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УДК 614.2

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THE VOLUNTEERISM AS A SOCIAL PHENOMENON DURING A PANDEMIC: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

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The article is devoted to the specifics of volunteering during a pandemic. The goal of the Russian Orthodox Church is to study characteristics of volunteerism as a social phenomenon during pandemic on the the Church own experience. The specific features of volunteerism are socially useful orientation, gratuitous nature, good will, charity and care. The volunteerism of the Russian Orthodox Church is rooted in the past centuries. It is always activated when there is social demand for volunteering. This was the situation during pandemic when volunteers joined the social services with purpose of selflessly providing socially significant services to those in need. The most popular modes of assistance were hot lines, delivery of food packages, medicines, personal protective equipment, antiseptics as well as remote spiritual assistance. During the pandemic, volunteers were engaged in supplying food to the elderly and the disabled who were in self-isolation and providing medical and spiritual assistance to the sick. To illustrate, the article considers the activities of "The Orthodox Volunteers" in Belgorod.

Key words: The Russian Orthodox Church; volunteerism; volunteers; voluntary activity; assistance; pandemic.

For citation: Lipich T., Maslakova A., Lipich V., Reznik S. The volunteerism as a social phenomenon during a pandemic: the experience of the Russian Orthodox Church. *Problemi socialnoi gigieni, zdravookhranenia i istorii meditsini*. 2022;30(6):1177–1183 (In Russ.). DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.32687/0869-866X-2022-30-6-1177-1183>

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Conflict of interests. The authors declare absence of conflict of interests.

Acknowledgment. The study had no sponsor support

Received 12.03.2022

Accepted 23.06.2022

Introduction

The instances of volunteering and disinterested help occurred in different social formations. Under different social systems, there were people-oriented to the values of self-realization, self-improvement, and interaction with other people in the context of the growth of the community well-being where a person travels over a distance of his/her path of life. The research results show that in the twentieth century in the United States of America and several European countries volunteering labor has become a significant economic resource. Therefore, the status of a powerful social phenomenon of volunteering gained only in the twentieth century, and specifically in Europe.

The formation of the volunteering movement in Russia is not identical to that in foreign countries. The roots of Russian volunteering are very far back in the depths of Russian history. It has to do with those people who were brought up in the moral and ethical traditions of Orthodoxy and who helped the needy fellow citizens in a costless manner.

During the Soviet Union, volunteers were people who went to virgin lands or the Baikal-Amur Mainline to work. But the labor of volunteers who developed virgin lands or built the Baikal-Amur Mainline was paid. This compensated for the difficult working conditions. Volunteering work to gather the harvest, clean the terri-

tory of the organization on weekends (Saturday voluntary workday) was often an obligation, and had the form of forced labor. There was no legal framework for volunteering work. And even though these activities were called volunteering work, they differed from the modern understanding of volunteering.

After the breakup of the Soviet Union, many people had forgotten the idea of labor for the good of society.

The development of the volunteering terminology, the society reevaluation of the content and forms of volunteering work in modern Russia took place in the 1990s in parallel with the emergence of the third sector of the economy that was represented by non-profit, public, and philanthropy organizations. The activity of volunteering organizations is regulated by federal laws.

The most important social components of our country's sustainable development are the revival and the spread of volunteering. According to the Constitution of the Russian Federation (Chapter 6 Article 141), the Russian Federation Government implements measures to support volunteering [1]. In the annual address, President highlights that volunteering is the most important indicator to build a civil society.

The citizens' involvement in social practice through the development of volunteering mechanisms is the feature of State policy. which is approved in several regulations. Among them is the Federal Law of April 5, 2010, № 40-F, which defines the development assistance of

volunteering as one of the types of socially-oriented activities [2], the “Concept of the development assistance of volunteering in the Russian Federation” and others. The concept aims to activate and support volunteering as a resource for civil society development [3].

In modern Russia, there is a new rise in the volunteering movement. The awareness of the need to participate in dealing with society and state problems, ready to devote time at no charge, to use their life and professional experience and knowledge, all these are becoming typical for more and more people. By the way, there are about 4 million people in Russia.

O. V. Reshetnikov’s researches results testify that in the first half of the XX century volunteering was considered as one of the forms of public activity [4]. But since the middle of the 20th century, it gradually became a widespread phenomenon, it reached a new qualitative level by the beginning of the 11th century and became the most important form of participation in public life.

Even though legally “the Church is separated from the State, but it is not separated from society and the people, and thus from the troubles and sorrows that fill our lives” [5]. Several representatives express the following opinion: “Without the volunteering development, the Russian Orthodox Church will not be able to respond in any way to society’s social demands”. The present study is not intended to answer the question, “Should the Church be involved in social work?” However, today, at a time of the rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, the lack of experience in dealing with the virus, medical, economic, social and other life spheres problems, people are in great need of effective the Christian faith. An awful lot of people need the example of active love and preach deeds.

The purpose of this article is to characterize volunteering as a social phenomenon during the pandemic: the Russian Orthodox Church experience.

Methods and methodology

To achieve the purpose is possible in the context to consider volunteering as a social phenomenon. The methodological basis to characterize the volunteering was taken by Belanovsky Y. S., Loginova N. V., Kholostova E. I., Kudrinskaya L. A., Reshetnikova O. N. These works contain the description of terminology related to volunteering, social aspects, essence, functions, specific features, development of volunteering service of the younger members of Russian society. The study of the mentioned literary sources gave the author of the article and opportunity to characterize the social phenomenon of volunteering. The study of materials of the official website of the Moscow Patriarchate, V. Rulinsky’s Internet publications, I. Pitalov, N. Gorlova, A. Mamedova, E. Paklina, the Synodal Charity Department Chairman Bishop of Orekhovo-Zuevsk Panteleimon’s report at a press conference that was dedicated to the opening Orthodox churches in Moscow for parishioners and the social work of the Church in terms of the pandemics, the Orthodox portal Miloserdie.ru, etc. made it possible to characterize volunteering during the pandemic: the Russian Orthodox Church experience.

Results

History offers many examples of how during the period of terrible epidemics the Church volunteers helped people to endure.

“In a broad sense, volunteering is a gratuitous socially useful activity based on goodwill and free choice for the benefit of third parties or society. The conceptual basis of volunteering is the presence in any society those people who need any help, as well as people who are ready to provide this help voluntarily without any benefit to themselves” [6].

Volunteering has always been based on “non-monetary incentives and without the intention of financial gain. It has never depended on material status, social status, religious beliefs, and nationality. It was carried out outside of commercial relations or government service, but for the good of society to solve social problems” based on free will.

It is worth noting that the emergence of the phenomenon of volunteering is associated with the actualization of social needs in it. The literature analysis has shown that volunteering can be considered as a mass social movement with its own specific goals, values, norms, principles, functions, and areas of activity.

Volunteering work is a type of spiritual activity that aims to help those who need it most, who are unable to help themselves without assistance. Volunteering help is very relevant for the elderly, the lonely, the disabled, the underprivileged, the sick and homeless, orphaned children, as well as during social cataclysms, epidemics, or natural disasters. At all times, volunteers, first of all, help the neediest segments of the people.

Volunteering work often begins with traditional forms of mutual aid and transforms into integrating efforts of a huge number of people to solve any socially significant situations.

Volunteering can act as the following activities:

- 1) mutual aid — to provide volunteering assistance to other members of one’s social group;
- 2) charity or contribution for the benefit of others;
- 3) participation and self-management;
- 4) education or propaganda.

By type, there are the following volunteering assistances:

- 1) orphaned children, the disabled, the elderly, the homeless, refugees, former prisoners and convicts, and other categories of the population assistance;
- 2) sick people assistance (at home, in hospitals);
- 3) activities that are connected with preservation and restoration of natural and historical monuments;
- 4) animals care, voluntary assistance to nature reserves and zoos, work in animal shelters;
- 5) prevention of health disorders, fight against “social” diseases;
- 6) historical educational activity;
- 7) environmental protection;
- 8) cultural and leisure activities;
- 9) specialized aid to children and teenagers;
- 10) the native shore concern;
- 11) labor aid;

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12) participation in social activities.

Many researchers consider “volunteering as a form of social service” which aim is to provide selfless socially important services that are carried out on the citizen's free will.

Social service reflects the level of social responsibility of the whole society members. For a long time, it has been the understanding of one's social responsibility that has been associated with the moral strength and religious consciousness of the individual. After all, to serve means to do something for others' good, to be necessary to others.

To avoid precedents of unjustified inclusion of other forms of public behavior in the concept of “volunteering” it seems to formulate specific criteria of volunteering. Namely:

- 1) the lack of gaining profit (volunteering activities are carried out without expectation of remuneration);
- 2) participation in volunteering activities is determined by a person's “free, informed choice, related to non-coercive person's choice or obligation”;
- 3) volunteering benefits other people or society as a whole, it contributes to personal growth and development of the volunteers themselves”.

The world practice of volunteering shows that volunteers become people who, regardless of age, social status, position, religious or political beliefs, based on a conscious choice carry out gratuitous activities that benefit others [7].

Studies do not sidestep the problem of the volunteering types. However, the volunteering facts analysis shows that it can be both individual and collective civic activity and the participation in the work of non-governmental organizations. The common to all types of volunteering is to achieve goals that volunteers consider important for the good of people and society.

The volunteering scope is very diverse. Volunteering can be expressed both in one-time socially useful actions and in systematic activities in various areas of society.

Volunteering activities related to helping the needy resides in the different epochs of people's social nature. At the same time in each separate country the volunteering scope, the level of its formation, incidence, popularity, citizens' involvement are connected with historical, social, cultural, political, and economic specifics. According to L. A. Kudrinskaya, Russian volunteering as well as volunteering “in some other countries is characterized by such features as socially useful orientation, gratuitous nature, and goodwill. Historically in Russia volunteering is inextricably linked to such notions as charity, mercy, custody, care. [8, p. 17].

In the current context, volunteering, especially in the form of Orthodox service, exists in two models of communities, which Y. S. Belanovsky conventionally defines as follows: “Volunteering community” and “volunteering movement”. They have the biggest potential for the development of Orthodox volunteering in the cities.

Volunteering movements are structured; they are characterized by the performance of certain activities related to help the needy. Therefore, the volunteers' ac-

tivities from their movements are aimed at achieving clear practical goals. Volunteers have the technology to achieve them.

Volunteering communities are like a large community where interaction is “based on deep personal relationships, friendship, trust, and love. Therefore, unlike movements, communities are not groups of volunteers, but commonwealths”.

Volunteering communities may be non-religious but Christian ones. The community is not aimed at a religious cult and spreading the faith. The community's purpose is to live together with those who are now in difficult situations. At the same time, the community's ideology is based on the rules of the Christian life, the Christian understanding of a human being, and the faith.

In modern society, there are more volunteering movements than volunteering communities.

In theology, volunteering is associated with Christian service to one's neighbors. Theologians write: “Service is connected with human's experience of the fullness and even excess of mercy, love for one's neighbors and God, and faith in human nature. The faithful know that God wants mercy from people, not sacrifice. Therefore, service is efficient when it is a merciful gift, not a compulsion. Nothing motivates volunteering more than the visible, living nurturing example and the experience of collaborative work.

Today it is important to develop volunteering in the context of “church social demands, taking into account the established forms of volunteering service. Therefore, we view Christian social volunteering as regular service to one's neighbors and the world as God's creation”. Recently, volunteering has involved about 3% of the population of the UN member countries and the majority of the residents of developed “countries (in the USA is about 27%, in the UK is about 38%, in Australia is 34%, in Canada is about 45%). Until the spring of 2020, only 5–10% of Russians were involved in volunteering work” [9, p. 54].

Discussion

However, the demand for volunteering help has increased in extreme situations [10]. An example of such a situation was the rapid spread of the coronavirus around the world.

The coronavirus pandemic occurred during Lent and preparation for the main Christian holiday, Easter (in 2020, Orthodox Christians celebrated Easter on April 19). Many churches and monasteries were closed for quarantine.

Orthodox church life in various countries of the world has changed. For example, in Italy, France, and several other European countries Orthodox churches were closed. Worship services were canceled. The Cypriot archbishopric appealed to the faithful to follow the services through television and radio broadcasts. The diocesan bishops of the Orthodox Church in America in their Synodal Encyclical regarding the coronavirus epidemic limited the number of worship services, reduced the number of services, and were authorized to suspend

The Russian Orthodox Church assistance characteristic during the pandemic in numbers

Grocery aid More than 6,800 Orthodox volunteers help the needy during the pandemic	By 26.3 million rubles In 100 volunteering services	23,000 food kits were collected 378 volunteers in the Ufa diocese are involved in the daily distribution of food kits	Transferred to 72 dioceses Volunteers have already helped over 28,000 people
The Russian Orthodox Church in Russia and other countries organized 96 hotlines	Hotlines are in Moscow, Alma-Ata, Yekaterinburg, Rostov-on-Don, Tyumen, Kazan, as well as in smaller cities such as Serov, Akhtubinsk, Balashov, and Armavir	34,000 calls	The federal information line for church social assistance began operating in Russia on February 1, 2021
Protection means are given to the population by the Archdiocese of Odessa	500 protective suits	FP2-type protective respirators, 50 reusable	5 thousand rubber gloves, hand disinfectant

them (in case of decisions by temporal authorities). The monasteries did not receive pilgrims until April 1, 2020.

Almost all European Christian churches have imposed restrictions due to the epidemiological situation. The faithful whose philosophical beliefs require participation in the Church sacraments has had to endure many moral difficulties. A general instruction was developed and approved by the Holy Synod on March 17. However, each country took different measures; depend on the epidemiological situation and the instructions of the authorities.

After all, Communion, for example, cannot take place online. Volunteers helped the faithful cope with difficulties by providing spiritual assistance.

But still, in different countries, the efforts of volunteers are centered around the help those people who are at risk, support doctors, transport assistance.

The pandemic prompted people to unite in the efforts to combat infection! Volunteering is inherent not only to people but also to companies. For example, car companies (BMW, Mercedes-Benz, Hyundai, KIA) have allocated motors for volunteers to deliver to the needy all necessary things. In France, the company LeroyMerlin allocated furniture for volunteer headquarters.

In the Czech Republic, Spain, Italy, and Canada, volunteers have participated in organizing living quarters for health care workers who must comply with quarantine rules. Self-organized volunteering management activities are not uncommon. In Brazil, for example, a people's committee against COVID coordinates on its own the resistance against the spread of the virus in densely populated, impoverished cities areas. These activities include people's enlightening about infection risk factors, water, and food delivery.

At the very beginning of the pandemic, hundreds of Orthodox volunteers began to help the needy, including those who are in self-imposed isolation. According to the Synodal Department for charity, over 5,500 volunteers engaged actively in early May 2020! 100 Orthodox Volunteer Services have worked [11].

Vasily Rulinsky, the Synodal Department for Church Charity and Social Ministry spokesperson, called the Church "one of the largest coordinators of aid to the population of different countries during the pandemic. Food aid for large families, the elderly, the lonely, and the disabled was especially in demand. After all, many people's material income went down and there was not enough money to buy food" [12].

As presented in the table, the assistance of the Russian Orthodox Church during the pandemic was varied.

It is especially noted worth that with the help of the Commission for Hospital Ministry at the Diocesan Council of Moscow, the training center at St. Alexius Hospital, with the support of the Department of Health and the Department of Labor and Social Security of Moscow, the Church began training volunteers to work in the "red zone". A decision was made to open a unique course for citizen volunteers. Such courses had previously been organized only for medical volunteers.

Courses for volunteers in the "red zone" were opened in July 2021 at the training center of St. Alexius Church Hospital in Moscow [13].

And volunteers come on these courses! They are representatives from different professions and have different mental backgrounds (doctors, police officers, housewives, etc.). Not everyone who attends the courses believes in God. Atheists and people of different faith can also become students. After all, churching is not the purpose. Volunteers between the ages of 18 and 60 can attend the course. But the students' core is the faithful. Their dominant motive to attend the course is faith. The most important requirement is that the students must be immunized: they must be down with an illness or be immunized.

The purpose of organizing courses is to teach how to work in the "red zone", to develop competence to be there. These Church actions are a response to the need for love and care of those who are sick. As well as, people need to perform basic hygienic measures, which have become difficult to implement, and in some cases, inaccessible for those who suffer from COVID-19. During the course, volunteers will learn how to communicate with COVID patients, use personal protective equipment, and will have COVID-hospitals practice in the "red zone". After the training, they will adhere to Moscow hospitals as volunteers.

Volunteers' help is very much in demand! Six Moscow hospitals have already indicated their need for volunteers help. A minimum of four hours of employment once a week is planned. Those who work can help or visit hospitals at night but one after agreement of the actions plan with the coordinator.

As a result of negotiations between His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and Russian President Vladimir V. Putin, priests were allowed to enter the "red" zones in certain regions. The purpose was to provide spiritual support to the faithful, the importance of this during the peak of the pandemic is enormous. Mobile special priests teams were formed in Russia, who were trained to use personal protective equipment and epidemiologists advised on

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how to administer the sacraments in the “red” zones. A twenty-four-hour telephone number for those who wanted to call priests for coronavirus patients during the first wave of the pandemic in Moscow was used to receive about 10 requests daily. Among them, 70% were for those who were dying in the resuscitation department. And 30% were for the sick spiritual support, including those in the “red” zones. By visiting “red” zones, priests also provide spiritual support to healthcare workers.

On June 9, 2020, during the press conference devoted to the opening for parishioners of Orthodox churches in Moscow and the social work of the Church in conditions of the pandemic Bishop Panteleimon of Orekhovo-Zuevsky, chairman of the Synodal Department for Charity stated that the number of volunteers in church social projects in most dioceses of the Russian Orthodox Church increased (Sochi, Kaluga, Armavir, Cheboksary, and others)[14].

Volunteer associations are often created under the auspices of the Sisters of Mercy. Therefore their main activity areas are identical to those of the Sisters of Mercy. They care for the sick, single mothers, multi-member families and families with disabled children, old people living alone, and homeless people. However, the pandemic has made its adjustments to life-sustaining activity.

We can formulate the following trends in volunteer assistance in these difficult times.

1. Remote solution to several emerging requests.
2. Increasing requests to the Church, religious organizations, such as the Sisters of Mercy, which established volunteering movements to volunteers by 50% or even 2–2.5 times in some dioceses in Russia (mostly Urals, Siberia, Far East), a sudden increase in requests in dioceses in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.
3. A new request for assistance with new content (personal protective, antiseptic and hygienic equipment, medications, payment for utility services, helping hand for children during e-learning, temporary shelter, other appeals related to loss of earnings).
4. A sharp increase in appeals for hot meals at homeless feeding centers (by 50–100%).

The elderly, disabled, and homeless people’s increasing appeals.

5. An increasing number of volunteers who joined charity during the pandemic was noted in several cities (for example, in Armavir the number of volunteers tripled, in Kaliningrad — almost doubled) [15]. A huge surge of volunteering service came during the first wave of the coronavirus spread. For example, volunteers from the Moscow service “Miloserdie” were ready to bring food and medicine to people in isolation, drive doctors to work, at first not even everyone had enough requests.

These trends stimulated increased volunteering support for the weakest and the most vulnerable people at risk, regardless of their religion or nationality. At the very beginning of the spread of the infection, there was a dramatic increase in the demand for food supplies for the elderly and disabled who were in self-imposed isolation. For example, in Kazan during the pandemic, vol-

unteers from the parish of St. Seraphim of Sarov distributed hot meals and personal protective equipment to those who were in need three times a week. Many volunteers distributed food after their main job.

Volunteers also did the logistics, dispatching work, drew-up of an application, and prepared food kits. Many of them were disabled themselves. During the pandemic, the demand for dispatching work increased sharply. For example, the hotline of the Moscow church relief headquarters receives about 1,500 calls each week. Volunteers answer them. In Kaliningrad, Orthodox volunteers are on duty at the diocesan hotline 24/7. In May-June 2020, the Russian Orthodox Church organized 96 volunteer hotlines in dioceses in Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and other countries.

In many services, such as Moscow’s “Angara Salvation” of the “Miloserdie” service for the homeless, volunteers were the primary medical point of contact. Volunteers sent for the doctors if they noticed the slightest sign of a cold.

Hotline work and food deliveries were the most in-demand types of volunteers’ assistance at the beginning of the pandemic. The Nizhny Novgorod diocese had a team of 80 volunteers on its hotline at the beginning of the pandemic (30 joined during the pandemic). During April the Diocese of Nizhny Novgorod, with the help of volunteers, delivered more than 1200 food kits to people under care. In the Serov diocese, volunteers started their work on the telephone hotline on May 1. 70 volunteers were engaged in food delivery to 150 multi-member families and 20 families who raise children with disabilities.

A small number of volunteers from the Khabarovsk organization “Miloserdie” (15 people) responded to 700 appeals in one week. In the Exaltation of the Cross Church Center in Ufa, 9 people joined volunteering activities. They assisted in the remote purchase and medications delivery.

Volunteers from various regions of Russia responded quickly and timely to the social request during the pandemic. In many cities, projects with the volunteers’ participation began to be implemented on an emergency basis. For example, on March 30, 2020, the Orthodox Mercy Service in Yekaterinburg has created the project “Time to Care”. The purpose of the project is to provide medication, food, and psychological assistance to needy elderly people and multi-member families. Immediately more than 40 volunteers began to provide daily assistance. On May 11, 2020, thanks to volunteering activities 738 people in need were assisted at home.

During the pandemic, there were a lot of requests to help those who were severely ill shut-in. Even before the pandemic, a lot of people were in great need of care. But the situation with severely ill shut-in people has worsened for another important reason: that is the imposition of restrictive measures. For example, a lot of caregivers who left for their homes, neighboring republics, or other states for a while were unable to return. It was not possible to find a substitution quickly, but the sick could not wait! Volunteers came to the rescue in such situations as well.

During the pandemic, the volunteers work at church shelters for mothers and humanitarian aid centers also came to the forefront. It was these institutions that took the brunt of the social assistance because there are so many of them and because they are located all over the country (in this case, Russia).

Both in big cities and small towns and villages, close to those who are the neediest. These centers have re-focused their work on distributing food and hygiene products, mostly to the poorest families, families with many children, and families with children with disabilities. Volunteers actively joined to supply the necessary items to the Centers' wards.

The situation with the spread of coronavirus was so unexpected and so complicated that in many countries and individual cities, the number of hospital beds was much lower than the number of people with chronic diseases and COVID-19. All of these sick people needed constant medical supervision and hospital stay. Hospitals could not cope with the influx of patients. Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan was no exception: the city hospitals were overcrowded; only the most severe patients could be treated there. The question "What should the rest of the sick do?" became pressing. At this difficult time, the Church came to the rescue.

At the height of the pandemic, the church opened a Covid hospital in the Bishkek diocese in coordination with the local Ministry of Health. Some medical workers volunteered to receive patients. There were days when requests reached 40 people. Patients with mild and moderate cases of Covid were treated free of charge at the diocesan hospital. The Diocese Social Department also paid for laboratory tests and medications.

Doctors also need help during the pandemic. In the Simferopol diocese, volunteers prepare and deliver free hot meals to ambulance stations and covid units [16]. Volunteers bring hot meals to ambulance medics in Odessa.

Doctors in different countries also need medical equipment to provide specialized care for the sick. The Church, with the participation of volunteers, donates equipment to hospitals in Russia and other countries: artificial respiration units, oxygen concentrators, and medications. There are well-known facts about how priests and bishops brought equipment to hospitals in Belgorod, Azov, Yaroslavl, Khanty-Mansiysk, Borovichi, Okulovka, Ukrainian Nezhin, etc.; about the purchase of two new ambulances by the Diocese of Odesa.

N. I. Gorlova [18], E. A. Paklin [19] write about the contribution of volunteers in the fight against coronavirus. Researchers unanimously state: "Volunteers are not limited by regulations and instructions. Therefore, they can respond quickly and on time to exactly what the need is right now".

Members of the "Orthodox Volunteers" activist group in Belgorod were very active in the fight against the coronavirus infection. To prevent the spread of the coronavirus infection, the activists switched to remote work in counseling people and providing spiritual support to those who fell ill or were self-isolated.

But volunteering cannot be limited to online technologies. It's not a secret that the elderly and those who are in difficult living conditions and they all have a weak immune system. In November 2020, the Orthodox Volunteers held a "Give a Mask" campaign. "As a result of the campaign, masks were distributed to financially disadvantaged citizens, the sisterhood employees, and homeless people" [20].

The sincere participation of the Sisterhood volunteers was an example for others. Other citizens took up the idea — students and master's students of the Theology Department of the Faculty of Social and Theological Sciences at Belgorod State University, representatives of public organizations, and residents.

Among Orthodox Volunteers some health professionals work at a hospital in Belgorod, it was retooled into a covid hospital for the duration of the growing disease. Volunteer Kirill Peresadin decided to work there because of a shortage of medical personnel. Sick people need not only medical but also spiritual help. Therefore, after completing medical procedures, the volunteer told the sick about God, saints, especially St. Luke of Crimea, and how to address God and the saints prayerfully [21].

Conclusion

Thus, the specific features of volunteering are its socially useful trend, gratuitous nature, and goodwill. Charity, mercy, care, custody accompany volunteering. The vector of volunteering development is largely mediated by the content of social inquiries addressed to the church and the established forms of volunteering service.

The need to be useful is natural for people. Many become volunteers when they realize and understand the importance of the work they can do. It builds the conviction that society needs you and they feel as a valuable part of it. The Russian Orthodox Church faithful volunteers know that the world's savior comes to earth in the image of the suffering and deprived. The Christ Himself voluntary service is to help those who ask for it or suffer. Volunteering is the embodiment of the idea of social service.

Volunteering, on the one hand, helps to realize the idea of a sustainable and united society and, on the other hand, supplements the services provided by the state or business structures, if these services have a social significance.

Volunteering will become more active when a social need for it becomes particularly acute. The period of the rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic is an example of this. During the pandemic, volunteers work to provide food for the elderly and disabled in self-imposed isolation, distribute hot meals and personal protective equipment, do the logistics, dispatching work, draw-up of an application, and prepare food kits, and provide medical and spiritual care to the sick.

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