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Implementing Missionary Activity

Theory and Practice

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**Implementing Missionary
Activity. Theory and Practice**

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The manual is designed to help full-time ministry workers and lay-people understand legislation concerning missionary activity, and how to conduct oneself while preaching, or engaging in outreach activities.

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Implementing Missionary Activity Theory and Practice

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Chapter 1. Legislation Concerning Missionary Activity

Constitution of the Russian Federation

Article 28.

Everyone shall be guaranteed the freedom of conscience, the freedom of religion, including the right to profess individually or together with others any religion or to profess no religion at all, to freely choose, possess and disseminate religious and other views and act according to them.

Article 29.

1. Everyone shall be guaranteed the freedom of ideas and speech.

2. Propaganda or agitation instigating social, racial, national or religious hatred and strife shall not be allowed. Propaganda promoting social, racial, national, religious or linguistic supremacy shall be banned.

3. No person may be forced to express their views and convictions or to renounce them.

4. Everyone has the right to freely seek, receive, transmit, produce and disseminate information by any legal means. The list of information constituting a state secret is determined by federal law.

5. The freedom of mass communication shall be guaranteed. Censorship shall be banned.

Federal Law «On freedom of conscience and religious associations» №125-FZ

Chapter III.1. Missionary Activity

Article 24.1. Content of Missionary Activity

1. For the purposes of this federal law, missionary activity is recognized as the activity of a religious association, aimed at disseminating information about its beliefs among people who are not participants (members, followers) in that religious association, with the purpose of involving these people as participants (members, followers). It is carried out directly by religious associations or by citizens and/or legal entities authorized by them, publicly, with the help of the media, the internet or other lawful means.

2. Missionary activity of religious organizations can be carried out:

– On religious premises, buildings and structures, as well as on land on which such buildings and structures are located;

– In buildings and structures belonging to religious organizations or provided to them in order to carry out their statutory activities, as well as on land on which such buildings and structures are located;

– On premises belonging to religious organizations or provided to them in order to carry out their statutory activities, as well as on land on which the buildings containing the relevant premises are located, by agreement with the owners of such buildings;

– In premises, buildings, and structures and on land owned by or provided to institutions established by religious organizations;

– On land owned by or provided to religious organization;

– In places of pilgrimage;

– In cemeteries and crematoria;

– On the premises of educational institutions historically used for religious ceremonies.

3. Sharing beliefs is not permitted in residential buildings, except as provided for by Article 16, Part 2 of this Federal Law.

4. It is prohibited for a religious association to disseminate information on its doctrine while on premises, in buildings or structures, or on land on which there are such buildings and

structures, which belong to another religious organization without the written consent of the relevant governing body of the religious association which owns said property.

Article 24.2. The Legal Conduct of Missionary Activity

1. Citizens engaged in missionary activities on behalf of a religious group, are required to be in possession of a decision of the general meeting of the religious group authorizing their activity. The authorization must contain details of the written acknowledgment of receipt and registration of the establishment and commencement of activities of the religious group, issued by the territorial body of the federal body of state registration.

2. Missionary work on behalf of a religious organization may be carried out by the head of a religious organization, a member of its governing body and (or) the clergy of a religious organization.

Other individuals and legal entities have the right to carry out missionary work on behalf of a religious organization if they have a document issued by the governing body of the religious organization confirming the authority to carry out missionary work on behalf of the religious organization. This document must contain details of the document confirming the entry of the religious organization to the Unified State Register of Legal Entities, issued by the federal body of state registration or a territorial authority.

These rules do not apply to missionary work provided for in paragraph 2 of Article 24.1 of this Federal Law.

3. Foreign nationals and stateless persons who are lawfully in the territory of the Russian Federation shall have the right to carry out missionary work:

On behalf of a religious group – only in the territory of the Russian Federation in which the religious group is registered and was issued a written acknowledgment of receipt and registration of the establishment of the beginning of activities of the specified religious group, in possession of the document referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article;

On behalf of a religious organization – only in the territory or territories of the Russian Federation in which the organization is registered and only in accordance with the scope of the activities of this religious organization, in the possession of the document referred to in paragraph 2 of this Article.

4. Foreign nationals who have entered the territory of the Russian Federation at the invitation of religious organizations in accordance with Article 20 of this Federal Law shall have the right to carry out missionary work only on behalf of the said religious organization only in the territory or territories of the Russian Federation in which the organization is registered in accordance with the scope of its activities with the document referred to in paragraph 2 of this article.

5. It is prohibited to engage in missionary activity on behalf of a religious association whose objectives and actions violate the law, or who have been liquidated by a court decision, or whose activities are suspended or prohibited in the manner and on the grounds stipulated by this Federal Law, Federal Law of July 25, 2002 №114-FZ «on countering extremist activity» or the Federal law dated March 6, 2006 №35-FZ «on Combating terrorism», as well as individuals referred to in paragraphs 3 and 4 of article 9 of this Federal law.

6. Missionary activity with the following objectives or aims is prohibited:

Violation of public security and public order;

Extremist activity;

Forcing the break-up of a family;

Infringement of a citizen's personal rights and freedoms;

Activities damaging to the morals, health, and well-being of citizens, including the use of narcotic and psychotropic drugs, hypnosis, indecent behavior, or other unlawful acts in connection with their religious activity;

Encouragement of suicide or the refusal on religious grounds of medical assistance which jeopardizes a person's life or health;

Obstruction of compulsory education;

Coercion of members and followers of a religious association and other persons to donate their property to the religious association;

Preventing a citizen from leaving a religious association through threatened or actual use of force or illegal action;

Inciting citizens to refuse to fulfill their civic duties established by law or to commit other illegal acts.

7. In the case of the missionary activities provided for in paragraphs 5 and 6 of this Article, the religious association is responsible for any missionary activity carried out on its behalf by its agents.

[Housing Code of the Russian Federation from 29.12.2004 №188-FZ](#)

Article 17. Purpose of premises and limits of their use. The use of residential premises

Point 3. It is prohibited for a missionary group to be located on, or conduct missionary activities on premises designated for industrial production or residential premises, except as stipulated in Clause 16 Federal laws of September 26, 1997 No. 125-FZ «About liberty of conscience and about religious associations»

Article 22. Conditions for converting residential premises into non-residential premises and non-residential premises into residential premises

Point 3.2. The conversion of residential premises into non-residential premises for the purpose of religious activity is prohibited.

Russian Federation Code of Administrative Offences from 30.12.2001 number 195-FZ, Article 5.26

3. Religious organizations conducting activities without displaying/indicating the official full name of the organization, including missionary activity involving the release or distribution of literature, printed, audio and video materials without marking the material with the name of the organization, or incomplete, or deliberately false labeling on said material, —

Punishable by an administrative fine in the amount from thirty thousand to fifty thousand rubles with confiscation of literature, printed, audio and video materials.

4. Implementation of missionary activity in violation of the law on freedom of conscience, freedom of religion and religious associations-

Punishable by an administrative fine on citizens in the amount from five thousand to fifty thousand rubles; for legal entities – from one hundred thousand to one million rubles.

5. Violation provided by section 4 of this Article, if committed by a foreign national or a stateless person, —

Punishable by an administrative fine in the amount from thirty thousand to fifty thousand rubles with the possibility of administrative expulsion from the Russian Federation.

Chapter 2. General Principles of Conducting Missionary Activity

Any discussion of how to conduct religious and missionary activity on the basis of the new laws must first begin with a definition of what is and what is not missionary work.

This is a very important step, since most of the issues related to missionary work will disappear as soon as we clearly define the concept of «missionary activity».

For believers, the concept of missionary activity is inextricably linked with their faith and beliefs, and by extension, their daily lives. The Christian faith is by its very nature missional. As believers it is normal for us to do things such as preach to friends or acquaintances or post pictures and comments on social media sites quoting scripture. Is this considered «Missionary Activity» under the new laws?

Can I visit my friends and talk to them about my faith, or is this an illegal activity prohibited by law?

How do I know if I am engaging in prohibited activity or am within my legal rights? Where is the boundary?

The answer to this important question can be found in the articles of the Law «On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations, particularly in paragraph 1, Article 24.2:

For the purposes of this federal law, **missionary activity** is recognized as the activity of a religious association, aimed at disseminating information about its beliefs among people who are not participants (members, followers) in that religious association, with the purpose of involving these people as participants (members, followers). It is carried out directly by religious associations or by citizens and/or legal entities authorized by them, publicly, with the help of the media, the internet or other lawful means.

As we read this law, we see that it defines several marks or characteristics of Missionary Activity. **It is very important for us to understand these characteristics, as they differentiate «missionary activity» from other religious activities.**

We have identified four main characteristics of Missionary Activity:

– Missionary Activity **is carried out directly by the religious association and/or authorized persons and organizations.** The spread of one's personal faith cannot be automatically attributed to the missionary work.

– Missionary activity **is aimed at those who are not yet a follower of a religious association;** therefore, talking about faith among fellow believers is not missionary activity.

– The **purpose of missionary activity is recruiting people to join a religious association.** If you're just talking about your faith without reference to a particular religious group, it is not missionary work.

– **Missionary activity is carried out in public.** Talking about one's faith at home is not a public activity.

As noted in a letter written by the Office of the President of the Russian Federation, **missionary activity is characterized by the totality of the above characteristics.** The activity of a religious association, which does not contain all four characteristics, cannot be regarded as a missionary activity. Therefore, these activities are not subject to restrictions set by the Federal Law against missionary activity.

Personal testimony about one's faith is not marked by the above characteristics; therefore, it cannot be regarded as missionary activity.

It is important to understand that the modern version of the law does not consider the activities of individuals (Russian citizens and other persons legally residing in the territory of Russia) as missionary. Such cases are covered by Article 28 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation. There are certain restrictions on religious and missionary activity for foreigners. These will be discussed in a *separate chapter*.

What does this mean?

If friends come to your house to visit, or you are visiting someone, and you've decided to talk about your faith and convictions, you are fully within your rights to do so. This basic right is guaranteed by the *Russian Constitution*.

Based on the postulate that missionary activity is characterized by the totality of the characteristics contained in the legal definition, we can conclude that **an individual citizen** engaged in the distribution of opinions on the street, with a public audience including non believers, with the intention to recruit people into a religious organization, but **acting on their own initiative**, without authorization from a religious organization **is not conducting missionary activity**.

If you find yourself in a situation similar to the one above and are confronted with law enforcement officials whose definition of missionary activity does not agree with yours, what should you do? We will cover this in a later chapter entitled «*What to do if you are accused of violating the laws of missionary activity*».

Chapter 3. Religious Activities of Individuals

As we saw in the previous chapter, the laws and regulations governing missionary activity do not apply to the activities of individuals acting on their own, without official connection or authorization to conduct missionary activity on behalf of religious organizations.

The right to preach and share one's beliefs is guaranteed under Articles 28 and 29 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation.

Article 28.

Everyone shall be guaranteed the freedom of conscience, the freedom of religion, including the right to profess individually or together with others any religion or to profess no religion at all, to freely choose, possess and disseminate religious and other views and act according to them.

Article 29.

1. Everyone shall be guaranteed the freedom of ideas and speech.
2. Propaganda or agitation instigating social, racial, national or religious hatred and strife shall not be allowed. Propaganda promoting social, racial, national, religious or linguistic supremacy shall be banned.
3. No person may be forced to express their views and convictions or to renounce them.
4. Everyone has the right to freely seek, receive, transmit, produce and disseminate information by any legal means. The list of information constituting a state secret is determined by federal law.
5. The freedom of mass communication shall be guaranteed. Censorship shall be banned.

It is within the rights of every individual believer, when speaking on their own behalf, to preach and share their beliefs; further, one can freely pray, and have conversations about one's faith in a public place. These activities are not prohibited by law.

Whether on the street, on premises (residential or industrial) sharing of beliefs by an individual believer does not meet the legal definition of missionary activity under paragraph 1 Article 24.1 of the Law «About Liberty of Conscience and about Religious Associations»:

For the purposes of this federal law, **missionary activity** is recognized as the activity of a religious association, aimed at disseminating information about its beliefs among people who are not participants (members, followers) in that religious association, with the purpose of involving these people as participants (members, followers). It is carried out directly by religious associations or by citizens and/or legal entities authorized by them, publicly, with the help of the media, the internet or other lawful means.

In the previous chapter we identified four necessary characteristics of Missionary Activity:

– Missionary Activity **is carried out directly by the religious association and/or authorized persons and organizations**. The spread of their personal faith cannot be automatically attributed to the missionary work.

– Missionary activity **is aimed at those who are not yet a follower of a religious association**; therefore, talking about faith among fellow believers is not missionary activity.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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