

ANNA EKLUND



Photo: General Commission on Archives and History

Deaconess Anna Eklund



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Anna Eklund, on the back of the sled, delivers supplies to poverty-stricken communities of St. Petersburg, early 1900s.

Deaconess Who Served the Poor of Russia

The Methodist Church in Saint Petersburg, Russia, began in 1889. Its early days are marked by passionate people, one of whom was Anna Eklund.

Eklund was born in Finland in 1867. As a teenager, she felt a call from God for ministry. At age 19, she was trained at Bethany Center in Hamburg and was then commissioned as a deaconess in the Mission Conference of Finland and Russia.

In 1914, the Methodists of Saint Petersburg purchased a building, enabled by a generous gift from Fanny Gamble in the United States. This building is where the Methodist people then further developed their ministry and mission and where Eklund flourished.

Eklund spared neither her energy nor her health when she ministered to the Russian people who were dying by thousands from hunger and cholera in the 1920s. In wintertime, many people did not have shoes to keep their feet warm. Eklund gave

away everything that she had to save their lives and care for their souls.

Even in the dark days of oppression and persecution, she served the suffering people in Russia. She was in Saint Petersburg in 1931, during the worst times for professing Christians. She wrote to her bishop, "Our position remains firm—to work for Russia; therefore, in spite of everything we will be beside our people."

On the 1908 Journal of the Mission Conference of Finland and Saint Petersburg is printed Wesley's appeal, "Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen, they alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven upon earth." Among Methodists in Eurasia, Eklund exemplifies the preachers whom Wesley sought to preach the gospel.

Source: Submission by Fedor Kim, with modifications.