

## In memory of Connie Meyer and the history of the humanitarian work

On Thursday evening, May 9, 2019 a very special person, Connie Meyer, passed away. For 27 years she volunteered to help people in need. (In Moscow she was called Constance). It all began with an invitation from Moscow in 1991 mediated by the then Minister of Culture, Grethe Rostbøll.

Connie Meyer had a background and experience in the health field as well as church work, so it was natural that Grethe Rostbøll presented Connie to the Russian Orthodox priest Father Pavel Vishnevsky, a priest in the Moscow Patriarchate. This meeting led to the establishment of a Danish relief organization, first called the Paul Society and later HumanCare Russia, founded in Bethlehem Church. Connie Meyer was invited by the Moscow Patriarchate to come to Moscow and assist in building social & humanitarian support in the Russian Orthodox Church. On January 2, 1992, she moved to Moscow, where she has lived ever since.



Connie Meyer has worked diligently with Father Pavel Vishnevsky for all 27 years. The work, which is based on Father Pavel's congregation, includes families with very low income, single mothers, orphans, orphanages etc.

When Connie arrived in January 1992, the church was still a ruin under reconstruction. Connie Meyer won the respect of the Russian congregation by her theoretical knowledge and practical sense. She solved many problems for them, sometimes by using such simple things as chamomile tea, headache pill and hand cream.

She also had a sense of finding ways for women to earn a little extra by handwork. She set up a special school, specializing in lace- and embroidery, called School of Dagmar, where students - children and adults - could sew and repair clothes for the churches and priests.

From time to time, Connie Meyer visited Denmark, where she gave lectures and showed pictures from the work. She has been dynamic and energetic. Once she discovered a problem, she was the one who took the initiative to get it solved. She could have many balls in the air at a time, and often things went rapidly. HumanCare Russia's chairman stated to Connie Meyer's 25th anniversary that it sometimes felt like Connie ran 180 km/h. A journalist (Anna Libak) who has written an article about her, describes her as a "Danish angel among Russian souls".

There have also been many tasks to address. Connie had tremendous energy and infectious joy, but especially endurance. The 27 years have been an active life with good results. Connie Meyer had a knack for tackling Russian culture with her Danish background in a rewarding and fantastic way.

Connie has been good at raising money for specific people in need, and she was eminent in finding contacts that could help in specific situations. In 1993, she met a doctor, Dmitry Zinenko, who is working on a project to help sick children. Contributing to this clinic's work became one of Connie's projects. She made some contacts by being a member of The International Women's Club of Moscow, the International Club for Women abbreviated IWC Moscow.

Connie Meyer has been involved in other initiatives in the health field. For many years she has collaborated with an organization in Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA, called "Russia With Love". It resulted in mutual visits and an update in various health treatments, especially for the benefit of children.

Connie Meyer was and remains a great role model. She demonstrated with her life what it means to love her neighbour as herself. Her joy in life was being able to help others. This joy passed on to all who came in contact with her. She spread safety around her and many will think of Connie Meyer as their reserve mother.

Connie Meyer also found support from many in Denmark. Among the donors who have supported Connie Meyer's work have been the Spiritual Chivalrous Maltese Order - the Autonomous Priory in Dacia. At a special event, in addition to an amount for the work, they also awarded her the Spiritual Chivalric Maltese Order - the Autonomous Priory in Dacia's Silver Medal of Merit (the highest order).

Fortunately, Connie Meyer reached her 25th anniversary celebrated by all those who appreciated her great humanitarian efforts.

She worked in Moscow because she loved the Russians and Russia, even so much that it was her last wish to be buried there. Connie Meyer is and will be missed. She was 75. Glory be her memory.

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