



Vivian Raudsepp is the second woman pastor in Estonia (one of the fifteen Soviet republics). Her parish is the Lutheran church in Ioe-

lahtme, a mere 17 kilometres from the city of Tallinn, the capital of the republic. Vivian's husband Juri Raudsepp is also a pastor, but they came to their vocations in different ways.

Vivian was born into a family of believers. Having obtained a secondary education, she was admitted into the Higher Economic Course in Tallinn, was married, and gave birth to two girls. But a tragedy was imminent — her husband, a power specialist, was killed by a strong electric shock. Vivian, with two tiny children, could only count on herself. So she went to the office of the Dom Cathedral to work as an economist. Grief, and religious ideals imbued in childhood, more and more often pulled her to God. She became a student at the Institute of Theology at the Tallinn Consistory.

Sometime after, a friend of her deceased husband came to her office to express his condolences. It was Juri Raudsepp. They had never seen each other before. Juri admits that it was love at first sight; she married him a little later.

Juri's road to religion was somewhat different. He does not deny that the influence of his wife, to whom he looks up,

Vivian Raudsepp, A Pastor from Estonia

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was there, but he still had his own reasons. A physician by profession, he was doing research in oncology. He made a mistake in an experiment which led to a conflict. Juri says he could have easily got away with it, but instead chose to leave his institute and began working as a surgeon at a children's hospital. Like Vivian's, Juri's family members were believers, and he regularly visited the church. He finally got interested in the impact of religion on people, gradually arriving at the conclusion that the church is a powerful antidote to emotional stresses. Juri's personal life had not been easy either. He had been married twice but both marriages were failures; he had to divorce his

second wife just because of his devotion to religion. His meeting with Vivian marked the beginning of a new stage in his life.

Is it difficult for a woman to be a pastor? "When I was beginning to work as one," Vivian says, "people around treated me with attention and care, obviously sympathizing with me and my sorrow. I wanted to reciprocate, help those afflicted by trouble and share their sorrow. I met no obstacles in my way to pastorship. But as for difficulties, who can say she or he has never come up against them? Well, there were cases when, ill and with a high temperature, I had to leave for a burial or a service in frosty winter weather. But I was not afraid of that and was set right. Then again, women are more emotional and sensitive by nature than men, and it is easier for them to understand others. Parishioners are more outspoken with a woman-pastor, as if they were with their mother."

Juri admits that as a pastor, he is inferior to Vivian. Generally, he says, both professionally and as a human being, Vivian is superior to all male pastors he knows, though, he is in principle opposed to the idea of a woman surgeon or a woman pastor. Juri adheres to the traditional view that women should be mothers and keepers of the family hearth.

In the near future three more women from various parts of Estonia will be ordained.

