



THE SIBERIAN LUTHERAN MISSION SOCIETY



Continued prayers sought for work in Russia

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**By Rev. L. Daniel Johnson
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St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Hillsdale, Mich.

It is a joy for us to serve God's people in Russia. And it is a further joy for us to share some news from Russia with you to encourage your joyful support for this vital mission.

A faithful joy has been the hallmark of the letters we receive and the encouragement others give to us. Such mutual encouragement among God's people as they do God's work is a blessing.

In your prayers please continue to ask God's blessings upon the work in Russia. The articles in this newsletter will give you many specific names, places and concerns for your prayers. In connection with the mission work in Russia, please also remember the SIBERIAN LUTHERAN MISSION SOCIETY (SLMS) work that is being done here. Much has been accomplished, but much can still be done.

May God continue to guide and direct us according to His gracious will. ✠



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Seminars help participants understand Gospel

By Olga Netaeva

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

My name is Olga Netaeva. I am a member of St. Andrew Lutheran Church in Novosibirsk. It is my pleasure to tell you about myself and the summer theological seminars that I have participated in.

A few years ago I moved to Novosibirsk from the city of Tomsk. I had graduated from a typical Soviet school in Tomsk. Before that I was a student of one of the best schools in Tomsk; however, my English grades were so poor that I was expelled.



Olga Netaeva

I was a typical Soviet teenager. We didn't know about religion, and it really didn't matter to us. When I was about 11-years-old, following the common fashion to "believe in something," I was baptized in the Orthodox church, but didn't show or experience any serious interest in God.

When religious freedom came to our country, a great number of different denominations appeared. At 18, I was selling newspapers at an outside market when someone invited me to come and listen to some lectures in English. In this invitation I was assured that I would be able to improve my English. I came out of curiosity, to see how they could help me with English. It turned out to be a small Protestant movement with missionaries from America. To understand what these missionaries were talking about with us (they were speaking of God and the Bible) I decided to read the Bible for myself.

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Trip reveals faith, trust of Russian Lutherans

By Rachel M. Johnson

Who would ever want to go to Russia – especially Siberia? This is the question asked by family and friends before I left for a three-week visit.

The country is rich with a colorful history, the land is full of natural beauty and a culture much different from our own. It is Russia's history, as well as its geography, that has created this culture. The most recent influence was Soviet communism and the devastation on land, infrastructure and people its collapse left behind.

The Lutheran church that existed in Siberia prior to the 1917 revolution has, by God's grace, survived and grown in the midst of this turmoil. The people of the Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church today continually strive to learn more about the Church and God's Word.

On July 2 my father, the Rev. Daniel S. Johnson, my brother, Luke, and I started on an eye-opening journey to visit the people of the Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church and the vast land and culture. After studying Russian for many years, I wanted to travel with my father when he went to teach at the Biblical School in February 2000. Upon his return he promised to take me when he went back.



Rachel Johnson, a sophomore at Iowa State University, and Luke, a sophomore at Marshalltown High School, are members at Redeemer Lutheran Church - Marshalltown, Iowa.

In July 2003 we decided to visit the summer seminars. When the Rev. Vsevolod Lytkin heard we were coming he asked my father if he could lecture at the seminars and Olga Netaeva volunteered to travel with us while in Siberia.

The memories of these three weeks in Siberia will stay with me forever: the people I met; the cultural differences; the abundant history and geography; the amount of Russian language I learned by speaking with the people that I had not learned by sitting in a classroom; the miles of mountains and lush trees that seem to go on forever; and especially the great faith and trust the people have in our Lord.

Though we live in two very different cultures, we both worship in very similar ways. I received holy absolution and holy communion because I knew from our liturgy what Rev. Lytkin was saying. Their liturgy is

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so similar to ours – I simply inserted the English words in my mind as we worshiped. I recognized many of the hymns because they are sung to the same tunes as our hymns. I felt at home worshiping with the Russian Lutherans.

What I experienced is so much more than what I can put into words.

An experience like this is much more impressive than reading a book. A book gives information, but an experience gives feeling, emotion, first-hand knowledge. It makes the individual a living part of the culture and land. I am continually telling friends and family what I learned and experienced.

When I first arrived I had culture shock and I began to re-evaluate my reasons for going. But, as I became acquainted with the people, this soon passed. They were wonderful hosts and treated us like old friends and family. Some day, I am going to return and visit the people and the congregations in Novosibirsk, Tomsk, Abakan and Touim. ✕

Due to the great distances SELC Pastors must travel to visit their parishes, they are in need of laptop computers to maintain a mobile office.

To make a tax deductible donation to the SLMS, contact Mrs. Elizabeth Meyer at emSLMS@aol.com or call 408/286-1771.

Summer seminars more than expected

By Robert Dargatz

I had no idea of what I was getting myself into when I consented to be part of the three-week summer seminars in Siberia. I was flattered to be asked and realized the Lord was presenting me with a special opportunity for personal growth and service to others. It turned out to be all of that and much more.

I joined a group of summer seminar leaders who had just finished a seminar in Altai.

That group included three Americans and three Russians. The Americans were the Rev. Daniel S. Johnson of Marshalltown, Iowa; Dr. Tim Quill of Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Ind.; and Prof. Alan Ludwig, who has been assigned to the seminary in Novosibirsk, Siberia. It also included bilingual Russians who served as translators: the Rev. Alexei Strelsov, rector of the seminary in Novosibirsk, Deacon Alexi Shilin; and Olga Sukhinina, a translator employed by the seminary in Siberia.

We first went to a seminar/camp in the area of Sayanogorsk near Abakan by the trans-Siberian railway. Rev. Johnson's two teenagers accompanied us and got two compartments with what looked like two bunk beds in each compartment.

Since we left in the wee hours of the morning, we did sleep for most of the journey. Upon arriving in Abakan we had a long car ride to the camp site where the seminar was held.

The Rev. Pavel Butakov proved himself to be a very effective leader in running an excellent camp with the right mixture of discipline and leisure. Rev. Johnson shared the sacramental and liturgical character of the Gospel of Mark with the high school group. Dr. Quill informed the adults about "World Lutheranism." Prof. Ludwig taught the entire group about Church and Ministry and I surveyed the book of Genesis. Everyone was especially attentive and respectful.

We had worship every morning utilizing Matins and every evening utilizing Vespers.

The Americans could follow the Russian worship because of its liturgical structure and find the time edifying even though we could not speak or interpret most of the Russian words. Hymns were sung as cappella. All the Russians sang heartily and spoke the Psalms and liturgical portions of the liturgy with great conviction.

We had to bid farewell to the Johnson family and Deacon Shilin when we flew to Krasnovarsk and then to our next destination, Chita. Chita is the farthest east we went into Siberia this summer and it is near the Mongolian border.

The Rev. Igor Kizyaev was once part of Russia's Special Forces. He uses his discipline and determination now to forward the kingdom of the Lord. Besides serving the city of Chita, he travels to a remote village to share the gospel. When he goes, he must change all of his tires and use special "heavy duty" tires

that sacrifice comfort for the durability he needs to get through difficult terrain. Some of the people from that village who attended the seminar had never seen a television or a train.

The pastor's wife and sister-in-law translate his preaching into deaf sign language and that made up a sizable part of the group in Chita. It was remarkable to speak in English, have my words translated into Russian and then have those words translated into deaf sign language.



Rev. Robert Dargatz (left), Dr. Timothy Quill and Rev. Alexei Streltsov return to their room following a day of lectures in Sayanogorsk.

The last city we conducted a seminar in was Omsk, the westernmost of the cities we visited. It is a new mission with Vlade, a new young deacon from the seminary, and his wife, Svetlana.

We continued our standard practice of starting our day with Matins and ending our seminar days with Vespers. Prof. Ludwig supplied some musical accompaniment to our worship using an electronic keyboard.

Dr. Quill offered a new lecture topic dealing with the historic liturgies and especially adapted his lectures to the many young people who attended. We were treated to a home-cooked Russian meal by Svetlana – one of the culinary highlights of the trip.

While it was good to get home to America, I am glad to have had the privilege to meet wonderful brothers and sisters in Christ on the other side of the globe and to be enriched by their fervent faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. ✠

To learn more about the summer seminars in Siberia, contact Rev. Timothy Quill at: QuillTim@aol.com

History of Siberian summer theological seminars

By Alexei Streltsov

Summer theological seminars are conducted in Siberia jointly by the Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind. These theological seminars have greatly contributed to the growth of Lutheranism in the Siberian part of Russia. They have served as a basis for theological development of the newly-organized SELC and for the formation of Lutheran Theological Seminary in Novosibirsk.



Participants at seminar set cross on mountain.

Summer seminars began when Russian Lutherans in Siberia requested their American brothers from the LCMS to assist them in theological education. One aspect of this education was the preparation of the candidates for the pastoral ministry. This was first done in Fort Wayne and then at the seminary in Novosibirsk. Another goal of the summer seminars included the training and catechetical instruction of the laity.

From the very beginning the seminar participants were privileged to hear sound confessional Lutheran theology presented by the best scholars in the appropriate fields. At every seminar there is a nice balance between seminary professors and parish pastors as teachers.

The first seminar took place in July 1996 near Novosibirsk. It was a very special occasion. It is difficult to render accurately the degree of excitement that was prevalent among seminar participants. Many young people came from various places of Russia to learn about Lutheran theology.

Ever since the Soviet Union disappeared, Siberia has been a very popular place among generic Protestant missionaries (and among all sorts of sects and cults coming in). Very often these groups organized some special events. Things that were taught at their conferences were not compatible with Lutheran incarnational theology. Now, for the first time, the Lutherans gathered together for mutual encouragement and for the witness of Scriptural truth to others! The truths that the coming guest teachers offered to the audience, literally had an effect of the bomb explosion. Vigorous presentations by Drs. William Weinrich, Arthur Just, Kurt

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SLMS financial report

By Elizabeth A. Meyer
SLMS Secretary/Treasurer
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As treasurer of the Siberian Lutheran Mission Society, I continue to manage the financial affairs of the SLMS. We have received donations from congregations as well as individuals. Currently, we disburse \$900 each month to the Rev. Vsevolod Lytkin in Novosibirsk, who supports three congregations with this allotment. In addition, \$300 per month is dedicated to the Rev. Olav Panchu in Saratow, a historical center of Lutheranism in Russia. Although he is not in Siberia, the Rev. Panchu is a graduate of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

The August bank balance was \$20,920.91. Of that amount, \$13,597.82 was transferred from the account managed by Advent Lutheran Church during the Rev. John Fiene's tenure as president of the SLMS. We expect to disburse allocations soon to the various congregations in Siberia as they prepare to face the challenge of continuing service during the winter months.

A list of donors will be published in the next edition of the newsletter. All donations are used to support pastors, missions and individual congregations throughout Siberia. A report on specific expenditures of the SLMS is available from the SLMS secretary/treasurer upon request. All business operations of the SLMS are conducted entirely by volunteers.

The newsletter is financed and printed through designated private funds at Redeemer Lutheran Church of Marshalltown, Iowa. Donations are tax deductible. Legal questions pertaining to the operations of the SLMS may be directed to the SLMS Board of Directors. ✕



Over 85 attended the summer seminar in Altai

Seminars address needs of attendees continued from page 4

Marquart, Tim Quill and Rev. Charles Hogg opened many people's eyes to the truths of God's Word and the Lutheran Confessions.

The second seminar in Novosibirsk held in July 1997 was also special. It probably had the largest group of participants ever gathered for a seminar in one place – about 120 people. During this seminar the first building of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Novosibirsk was formally consecrated by Dr. Dean Wenthe, president of Concordia Theological Seminary.



Professors answer questions following a lecture. Participants at the seminars are encouraged to ask questions and learn Lutheran theology.

Since then the seminars have taken on a function of also attracting capable young men to the seminary. Another seminar was organized that summer in Ekaterinburg in the Ural region. Since then summer seminars were no longer limited to Novosibirsk.

Beginning from 1998 the seminars began to be called "traditional." They were conducted every July and the number of seminar locations grew from year to year. This summer there were as many as five seminars organized in Ekaterinburg, Altai, Khakassia, Chita, and Omsk.

Over the years our seminar presenters have included professors from the Fort Wayne and St. Louis seminaries such as William Weinrich, Arthur Just, David Scaer, Kurt Marquart, Ronald Feuerhahn, Larry Rast, Horrace Hummel and parish pastors such as John Feine, Scott Bruzek, and many others. Dr. Quill was at most of the seminars. During the last years the regular teachers at the summer seminars were Rev. Alan Ludwig, professor of the Novosibirsk seminary, and Dr. Charles Evanson, professor of Klaipeda University in Lithuania.

The topics were chosen specially each year based on the needs of the audience. Different themes are usually chosen for every summer. At the seminars we want to present the Lutheran theology as fully as possible. Lectures are given on the Bible, doctrine,

history, etc. Some examples of the lectures given at the summer seminars include Genesis, Psalms, Matthew as Catechesis, Mark, Luke, John, Liturgy, Lutheran Confessions, Law and Gospel, Sacraments, Cults, Early Church History, Reformation, Lutheran Church Today, etc.

We try to target the two audiences: newcomers who do not know much about the faith and the older church members who want to grow in their understanding of the Gospel. Of course, there are changes from one place to another as the audiences are different. For example, there are always people coming from the other Protestant groups at the Ekaterinburg seminar. Many deaf people from the Chita congregation are present at the seminar there. We had many children and teenagers attend the seminar in Sayanogorsk in Khakassia this summer.

Other crucial aspects of Summer Seminars include daily Matins and Vespers and engagement of the local pastors as they answer the questions that people might have concerning the Lutheran doctrine and practice.

Every seminar yields some fruit. Every year we have new people joining the Lutheran church as a result of the seminars. For example, several people were confirmed in July in the parish in Ekaterinburg following the seminar there. We hope to continue summer seminars in the future and to continue to use them as a powerful missionary and catechetical tool for the building the Body of Christ in Siberia. ✠

Editor's note: The SLMS expresses its gratitude to the Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation for its generous donation and to the LCMS Board for Mission Services for making these summer seminars possible. We also thank President Dean Wenthe at Concordia Theological Seminary - Fort Wayne, Ind., and the CTS Russian Project for providing professors to lecture at the seminars. Appreciation is given to the faithful people of the Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church and their continued support for these summer seminars.



Many teens attended the Youth Camp held during the seminars in Khakassia

Seminars show unity of Church

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When I had read the whole Bible, I understood practically nothing. A lot of questions came up, which they were not always able to answer.

At that time my brother was a student at Novosibirsk State University and a member of the Lutheran church where the Rev. Vsevolod Lytkin was pastor. My brother had brought home Lutheran books, and I was reading them to find answers to my questions. But in reality I was even more confused.

At the end of 1997 our family moved to Novosibirsk. The Lutheran church was near my house, and I sometimes went there on Sundays. I wanted to understand how the faith of the Lutheran church differed from that of other denominations. Also, I wanted to understand what I myself believed. But I didn't want to bother the priests all the time with my "foolish questions." Therefore, when in 1998 I was invited to the summer theological seminars, I gladly agreed.

The lectures of Dr. Ronald Feuerhahn on the history of the church and of the Rev. John Fiene on Lutheran doctrine helped me to understand many things. Before this, at the Protestant church in Tomsk, I had heard only law, but now I was hearing the Gospel. I had only heard only about what I should be and do. Of course, there were also some other lectures that helped me to see the Gospel in the life of the Church and of people.

I liked the fact that at the lectures I received answers to almost all of my questions. I was very surprised that I was not the only one to have "foolish questions." There were a lot of people like me who had come here for the first time. The atmosphere of the seminars and acquaintance with new people helped me to learn better about relationships in the Church as well as the Church's teaching.

I remember how the lectures of Prof. Horrace Hummel on "Christ in the Old Testament" strongly changed my attitude toward the Old Testament, because before I had been taught that it is not very important. I could not understand how it relates to us as Christians. All of this was explained in an understandable way.

Participants have the opportunity to take part in daily Matins and Vespers as well as in the divine liturgy. The lectures on liturgy, given by Dr. Timothy Quill, helped many people, including me, to understand what goes on there. Therefore, participation in the liturgy was just as important and interesting as listening to the lectures.

This year I participated in the theological seminars for the fifth time. During these five years a number of participants have grown a lot. People have stopped being afraid to invite unchurched friends. Now the seminars are organized in such a way that people at all levels of theological knowledge can listen to the lectures. Now professors try to present serious and profound material for more experienced Christians, so that they will increase their knowledge and grow in the faith, not staying at the same level as before.

Of course, I have not mentioned many professors who have come for the summer theological seminars, but I would like to acknowledge the hard work of all of them and to thank them for it.

At the seminars you can actually sense the unity of the Church. For four or five days we live in one building, eat together, pray together and participate in the divine services. Plus we have teachers from other countries, who help us to learn about other cultures. It is always interesting to hear pastors tell about their parishes in America.



Participants at Youth Camp in Khakassia

There are many things I could tell about each seminar individually. Every year I come to the seminars and receive new knowledge, new impressions. God, by a wonderful miracle, has brought me to the Lutheran church, whose doctrine corresponds to Holy Scripture and ancient tradition.

I am glad that we have established such a tradition of conducting summer seminars. We need to keep learning about God and study Scripture. I think it is impossible to remain Christian without aspiring to understand and study the Bible. Please, include the Siberian Lutheran Church in your prayers. ✠

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