

Keep the Faith

By Suzy Hopkins

Throughout the period before 1917, the Russian Orthodox Church had official status in the government. After the Russian Revolution the communist regime under Lenin confiscated religious property, ridiculed religion, harassed believers and propagated atheism. 1,228 priests were killed.

Before that revolution the Russian leaders directed that a railroad be built funded by the government. Many young people worked on the 2, 672 miles of track across Siberia living in rustic camps along the entire length in order to build and maintain the route. After the revolution the money for this project was eliminated stranding thousands of young people in the remote areas of Siberia, now jobless.

These people made their living as bakers and carpenters and tiny store keepers. They practiced their faith in their homes since religion was banned.

To this day there are numerous people living in these dozens of crumbling towns with very little contact with the outside world.

Fortunately there is a Medical Train paid for by the Russian State Railways Agency that comes out to these remote villages every six months for a day or two to provide free medical services like EEG, EKG, X-Rays, ultrasound, lab work and medicine.

The best part of this train is the last car. This is an ornately decorated Russian Orthodox Church with a priest that performs weddings, funerals, baptisms and counselling as needed for those who kept the faith.