> | <u>File</u> | <u>Description</u> | <u>Date</u> |
| 1 | 1 | Mission Statement and Bylaws | 1999-2011, Undated |
| | 2 | History and Background | 1996-2007, Undated |
| | 3 | Russian Ministry Network | 1996, Undated |
| | 4 | Russian Parish Partnership | 1996, Undated |
| | 5 | Foundation for International Professional Exchange (FIPE) | 2002, Undated |
| | 6 | Russian Ministry Prayer | 2005, Undated |
| | 7 | Banner-Eleven Miami Valley Churches Originally Forming MVERN | [1997?] |
| | 8 | Logo, Letterhead | Undated |
| | 9 | Russian Orthodox Faith | 1997, 2002, Undated |

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|------------|-------------|---|--------------------------|
| | 10 | MVERN Presentation Slides (Transparencies) | Undated |
| <u>Box</u> | <u>File</u> | <u>Description</u> | <u>Date</u> |
| 1 | 11 | MVERN Presentation Slides (Transparencies) | Undated |
| | 12 | MVERN Presentation Slides (Paper) [possibly out of order] | [2007-2008?] |
| | 13 | Protocol for Church Exchanges | 1997, Undated |
| | 14 | Board Members, Committees | 2000-2011, Undated |
| | 15 | Meeting Minutes | 1996 |
| | 16 | Steering Committee Meeting Minutes | 1997 |
| | 17 | Steering Committee Meeting Minutes | 1998 |
| | 18 | Planning Meeting Minutes | 1999 |
| | 19 | Planning Meeting Minutes | 2000 |
| | 20 | Meeting Minutes | 2001 |
| | 21 | Meeting Minutes | 2002 |
| 2 | 1 | Board Meeting Minutes | 2003 |
| | 2 | Executive Committee Meeting Minutes | 2003 |
| | 3 | Board Meeting Minutes | 2004 |
| | 4 | Executive Committee Meeting Minutes | 2004 |
| | 5 | Board Meeting Minutes | 2005 |
| | 6 | Executive Committee Meeting Minutes | 2005 |
| | 7 | Board Meeting Minutes | 2006 |
| | 8 | Executive Committee Meeting Minutes | 2006 |
| | 9 | Board Meeting Minutes | 2007 |
| | 10 | Executive Committee Meeting Minutes | 2007 |
| | 11 | Board Meeting Minutes | 2008 |
| | 12 | Executive Committee Meeting Minutes | 2008 |
| | 13 | Board Meeting Minutes | 2009 |
| | 14 | Executive Committee Meeting Minutes | 2009 |
| | 15 | Board Meeting Minutes | 2010 |
| | 16 | Executive Committee Meeting Minutes | 2010 |
| | 17 | Board Meeting Minutes | 2011 |
| | 18 | Executive Committee Meeting Minutes | 2011 |
| | 19 | Board Meeting Minutes | 2012 |
| | 20 | Executive Committee Meeting Minutes | 2012 |
| | 21 | Board Meeting Minutes | 2013 |
| | 22 | Executive Committee Meeting Minutes | 2013 |
| 3 | 1 | Board Correspondence | 1998-2008, 2012, Undated |
| | 2 | Board Correspondence-Rich, Sarah | 2002 |
| | 3 | Board Correspondence-Saunders, Chris | 1999-2006 |
| | 4 | Annual Reports | 2003-2013, Undated |
| | 5 | Newsletters | 1999-2001, 2013 |

| <u>Box</u> | <u>File</u> | <u>Description</u> | <u>Date</u> |
|----------------------------|-------------|---|----------------------|
| 3 | 6 | Board Retreats, Strategic Planning | 1996-2002, 2007-2012 |
| | 7 | Strategic Planning | 2004-2005 |
| | 8 | Strategic Planning (continued) | 2005 |
| | 9 | Board Orientation | 2008-2009 |
| | 10 | Oswald Family Foundation | 2003-2006 |
| | 11 | Web Site | 2002-2013, Undated |
| | 12 | Financial Reports | 2000-2006 |
| | 13 | Financial Reports | 2007-2013 |
| | 14 | Capital Campaign-“Blueprint for the Future” | 2007-2014 |
| | 15 | Photographs of Members | 2010 |
| | 16 | Member Deaths | 2010-2013 |
| | 17 | Aksenov (Aksyanov?), Nikolai, Fr. | 1996-2008, Undated |
| | 18 | Belyakova, Marina (Teacher) | 1998-2001 |
| | 19 | Katyushenko, Olga (Teacher) | [199?-200?] |
| | 20 | Tolochin, Igor | 1998-2002, Undated |
| Series II: Projects | | | |
| 3 | 21 | Projects/Accomplishments | 1997-2002 |
| | 22 | Advent Projects | 1996-2000 |
| | 23 | Opora | 2001 |
| | 24 | Outreach | 1998-2005 |
| | 25 | Construction | 2002 |
| 4 | 1 | Timeline-Trips, Exchanges | 1997-2001 |
| | 2 | American Teachers-Russia | 1998 |
| | 3 | Teacher Exchanges | 2000-2002, Undated |
| | 4 | Youth Service Trip to Sablino/Tosno | 2002 |
| | 5 | Youth Ministry Trips-“To Russia With Love” | 1999-2012 |
| | 6 | Youth Exchange | 1999-2002 |
| | 7 | Youth Exchange | 2003-2013, Undated |
| | 8 | Inbound Youth Exchange | 2002 |
| | 9 | Youth Exchange | 2004 |
| | 10 | Youth Exchange | 2005-2006 |
| | 11 | Youth Exchange | 2013 |
| | 12 | Trips to Russia (Adults) | 1997-2001 |
| | 13 | Trips to Russia (Adults) | 2002-2014 |
| | 14 | Sablino Preschool | 2002, Undated |
| | 15 | Sablino Youth Center-Budgets and Correspondence | 2008-2009 |
| | 16 | Sablino/Tosno Women’s Prison | 2001-2003 |
| | 17 | Photographs-Renovation, Russian School | 1998, Undated |

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|------------------------------|-------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| | 18 | Photographs-Sablino, Russia | 2001, Undated |
| <u>Box</u> | <u>File</u> | <u>Description</u> | <u>Date</u> |
| 5 | 1 | International Festival-Cultural Side | May 2005 |
| | 2 | Russia: 18-Month Calendar | Jan. 2007-Jun 2008 |
| | 3 | St. Nicholas Day | 2008-2009 |
| | 4 | Borscht Bash II | 2011 |
| Series III: Publicity | | | |
| 5 | 5 | Publicity: Miscellaneous | 1995-2007, Undated |
| | 6 | Newspaper Articles | 1997 |
| | 7 | Newspaper Articles | 1998 |
| | 8 | Newspaper Articles | 1999 |
| | 9 | Newspaper Articles | 2000 |
| | 10 | Newspaper Articles | 2001 |
| | 11 | Newspaper Articles | [2002?] |
| | 12 | Newspaper Articles | 2003 |
| | 13 | Newspaper Articles | 2004 |
| | 14 | Newspaper Articles | 2005 |
| | 15 | Newspaper Articles | 2006[- 2007?], Undated |
| | 16 | Newspaper Articles | 2011 |
| | 17 | Newspaper Articles | 2012 |