

Peace to you, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church is moving to Europe. Until now the parishes and missions of our Church were located only in Asia (as you know, the largest part of Russian territory is in Asia).

While our Church eventually intends to form a parish in Moscow as this city draws a number of our members who relocated there from Siberia, now she is starting a new mission in Beloretsk (Russian Republic of Bashkortostan). That allows us to state that SELC has crossed the border of Asia and reached into Europe. [See: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beloretsk>]

The mission in Beloretsk would not have been possible without missionary zeal of both Rev. Sergei Glushkov and



Rev. Vladislav Ivanov who first traveled there a year ago. And recently once again the pastors Sergei Glushkov and Vladislav Ivanov, this time accompanied by the Rector of the Lutheran Theological Seminary Alexei Streltsov and Dr Timothy Quill from Concordia Theological Seminary (Fort Wayne, Indiana) came to Beloretsk.

Since the travelers crossed the border of Europe and Asia in about halfway between Chelyabinsk and Beloretsk, this new mission may rightly be called the first European congregation of the Siberian Church.

Bashkortostan is a place with a strong Muslim presence: traditionally Bashkir people who are closely related to the Tatars are Muslim. Passing through the local villages there you normally see a mosque there and not a Russian Orthodox church building like in most other regions of Russia.

There is a family of our parishioners in Beloretsk who are currently assigned to the Holy Spirit parish in Chelyabinsk. But travel to Chelyabinsk is long and uncomfortable, so Veronica, the first among those to come to the Lutheran faith in Beloretsk, is dreaming of the time, when a Lutheran congregation will be established in her town.

A meeting with people was held in the building of the local Museum of Arts. Among the people who came there was a genuine interest to what the speakers Dr Timothy Quill and Rev Alexei Streltsov had to say. There were many questions, which also helped to speak about the issues that were really important for the local people. Some questions were related to Islam. Few people had no previous religious background: most were members of or had contact with different groups or sects, both Christian and non-Christian. And so their questions mostly went like: "What do you Lutherans think about the infant baptism," "How do you believe in the last times," and so on. In a place like this it is obvious that the need for a Church that would be serious and liturgical and yet would preach the clear unadulterated Gospel is truly great. Sometimes people struggle how to formulate this need in precise words, but it is really there.

Our Siberian Church does not have any global "political" ambitions to expand her territory of influence. Church serves her parishioners where they find themselves. But it is important for the Church to preach

and proclaim the saving Gospel to all people. And there is great joy when the Gospel message reaches people's hearts in new locations and brings to them the deliverance from sin, death and the devil.

Our nearest plans include offering more or less regular courses on the Bible and Lutheran Catechism for people in Beloretsk. Veronica is the key local person in organizing these meetings and inviting her friends and other people to come there. This meeting would not have been possible without her input. She knows already what it means to be a confessing Christian, as she recently lost her job of sanitary inspector for not letting the spoiled meat enter the local grocery market; she refused to take bribes from dishonest market vendors and just followed her duty.



Veronica

At present time the few local SELC members who are in Beloretsk are quite struggling financially (but they go out of their way to facilitate continuation of these meetings). Thus, our mission plans in Beloretsk at this time largely depend of our friends' support of this new program. In particular, fuel cost (with Russian geographical scale the sheer distance is always a factor) and rental time in the museum for the future meetings need to be covered.

(Materials from the Lutheran Theological Seminary web-site, www.lts.ru, were used in preparation of this newsletter.)

Please pray for the missionary work of the Siberian Lutherans.

“Faith and Hope”

Please see the attached photos.



Dr. Tim Quill teaching



Father Vladislav Ivanov



Father Sergei Glushkov and parishioners