

# Daniel S. Johnson

## – Catechist to Siberia & Baltics

ὁ πιστεύσας καὶ βαπτισθεὶς σωθήσεται

Garbė Dievui aukštybėse

Χριστός Βοσπρεσ!

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For more information on the ministry of the Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELC) you may take a look at the Siberian Lutheran Mission Society (SLMS) website where newsletters are available for download and videos may be viewed: [www.siberianlutheranmissions.com](http://www.siberianlutheranmissions.com)

Church officials from the Lithuanian, Latvian and Siberian Lutheran churches frequently visit the United States. If you wish to invite one of these Church officials to visit your congregation, please contact me at: [Daniel.johnson@lcmsintl.org](mailto:Daniel.johnson@lcmsintl.org)

To be added to or removed from this mailing list, send an email message to [Daniel.Johnson@lcmsintl.org](mailto:Daniel.Johnson@lcmsintl.org) with the word ADD or REMOVE in the subject line.

### Catechist to serve Siberia and Baltic Churches

Many people, when they hear that I am going to Siberia to serve as a catechist ask, "What great crime did you commit that you are being sent to Siberia?" Well maybe my "crime" was answering the phone back in 1999 when Dr. Timothy Quill [Director of the Russian Project at Concordia Theological Seminary in Ft. Wayne, Indiana], called me. He wanted me to teach at the new Biblical School in Siberia. The seminary in Novosibirsk, which had been established in 1997, was starting a "feeder school" similar to the LCMS's university system. This Biblical School's purpose is to provide theological education and advanced catechesis to church leaders, laity and candidates for seminary education. The school needed teachers and pastors to lecture on various theological, catechetical and biblical topics.

In February 2000, I traveled to Siberia for the first time. That was to be my first of many visits over the next twelve years. It was those visits to Siberia, which would prepare me for a full-time call, through the Office of International Mission.

The LCMS Office of International Mission (OIM) wants me to take my 22 years of pastoral experience and work with the Siberian and Baltic bishops as a catechist to their pastors. After serving as senior pastor at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Marshalltown, Iowa for the past 19 years, I would be remiss if I failed to thank my former congregation for permitting the many teaching sabbaticals over the years.

The challenges in the Baltics and Siberia are very similar, yet unique. Lutherans first appeared in Russia and in the Baltics in the late 1500s. Under the Russian Empire of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Lutheranism flourished. Lutherans were respected and welcomed. By 1900 Lutheranism had grown to be the second largest Christian confession in the territories of the present Russian Federation. The Russian Orthodox Church, alone, possessed a larger baptized membership. Only the Russian Orthodox and Lutheran churches received official recognition by the Russian government. Neither the Roman Catholic nor Baptist churches received such recognition.



**Amy and I visiting a parishioner's home in the city of Tuim in south central Siberia**





### Prayer Requests, Praises, and Thanks

We ask you to pray for Amy and me as we prepare to receive a deployment date to Frankfurt, Germany. We pray for a safe and smooth transition.

We pray for Pastor Pavel Zayakin in Abakan in the Khakassia Region of Siberia. Health problems have necessitated additional surgery. Nina, the seminary nurse, must care for her aging mother. Her mother is in need of a surgery to improve her health. She is very poor and has no health insurance. She must pay the hospital and doctors prior to surgery and medical care.

Pray for the Siberian and Baltic pastors as they serve multiple parishes and must travel constantly. Travel during the winter is often difficult and dangerous.

There are many opportunities to serve as short-term or career missionaries. Check out the current list and download an application at [www.lcms.org/service](http://www.lcms.org/service). Click on "Service Opportunities."

Scattered across the southern Siberian trade route, from the Urals to the Pacific Ocean, Lutheran churches could be found. Lutherans had also settled in the Volga region of western Russia as well as in the prominent cities of Petersburg and Moscow. Many prominent Russians were Lutheran. Catherine the Great was a Lutheran, as were many military and naval officers, academics, craftsmen, musicians and authors. The Empress, Tzariza Elizaveta, wife of Nicholas II (who was executed by the Bolsheviks in Ekaterinberg in 1918) was Lutheran. She was the former princess of Hesse.

In 1917 the Bolsheviks came to power in the bloody and politically motivated October Revolution. This changed everything for the Lutherans in Russia. During the purge of the late 1930s, Stalin sought to use the Lutheran Church as a means to "control" the people. The Russian Orthodox capitulated to the Soviets. The Lutherans did not. They responded, as the confessionalists they are. They said, "This we believe teach and confess," quoting from the Book of Concord. The Lutherans knew that to compromise with the Soviets was tantamount to abandoning the Gospel. They refused to cooperate with the Bolsheviks. Stalin, therefore, marked the Lutheran Church for extinction. Every Lutheran pastor was executed and every Church in Siberia was torn down. Many church members were sent to Stalin's "death camps." The number of Lutherans put to death by Stalin from 1930 until 1953 is impossible to determine. However, some researchers have estimated the number to be as great as a million, or even more.



Pastor Zayakin holds new parishioner at Tuim congregation

Today, the Lutheran Church is showing resurgence. However, the clergy roster is filled with first generation clergy. There are no "senior clergy" to provide direction and catechesis to the young pastors. This is where I come in. Bishop Lytkin and the Baltic bishops have asked the LCMS to supply experienced clergy to help catechize their clergy. Professor Alan Ludwig is assigned to teach at the seminary in Novosibirsk, Siberia. Dr. Charles Evanson is assigned as a theological educator to the Baltic Churches. I will work with both of these men as I visit the congregations and provide catechesis to the pastors and church leaders now serving in the Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELC) throughout Siberia and in the Baltic Churches, of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Belarus. ☒



The Peace of the Lord be with you!

Rev. Daniel S. Johnson

Catechist to Siberia and the Baltic Churches



To support my work financially, you may send a tax-deductible gift to:

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Make checks payable to "The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod." Write "Support of Rev. Daniel S. Johnson" on the memo line. Gifts can also be given securely online through the LCMS website, on my online giving page at [www.lcms.org/Johnson](http://www.lcms.org/Johnson).