



Как слышать без проповедующего?

How Shall They Hear ...?

Siberia Letter of Rev. Alan Ludwig

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Twenty Years

Has it really been twenty years that I've been in Siberia, weathering the winters and sharing in the work of the Lord in this place? Where has the time flown? These dark, cold winter days are a good time to reflect on the past, to rejoice in the present and to look to the future.



The Past

Lutheran Theological Seminary in Novosibirsk began its operations in the fall of 1997. At that time it was an extension of the Russian Project of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, which was providing theological education to Russian Lutherans. They decided that it would be more efficient and cost-effective to teach theology to Russians in Russia rather than bring them all to the States to study.

The beginnings were humble. Classes met in a small apartment. There was one instructor, Rev. Dr. Horace Hummel. For ten weeks he taught Hebrew and other courses. By now the seminary had its own small building, which the Russians called "the cottage." I was scheduled to be the second instructor, following Dr. Hummel, continuing where he left off.

On January 1, 1998, Patricia and I boarded the first plane of several and began the long trip halfway around the world to Novosibirsk, Russia. My dual parish had graciously given me a ten-week leave of absence to



teach the second section of Hebrew and other courses in this new seminary. We knew nothing of the place, nothing of the language and customs. While I can't recall now exactly what I expected, it might have been something like log buildings and bears. The reality was far from this! We returned from that trip in March of the same year, having spent ten weeks in a large, modern city during the coldest winter months. We had adventures and memories to last a lifetime, and we had no clue then that this short stay would lead to other things.



Now I have been engaged in this work for twenty years. Over that time the country has changed significantly, moving from the wild "Yeltsin years" to the stability the country now enjoys under Putin. Our seminary has undergone many changes as well. We have turned out well-equipped pastors and deacons, plus a few really fine scholars.



The Present

Over these twenty years our faculty has grown to four full-time teachers and several part-time instructors, all native Russians. Most of these have gone through our own seminary program. Some have had additional training in Fort Wayne, as well as holding advanced degrees from Russian institutions. Unlike so many Lutheran



seminaries in the world, we have grown beyond needing a constant stream of teachers and theologians from America to feed us theologically. Except in the area of finances, the seminary has become self-sustaining. Though we are small, we are effective, and always looking for ways to improve our outreach.

It's a constant joy to bring to new students the depths of the riches of God's salvation in Jesus Christ. I never tire of this. Yet perhaps it's an even greater joy to me to hear my "children" echo in their preaching and



teaching what they learned as students. It is no exaggeration to say that Lutheran Theological Seminary in Novosibirsk has become a beacon of solid Lutheran doctrine in this part of the world. Our light is shining forth to other nations and even other continents. I'm thankful to our gracious God for allow-



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"Declare his glory among the nations"

Ps 96:3



ing me to be a part of all this. I'm also confident that the work here, solidly founded upon the Rock of Christ, will continue in a God-pleasing manner after my departure. When that time comes, I will leave behind many lectures, articles, sermons and other writings, which I pray will be of lasting benefit.

Church does receive some preference. How this will develop in the future is difficult to say. In the foreseeable future, opportunities for Lutherans in this country seem practically unlimited.

that the theology we confess will influence Russian Orthodoxy. Orthodoxy has very deep-rooted traditions and is not easily swayed. Yet some traditions are older than others. The most ancient ones harmonize with the Lutheran confession of faith. It is my hope that we can pluck these venerable strings with the music of our clear theology of who Christ is and what Has done, which was taught so beautifully by the ancient church fathers and church councils.

I am thankful to you for your interest, for your prayers and for your financial support.

TEACHING PASTORS



The Future

Right now the future for Christianity in Russia looks bright—to my eye, much brighter than in the West. The "magnetic pole" of Christianity is Russian Orthodoxy, which has shaped so much of Russian culture and thought. While there is no official state church in Russia, the Orthodox

Despite the relative openness to Christianity here, society is essentially secular. There are many unchurched people, many of whom want no part of Orthodoxy. The Lutheran faith has a long and venerable history, having spread to Russia already in the very days of the Reformation. While Lutheranism is unlikely to become the dominant Christian confession in Russia, the Lutheran churches are continually growing and attracting new converts. So far the need for faithful servants of the Word is greater than what we can supply. This work remains vital. Of all Christian confessions, the Lutheran Church most clearly declares that salvation is not by our own works, but by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. What we are powerless to do for ourselves, Christ has accomplished for us. This Gospel of God's limitless grace centered in the cross of Christ must continue to be heard in Russia and everywhere.



You may not realize how vital you are to the mission here. May our gracious God bless our work together.

Let us pray to the Lord

- ✝ For all seminarians,
- ✝ for seminary instructors,
- ✝ for all bishops and clergy,
- ✝ for the Russian people,
- ✝ for the prospering of the Gospel,

Lord, have mercy.

My goal, besides producing able preachers of the Gospel who can bring Christ to those outside the faith, is to strengthen the church here. It is also my hope that we can leave a mark on other Lutheran churches in Russia and beyond. Right now, for example, we have three students from the Lutheran Church of Ingria. A number of our graduates serve in other Lutheran churches in various countries. It is my wild dream also



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