



Making Christ A Normal Part of Estonian Life

Tiina Nolvak, director of Logos, the only Estonian Christian publishing house, shares how she spends her day, publishing books that meet the Church's needs.

I live in a farm house outside Tallinn, the capital of our country. Tallinn is a tourist destination, and has many parks and well-kept medieval buildings. It takes me about half an hour to drive to work. The Logos office and bookstore used to be farther away, in another part of the city, but now they

are near my home. Logos is the only Christian press in Estonia.

Let me tell you a story about my country. A few years ago our prime minister was asked if he was a Christian. He answered, "No, I'm a Lutheran." This is a true story!

In Estonia, most of the 1.5 million people do not understand what the

gospel is all about. Some 60 percent have no religious affiliation, and one percent are Muslim or Jewish. Of the remaining 39 percent, most are nominally Christian. They think that anyone who is religious is a fanatic. Our passion is to publish books that show Christianity is a normal part of life.

When I get to the office in the morning, I check my e-mail and then spend time with Kristiina

Krabi, my editor-in-chief. She is responsible for coordinating most of our editorial projects.

We publish 25 to 30 books per year, but last year we published 36. I read every proposal we

One of our authors, Teedy Tyrr, is a Lutheran pastor whose son is a famous composer, and Tyrr's books sell very well. We publish books by Baptists, Lutherans, and Methodists. We have a

Estonians buy a lot of books.

receive, and I try to read every manuscript we publish. If a book is for a scholarly audience, I ask Ingmar Kung, our board chairman, to read it—he founded the ministry years ago. Acquisitions are a shared responsibility. Sometimes I initiate a project, other times Kristiina does. It really depends on who has a passion for the book.

Only about half of Logos' books are translations. We work with a lot of Estonian authors. We believe preserving our national language and identity is very important.

Charismatic imprint too. We publish whatever the Church needs.

Logos has four main lines: theology, Christian living, cross-over books, and children's books. Also, we partnered with the International Bible Society to produce a translation of the Bible in Estonian.

With only three full-time staff members, and two part-time, we need outside help. We contract with freelance editors and designers in almost all our work.

We provide editorial and design services to



Logos' team, left to right: Kristiina Krabi, editor-in-chief; Tiina Nolvak, director; Ingmar Kung, (seated) founder, board chair; Kylvii Kung, writer, part-time layout; Helve Kaasma, distribution manager.



"My passion is to publish books that show Christianity is a normal part of life," says Tiina Nolvak.

other Christian organizations. In fact, nearly 25 percent of all our revenue comes from services to churches and ministries.

Because we have so much outside work, most of the time I plan to meet with designers or freelancers in the afternoon. I also visit printers then, make arrangements for our events, or visit bookstores. You could say my schedule is very flexible.

We want Logos to be self-sufficient. Many years ago, Logos began as an underground Christian magazine published by theological students. Then, when independence came, the ministry switched to books.

At that time I was a kindergarten teacher, but the Baptist denomination asked me to help them edit a magazine for chil-

dren. I did that for two years. Then, Logos asked me to join the ministry as editor-in-chief, and now I am the director. I work on funding proposals and look for partnerships with others.

We do strategic planning once a year together with our five-person board. I'm part of the board. But, we constantly revise our plan. I take advantage of whatever opportunities arise, so I am always looking for more business and ways to collaborate with Christian groups.

Logos is already reaching the Christian market on Tallinn and Tartu Christian radio, with a half-hour radio program that airs once every two weeks.

In November 2003, I also began promoting our books on secular radio, with an hour-long program once a week on Radio Cuckoo. This is the radio station for intellectuals. In our country, the cuckoo bird doesn't refer to anything crazy, like in English. Instead, it means "Wake up!"

Logos literature promotion efforts are not limited to the airwaves. Every month we have public events in the evenings. We invite authors to speak. We get as many people as possible to come. I even ask my husband, or one of my four children, to go. But, we usually have good attendance because we have so many products and we have different kinds of events.

The books that sell best are our poetry books. They are very important in Estonia. Next are the books for families and women. These are the Christian living titles. We mostly sell those in churches to believers.

I would like to publish more books for children. I taught kindergarten for eight years. I love children. Logos only has four titles for this audience.

Most of our titles are for Christian leaders and teachers. We publish a lot of theology and commentaries. Our cross-over lines are also theological and academic. We publish classics, like St. Augustine or Martin Luther, and those books are sold in the religion section of secular bookstores.

In Estonia there are many retail outlets. Only 20 percent of Logos' income is generated by sales from its own bookstore. Our bookstore is quite small. Kristiina and I visit client stores regu-

larly. It is easy. Estonia is such a small country, it only takes two hours to go from one end to another.

Even though it is small, Estonia has a good publishing industry. There is an association of about 33 publishers. Only four or five are big companies. The rest are about the same size as Logos.

Next year, Estonia is expected to join the European Union, so we are bracing for a downturn in sales as the economy adjusts. Like most publishers, the majority of our sales take place from September to December. Last year we had a good summer, but Logos did not do so well this year.

But, the main problem we face is that the Estonian language is read and spoken by so few people. Estonian is close to Finnish, and we can read books from Finland, but they cannot read our books. Logos only publishes books in Estonian, even though almost 30 percent of Estonia's population is Russian.

My print runs are very small, but we are the only Christian publishers in Estonia, and this is what God has called us to do. Estonians read constantly. They buy a lot of books, and we offer a Christian alternative. We want to show Estonians that God can be part of every day, every family. Christianity is a normal part of life. ❖