

**Drawing on the inner resources in times of persecution and economic hardship:
Case study of Protestant churches in Central Asian countries**
by Anneta Vyssotskaia

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, its five Central Asian republics (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan) became independent states. After a long period of militant atheism when all religious activities were either prohibited or strictly controlled by the government, the freedom of religious beliefs came accompanied by a great spiritual revival. That period was short as the governments started to amend the existing laws by putting restrictions on the religious activities in order to bring more stability to their countries. The first wave of restrictions mainly targeted foreign religious workers. As a result many missionaries were forced out of the region. The restrictions soon spread on other religious activities: church registration, sharing faith with other people, children and youth ministry, religious literature and religious education of church members etc. Since then the religious freedom situation has been continuously worsening and the churches and individual believers experienced various forms of persecution. The situation is complicated by the poor economic situation in Central Asia. Under these circumstances the evangelical churches are learning the precious lessons of how to draw on their own inner spiritual and material resources in times of continuous persecution and economic hardship: getting deeper into the Word of God and God's promises, disciplined prayer and fasting, sharing resources, growing in unity and joining forces in the dialogue with the authorities etc.