

Daniel S. Johnson

- Catechist to Siberia & Baltic Churches

Garbė Dievui aukštybėse

ὁ πιστεύσας καὶ βαπτισθεὶς σωθήσεται

Χριστός Βοσκέρε!

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SELC summer seminars continue

This year marked the 18th year of the summer seminars of the Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELC). In July 1996, Concordia Theological Seminary -- Russian Project (CTS-RP) hosted the first seminars at Berdsk (a southern suburb of Novosibirsk). Under the invitation of the young Lutheran church in Akademgorodok (the academic city the south suburbs of Novosibirsk), professors from CTS traveled to Siberia to deliver a series of theological lectures. At this first seminar, lectures were given on various theological topics. The purpose was to meet the



in

interest of many Siberians who were learning about Lutheran theology. They had had many insightful and thoughtful questions. The study of theology was important to them. To them, the study of Lutheran theology revealed the answer to the question of life. A whole new world and way of thinking had opened up before their eyes.

Timothy Quill (director of the Russian Project) organized the 1996, two-week-long, seminars with several professors from the Ft. Wayne and St. Catharine's seminary. (Present as guest lecturers were Timothy Quill,

Arthur Just, Kurt Marquart, William Weinrich and

Charles Hogg). Approximately 70 people attended the first lectures. The event was such a success that subsequent seminars were organized. These theological seminars quickly became very popular and important to the Siberian Lutherans. Families would plan their entire holiday schedule to be able to attend the seminars. **[See the documentary video archived on the SLMS website titled, "The Beginning": <http://siberianlutheranmissions.com/slms-resources-for-you/video/selc-the-beginning/>]**

In July 1997, a seminary building was dedicated in conjunction with the second series of seminars. Dean Wenthe (president of CTS) conducted the dedication service and additional professors and dignitaries from the LCMS attended this event. In addition to the lecturers who returned from the previous year, David Scaer and Lawrence Burgdorf were also present to observe and participate in the seminars. The success and popularity of the summer seminars motivated the organizers to "take their show on the road." Instead of paying to bring people from all parts of Siberia to Novosibirsk, it was decided to have several smaller seminars in 3-4 different locations.

Though the numbers at each location were smaller, the total number of people attending doubled and tripled. In subsequent years a lodge, hotel or resort was often rented and people were invited to come to the seminars for 4-5 days and listen to lectures, worship, socialize and receive recreation. The participants were also encouraged to invite guests to learn more about Lutheran doctrine and practice. The participants were **continued on next page**



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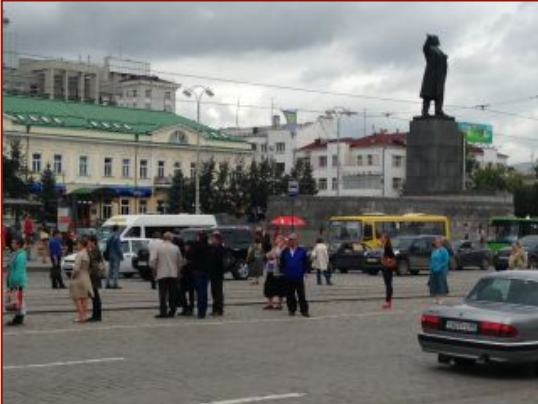




Prayer Requests, Praises, and Thanks

Many Siberian pastors serve multiple congregation parishes. Pray for safe travel as these dedicated clergy travel to provide care for their parishioners. Also, pray for the laity as they travel to attend liturgy.

concurring and then invited my children to come with me to see “the wild east, called Siberia.” My daughter, Rachel, had just graduated from high school and had taken 5 years of Russian language classes as part of a U.S. State Department grant to the Marshalltown (IA) Community High School. My son, Luke, was 3 years younger and came along to “keep an eye on his older sister.” For 3 ½ weeks we traveled Siberia. I lectured on the Gospel of Mark and we experienced a culture much different from our own -- but a church very similar to our own. [See the September 2003 Siberian



is a healthy church. The SELC believes in the importance of consistently catechizing (or teaching) the church. The summer seminar is one of the means by which this is accomplished. The seminary also conducts monthly theological seminars throughout the church during the winter months. These are usually held on a Saturday or Sunday. In November the seminary holds an annual symposia in which guests and seminary professors are invited to deliver papers on various topics of interest to the church. This is due to the Church’s belief in the ancient Latin phrase: *Lex orandi, lex credendi.* (Loosely translated: *The law of praying [is] the law of believing.*) ✘ DSJ

able to meet fellow Lutherans from America and other Siberian cities, ask questions of personal and theological natures, discuss topics of importance and expand their catechetical understanding.

The Siberian Lutherans were given opportunity to make new friendships and strengthen their personal and spiritual awareness of the reality of the universal church. The seminars have changed and adapted over the years according to available funding and demographic needs, but the purpose has always remained – to catechize the church and instill an understanding and perspective of the mission of the church universal.

Every year, the Siberians sought to invite one or two LCMS pastors or professors to speak on a topic of mutual interest.

Translators would be provided and these American Lutherans, in turn, would experience Siberian hospitality. The list of lecturers include but are not limited to: Frank Frye, Robert Wurst, Brian Saunders, Scott Bruzek, Larry Beane, John Dreyer, Peter Scaer, Bob Dobratz, Albert Collver, Randal Golter, David Mommens, Derek Roberts, Karl Rockrohr, Scott Stiggemeyer, Marcus Nelson, Alan Ludwig, Scott Murray, Barbara Resch, Charles Evanson. Detlev Schulz, Horace Hummel, Ronald Feuerhahn and others.



My first visit to the summer seminars was in 2003. Timothy Quill had encouraged me to return to Siberia (I had first visited Siberia in January/February 2000 to teach at the biblical school) and suggested I visit the summer seminars. Vsevolod Lytkin,

Lutheran Mission Society (SLMS) newsletter:

<http://siberianlutheranmissions.com> for an article written by Rachel following her experiences at the 2003 summer seminars].

This year Rev. Alexey Streltsov and I traveled around Siberia to the various churches to provide seminars. Rev. Streltsov spoke on, “Luther’s ethic on family and marriage.” I spoke on, “Holy Absolution as the face of Lutheran Spirituality.” The cities we visited included: Novosibirsk, Tomsk, Chits, Edinenia, Yasnay, Tuim, Ekaterinberg, Chelyabinsk, and Beloretsk. The groups who gathered to hear the lectures varied from 5-6 people in some remote villages, to over 20 in the larger congregations. All in all, the lectures continue to emphasize the importance of catechetical instruction and the value Lutherans place on the incarnational and sacramental focus of liturgical prayer.

The SELC knows and understands the phrase: *A well-catechized church*



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