

Daniel S. Johnson

- Catechist to Siberia & Baltic Churches

Garbė Dievui aukštybėse

ὁ πιστεύσας καὶ βαπτισθεὶς σωθήσεται

Χριστος Воскрес!

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Catechist travels to Kyrgyzstan

On October 14-18, I traveled to Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan to lecture at the catechetical school of the Lutheran Church in Kyrgyzstan. The Lutheran Church was present in Kyrgyzstan as early as the mid-1700s, under the Lutheran Church of the Russian Empire. Lutherans had settled in Russia in the 18th and 19th centuries under an invitation of the Tsar. Many of these Lutherans settled in the Central Asian territories of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

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:

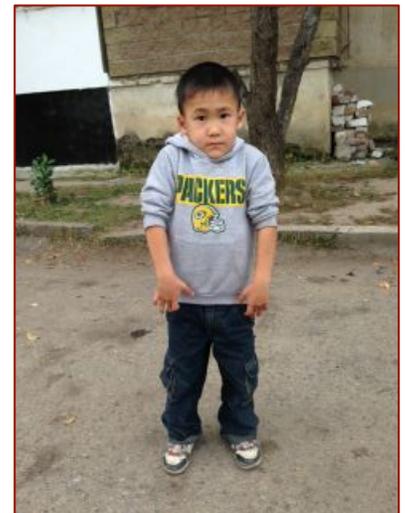
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Under Soviet atheism in the 20th century, the Lutheran Church,



Participants at seminars in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

however, was marked for extinction. In an attempt to exterminate Lutherans, many ethnic German and Baltic Lutherans living in Soviet-occupied territories, were sent to concentration camps in Central Asia. Every Lutheran church was closed and many buildings were destroyed, clergy executed and prohibitions against worshipping as Lutherans strictly enforced. As a result, Lutheranism disappeared from



This young boy in a Kyrgyz village shows off his NFL loyalties.

Kyrgyzstan. It was not until after the collapse of the Soviet Union when Lutheranism returned to the region. Shortly after the borders opened to western travel, The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LCMS) sent missionaries to restore Lutheranism to Kyrgyzstan. The first LCMS missionaries catechized converts and established over 20 congregations.

After an 11-year presence, the missionaries left. The task of further catechesis to the church has been given to LCMS theological educators and partner churches in the area. Dr. Gennadij Khonin (a pastor in Kazakhstan), Rev. Alexey Streltsov (rector of Lutheran Theological Seminary in Novosibirsk, Siberia) and I were sent to conduct lectures on the topic of pastoral theology.

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Rev. Alexey Streltsov (Novosibirsk, Siberia) in conversation with Rev. Mansur Kurmanbakeev (Bishkek)

Though these young Kyrgyz pastors had received an adequate education to begin evangelizing their communities and leading liturgy, they still require extensive training in pastoral theology. For the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kyrgyzstan to become an independent Lutheran church body, the clergy must be thoroughly catechized in all aspects of theology. There are two clergy who have received a formal seminary education, serving congregations in the Kyrgyzstan Lutheran church. Both of these men received their seminary education at the Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELC) Seminary in Novosibirsk. Due to the quality seminary education given by their Siberian neighbors, they are uniquely positioned to provide their fellow pastors with an academic theological education. They conduct weekly catechetical classes for the five clergy. Dr. Khonin, Rev. Streltsov and I were invited to provide lectures to supplement the catechesis these two men had been providing. I gave a series of lectures on a pastoral approach to preaching and catechizing the Ten Commandments. Dr. Khonin gave lectures on the history and

...By the mystery of Your holy incarnation; by Your holy nativity; By Your baptism, fasting, and temptation ...Help us good Lord. -- The Litany

purpose of Luther's Catechisms. Rev. Streltsov spoke on the theology of Paul's epistle to the Romans.

Prayer Requests, Praises, and Thanks

Pray for the spiritual health and maturity of our partner churches throughout the world.

Pray for the faith and perseverance of the Kyrgyz Lutheran clergy and laity as they face an increasingly hostile culture.

Pray for the missionaries who serve the church in difficult conditions.

The Lutheran Church in Kyrgyzstan is a young church in the midst of a 75 percent Muslim culture. State laws have been recently passed which make it increasingly difficult to survive as a confessing Lutheran. Intimidation and extensive legal paperwork frequently attempt to undermine the growth of Lutheranism. The church has a congregation in Bishkek and over 20 congregations in the



Bishop Kenjebek hosted us for an evening of conversation and feasting. L to r: Alexey Streltsov, Daniel Johnson, Gennadij Khonin, Bp. Kenjebek, Mrs. Kenjebek.

surrounding villages. Continue to pray for the continuing catechesis, which is vital to a growing church body. A well-catechized clergy is necessary as they take what they learn in our lectures to their parishioners throughout Kyrgyzstan. ✠ DSJ



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