



THE SIBERIAN LUTHERAN MISSION SOCIETY



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Roman Kislov – a ministry to the deaf

interview by: **Natasha Sheludakova**
translated by: **Marina Gaskova**

“From the year 1993 I attended Pentecostal meetings,” says Roman Kislov. “They didn’t have interpreters for the deaf at that time, and I didn’t understand anything. But the preacher was mentioning all kinds of miracles as a result of which lame people were given the ability to walk, the blind to see, and the deaf to hear. And I needed very much to have the ability to hear! I believed all that, and it was the reason why I attended that place. One woman asked the preacher for me: ‘Please, pray for his ability to hear’. The preacher squeezed my ears so hard (and it hurt me so badly!), and started praying. Then he drew his hands back and asked me, how I felt. I didn’t feel any better. He started squeezing my ears again (I was still able to stand this pain). And he started praying again. Then his assistant came, and they started ‘praying through my ears.’ Other people stood around and watched. He took his hands off and asked, ‘Well, how are you now?’ Nothing had changed for me. He told me, ‘Go aside and wait, please.’”



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Hearing the Word–Tatiana’s story

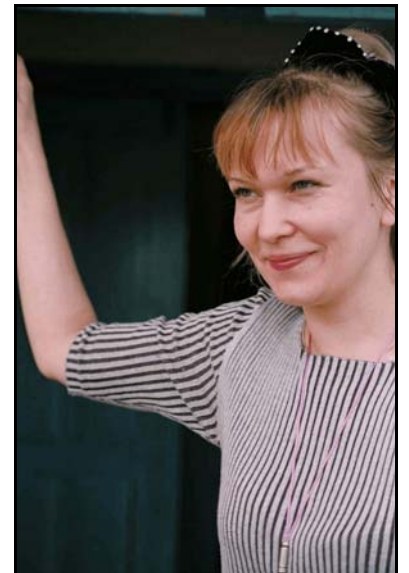
by **Tatiana Dovgan**
translated by **Olga Netaeva**

Greetings, dear friends! I would like to tell about my life and my way to God. I’m 34-years-old; I have a husband and two daughters. I grew up in an ordinary Soviet family. It was not common to believe in God during the days of communism in our country and it was considered bad to talk about God. It used to be the same way in my family. No one in my family believed in God and we didn’t talk about religion.

My father died when I was 18, my older sister got married, and became pregnant. I had entered college. I had received the car in the inheritance from my father, so I also went to a driving school to get my driver’s license. I got married and continued my studies at college. At that time I wasn’t thinking about God. I knew that Church existed, but I wasn’t interested in it and even my father’s death didn’t bring me to the Church.

I had a good life with my husband and we have a daughter, Irina. But after our daughter’s birth I noticed my husband’s indifference toward her. He needed just me. I couldn’t understand this, because I grew up in a family with a father who gave a lot of attention and love to his daughters. Because of this, my attitude to my husband become worse. If I believed in God at that time, I would probably have prayed to Him and asked Him to save my family, asked Him to help my

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First deaf man in Russia ordained as deacon

by Robert Wurst



Pr. Wurst visits the deaf

This summer, I was privileged to go to Siberia for the annual Summer Seminars. While I was there, it was time for Roman Kislov, a deaf man, to be ordained as a deacon in the Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church. To my

surprise, Bishop Vsevolod Lytkin asked me to participate in Roman's ordination. I accepted his invitation with joy.

The ordination was to occur at the end of the summer seminar week. Though I can understand very little Russian Sign Language, I could tell that the congregation, especially the deaf people, at Chita was very excited. At the end of the week, Roman was seated before the bishop and pastors for his examination. The examination of a candidate for the Office of the Holy Ministry is a very serious thing. Roman did very well. Though he is deaf, Roman impressed everyone with his knowledge of the Holy Scriptures.

Friday evening, after the examinations were finished, we rehearsed the ordination ceremony. For two hours, we practiced how we would process, where we would stand, and what we would do. The Siberian Lutherans are deliberate and careful about the Christian faith. This was very encouraging to me to witness.

On Sunday, we again rehearsed everything at the Chita congregation. Deacon Igor Kizyaev was nervous. He was being consecrated as a pastor that same day. We busied ourselves with fitting the vestments. We made sure that we had the right stoles and crucifixes. I was assigned the task of processing Roman's new deacon stole into the church. I was also asked to read a verse of the Holy Scriptures over him during the ordination.

**THIS IS A MIRACLE OF GOD THAT
THE DEAF CAN NOW RECEIVE THE
WORD IN THEIR OWN LANGUAGE.**

It was a beautiful and holy day. As you might expect, with all that intense preparation, things were completed in good order. The church was packed with the faithful from Chita and the village of Edinenie. Bishop Lytkin, Pastors Ivolga and Streltsov, Deacon Kizyaev, Subdeacon Yuri, Pastor Johnson, and I all participated with joy on that solemn and wonderful day in June 2007.

It was also an historic day. The ordination of a deaf man into the Holy Ministry had never occurred before in Russia. Bishop Lytkin told us that a deaf man had never

before been ordained in the Lutheran, Russian Orthodox or Roman Catholic churches in Russia. The ancient Apostolic Canons prohibited a deaf man from being ordained because he could not speak to the people nor hear them. Now, with the development of Sign Language, a deaf man can "speak" and "hear" with his hands and eyes.

Why is it so important that a deaf man was ordained as a deacon in the Siberian Evangelical Lutheran church? It is difficult for hearing people to understand, but deaf people "hear" through their eyes. Their language is a visual one. All the things that we understand by hearing, such as tone, inflection, etc., must be accomplished through the hands alone. Sometimes it takes quite an effort to communicate a simple concept. This does not mean that deaf people are less intelligent! That is not true. It means that the Sign Language must be adapted to the terms and ideas that we are trying to communicate.

Many times during my time in Chita, I could see that the deaf people looked to Roman for further explanation in Sign Language. It is important for the deaf people to have a deacon who can communicate with them easily



Bishop Lytkin ordains Deacon Roman Kislov

and naturally. Many times, deaf people do not hear about Jesus Christ and his forgiveness because they cannot understand speech and the written word very well. Now, with Deacon Roman Kislov working with them, they will have a called minister of the Gospel to preach to them and to teach them the truth found in God's Word. Now the deaf people will not be isolated from God's Word. This is a miracle of God that the deaf can now receive the Word in their own language.

In the future, Deacon Kislov will be instrumental in instructing people about Christ and showing them that He loves the deaf too. This effort will require patience and endurance. There is a good foundation begun in Chita for work among the deaf. They are a model for the other Lutheran churches to follow. ✕

A deaf ministry continued from page 1

"Then I started attending another place, even though I didn't understand many things there. Once I was asked, 'Are you ready to confess?' And I wondered, why did I have to do it. They answered, 'Stand out and confess! God will give you a blessing!' There were two more deaf persons with me, and we were taken out to the place for



Roman with deaf members of Chita congregation.

confession. One woman was interpreting for us. And I was standing there and still didn't understand a thing, like a blind kitten. When my turn came and hands were laid upon me, I didn't understand anything. They were praying and then told me, 'That's all. Having confessed, you became a member of the church.'

"We were taken to a room and told that we had to stop drinking vodka, playing cards and was given the list of other things it was forbidden to do. They explained to me that I had to be pure and righteous. I looked through the list. Well, that's OK not to smoke, I thought. No vodka as well; but how will that be possible if I drank alcohol. What shall I do? They asked me, 'Do you agree to these conditions?' And I looked at them back, thinking, 'Are you crazy?' Next week they told me, 'Come on, you have to be baptized.' But I had some kind of bad feeling inside. Other deaf people, who confessed together with me, were already baptized. But I was apprehensive. In the end they started calling me a coward without faith.

"I told my mother that I was attending the Pentecostal Church and she got mad at me, saying, 'Why did you join it? It's a sect! You better go to the Russian Orthodox Church. You have already been baptized in childhood! You don't need any more baptisms!' But Pentecostals were telling me in return, 'Why do you listen to what your mother and father say? You should have your own faith'. So I started having serious problems. This happened in 1994-95.

"Then an interpreter Sveta started coming (she is the

sister of the wife of my future Deacon, Igor Kizyaev. He wasn't a deacon at that time). I started feeling more comfortable, understanding at least something. But then she and her relatives stopped attending the place. And, of course, I got very disappointed. It was as if we were left without ears. Then we asked these people if they could explain to us, why they had left the Pentecostal Church.

"While listening to Igor Kizyaev, I started to understand the truth of the Lutheran faith. And I fully agreed with what he was saying: we are both saints and sinners (the Pentecostals would say that we are all saints, not sinners). Igor told us about the Eucharist, about the Body and Blood of Christ, which are given to us as a forgiveness of our sins. And when he told us about it, I started having a clear understanding of the idea. And in the Pentecostal Church I was constantly in doubt about how I was able to be saved from my sins? There a pure person comes to a pure church, but here a dirty, miserable me comes to be cleansed.

"I realized it very well. Igor was telling me about the Lutheran Church, and it was the first time I ever heard about it. But at that time there were still many things I didn't understand. Later I was also socializing with Baptists. I wanted to learn more about their teaching. It was the time of my search. But Baptists kept telling me the same things as Pentecostals.

"At that time, I realized that the foundation of the faith is given in Holy Baptism and the Eucharist. So in the year 2000 I fully agreed with the Lutheran teaching. I started attending services in the Holy Trinity parish, and it was very interesting for me. Deacon Igor Kizyaev was educating us, and I gradually started growing in my faith,

WHEN DEACON IGOR KIZYAEV TOLD ME THAT DEAF PEOPLE NEED A SPECIAL MINISTER, I WAS FRIGHTENED. IT'S SUCH A GREAT RESPONSIBILITY.

understanding the teaching of the Lutheran Church more and more.

"In 2001 I was confirmed into the Lutheran Church. Little by little I'm learning what it is to be a confessing Lutheran. I fear God very much. I was very scared to start walking the path of becoming a priest, and I am still afraid today.

"When Deacon Igor Kizyaev told me that deaf people need a special minister, I was frightened. It's such a great responsibility. I was very worried, but controlled this feeling. And I endure it now. It's a very serious and responsible task. I travel a lot in Russia. It's surprising to see that, for some reason, there are many deaf people among Baptists. They don't know anything about the Lutheran religion. But I defend the true teaching and Church, where I belong. And they don't know any deep teachings. They ask me, how I know about it. So I started explaining Greek and Jewish words, which they don't know."

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One God, one faith

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husband love our daughter same as me and the three of us would be happy. But I didn't have anyone who would show me the right way to God.

We divorced. It was very painful for both of us. My daughter and I stayed with my mother. It was a very hard time for me. I tried to work in any job, but they were not

IF I BELIEVED IN GOD AT THAT TIME, I WOULD PROBABLY HAVE PRAYED TO HIM AND ASKED HIM TO SAVE MY FAMILY... BUT I DIDN'T HAVE ANYONE WHO WOULD SHOW ME THE RIGHT WAY TO GOD.

permanent jobs. I graduated from college. There was not enough money, we ate just potatoes because we didn't have enough money. Every day my mother blamed me that I divorced but I had nothing to answer to her.

I felt very bad, because from one side my family broke up and from the other side it became impossible to continue to live with my mother. By that time I was sorry just for myself and only now I understand that it wasn't easy for my mother either. She was worried for me and my daughter and always helped us. Sometimes I didn't want go to home, and went anywhere—just not home. My life was like a piece of torn paper.

After graduation I started to work for the Police Department. Ten years had passed since my father died, but I still missed him. When I felt bad I often remembered him. I knew if he were alive I would have had a different life. But I didn't come to church and didn't pray for my father's soul and neither for myself. I wanted to have a full family, and a husband who loved me and my daughter. I was afraid that I would not be able to settle my life and didn't know what to do. One question bothered me all the time: why are some people successful but I can do nothing? And I still didn't have any thoughts about God.

One of my friends interested in Buddhism, had advised me to go to the shaman who lives 300 km from Chita. I went to the shaman to find out the cause of all of my troubles. My friend taught me how to make a "special dish" which the shaman will present as a gift to "the spirits" as he was praying about me. The "dish" contained several items on a plate. The first item was white bread. The second was cookies with butter. The third, several pieces of caramels and a few pieces of cubed sugar. My friend also said that I need to bring a bottle of vodka, but without labels. And when I take off the labels, I shouldn't scratch the bottle. And the bottle should stay in my home to be charged by "house energy." I also had to bring a bottle of milk and a bottle of tea with the milk.

Then I went to the village where the shamans live (it is called Chelutay). I've seen the line of cars; people came to the shaman from different cities. People came to the shaman with their problems, they all wanted help from him. I stayed in a line of people and when it was my turn, I went inside the shaman's house. I expected to see an old man, but he was a man about 40. I put everything on the table I brought with me and told him about all of my worries. The shaman listened to me and looked at the vodka. I said that my father died 10 years ago, but no one lights a candle in the Church according the Orthodox tradition. After that, the shaman gave me advice on what to do and prayed to "the spirits" and asked them to help me. After the ceremony we went outside and sprinkled the vodka, milk, and tea with milk on the ground and put the food in the dish under the tree. When I participated in the ceremony, the shaman spoke harshly to me. He told me that most of my problems are my own fault.

After that I went to the shaman two more times. There were always ceremonies, he prayed to "the spirits" and asked them for a resolution of my problems. Later I noticed that I started depending on the shaman—that every time I had problems I wanted his help. But I couldn't go to him very often, because it was too far away and expensive. When I was there for the last time, the shaman had his disciples ask me to come to them, too.

Then I started to think about Church and about God. Many say there is a god somewhere and there are a lot of ways to Him. Some people call it shamanism, some Buddhism, others Christianity, etc. I couldn't understand my spiritual emotions at that time, but the thought about



A "Shaman Tree" used by native Buratians to pray to "the spirits" for help. Often the worshiper will leave a cloth, money, vodka or other items as a gift to "the spirits." The location of such a "tree" is usually designated and blessed by a local Shaman.

someone who controls everything, including me, didn't leave my mind.

I worked with the wife of Rev. **Continued on page 6**

Roman ministers to deaf

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Deacon Igor Kizyaev says, "Roman became a subdeacon in 2005. I'm really happy about it; now I can share part of my responsibilities with him. For example,



Roman before ordination

when I can't teach a lesson to the deaf, I ask him to do that. About one third of our church members are deaf. But, in contrast to regular parishioners, deaf ones are more disciplined. They always attend services and lessons. They are very responsible; they are sacrificial. It's only with the help of their donations we are able to cover the rent of the building.

"Roman is quite active in the life of the parish, he also travels a lot in the country, and during his trips he often meets with deaf people from other cities; he tells them about the Lutheran faith. The level of his education and knowledge of the Lutheran teaching are very high, which gives him an opportunity to preach the way it should be done."

Svetlana Yefimova (interpreter for the deaf) said, "Unfortunately, deaf people mostly have little education. Their vocabulary is very poor, and that's why they cannot understand many things. For this reason it's very hard for them to read books. An interpreter has to explain everything in a simplified form to them. Sometimes there are words that we don't know how to translate. For example, the word 'Jew.'"

"We were sitting with the whole community of deaf, thinking out an appropriate gesture for this word, so that it would be clear to everybody. We also had to change the sermons slightly into a more simplified form. And we almost never use difficult terms and scientific words at all. Of course, we really lack education among the deaf."

...DURING HIS TRIPS HE OFTEN MEETS WITH DEAF PEOPLE FROM OTHER CITIES; HE TELLS THEM ABOUT THE LUTHERAN FAITH.

"Almost all deaf people have difficult characters. It is hard for them to grasp some things. They can 'blow up' and cause a scandal over some small unimportant things. One has to know how to manage it. A special gift is required for such a thing, and Roman has it."

Pastor Andrei Ivogla (senior pastor at Holy Trinity

parish) says, "Subdeacon Roman is an outstanding person, first of all because of his intellect. At the lessons he always asks questions, which are deep and to the point. He is always joyful and outgoing; he always smiles and pays attention to everybody. Thanks to these qualities he is treated with respect by the community, including the deaf. By the way, his girlfriend received the confirmation this Christmas, and they got engaged. It's a very important and good event in his life."

"I really hope that Roman will later become a pastor and will be able to serve to the deaf, because there are some special features and difficulties in this ministry. For example, how can a pastor hear a confession of sins from the deaf if he doesn't know the meaning of sign language? I constantly face this problem. However, people prefer not to have an interpreter nearby. It's not that they don't trust; it's just that the whole atmosphere becomes different when the third person is present at the confession. That's why there was often a situation when I would wait for a parishioner in the room for confessions, and, having come in and closed the door, a deaf person started trying to find the necessary signs and gestures so that I could understand. Actually, I mostly do understand them."

"First of all, they usually confess, using the catechism. They take the Ten Commandments and, standing nearby, read them all one after another and then reflect upon them



Deaf members of Chita at summer seminar.

and say: I have sinned here and here. They can point at a specific commandment with their hand. In addition to that, they are actually able to speak some words. Of course, these words are not so meaningful as they are among people, who are able to speak. But, nevertheless, one can understand them. Of course, they also know how to write. But so far they never do that. They somehow manage to explain things with gestures and confused articulation. Until now I have been able to understand them. Their confession, based on the Ten Commandments, helps a lot. It's clear what sin they have committed. When it comes to details, they explain them with gestures."

"In this sense, when Roman becomes a pastor, he will be able to hear the confessions of the deaf. It would be really good for the Church." ✕

Tatiana's story

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Igor Kizyaev, Ekaterina. She told me about the Triune God. Everything she was telling me, I took with all of my heart, but still didn't understand. When Ekaterina proposed I talk to Rev. Kizyaev, I agreed. I came to their house and we talked about four hours about life, faith, sin, Jesus and what He has done for me and my salvation. I understood

BUT LATER I NOTICED THAT I STARTED DEPENDING ON THE SHAMAN—THAT EVERY TIME I HAD PROBLEMS I WANTED HIS HELP. BUT I COULDN'T GO TO HIM VERY OFTEN, BECAUSE IT WAS TOO FAR AWAY AND EXPENSIVE. THEN I STARTED TO THINK ABOUT CHURCH AND ABOUT GOD.

that I shouldn't go to the shaman anymore—that what he says are lies and is a devil's network.

I went to the Orthodox Church a few times. But the word of God is most understandable in the Lutheran church. In spring of 2002, I came to the Lutheran church. I started to ask questions and receive very clear answers. Then for half of the year I participated in catechesis class. Once a week our group studied the Lutheran Creed with Father Igor. It was very interesting for me. I learned many interesting things, I understood the Creed and what is important. God strengthens my faith in Jesus Christ through the preaching of the Word and Holy Sacraments.

It was very easy for me to become a Lutheran, I was 30 when it happened. Now, when I have hard times, I pray to God and I know He will hear me and help me. I have wonderful relationships with parishioners in our congregation. We are all different people, but we all have one Father and one Church. Recently I was asked to be a member of the Congregation Council and hope to be useful for our parish.

I thank God for the life I have now and I thank people who told me about God and His ways. When I started coming for the Lutheran services, my second husband, who is Orthodox, was very suspicious of my choice. But after some time he saw that I try to be a good Christian,

and he is humbled that I'm a Lutheran and asked me to pray for him and his prejudice. Sometimes my daughters visit church when they have opportunity. And some time



Tatiana with friends at summer seminars in Chita

ago my husband came to our church and it was a big deal in my Christian life. For now, I try to come to church as often as I can and hear the word of God. It is very clear to me that I need to grow in my knowledge about Jesus and remember His presence in my life by participation in Holy Communion, for the forgiveness of my sins.

I know that this letter will be published in the SLMS bulletin and I'm very glad that I have the opportunity to share my joy in Christ with you. We are on different

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continents, with thousands of miles between us, but in spite of this, the Lord Jesus Christ has united us with Himself in Holy Baptism and the Holy Liturgy.

May God bless you, dear friends! ✠

From the Editor: The Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELC) continues to grow and be a place where the Gospel of Jesus Christ is preached and the Holy Sacraments provided for sinners seeking forgiveness and healing of body and soul. In the newsletters of [THE SIBERIAN LUTHERAN MISSION SOCIETY \(SLMS\)](#) the members of the SELC reveal their faith and hopes. They are Russians seeking an answer to challenges and problems in their lives. They are a people who have been called by Christ in the healing waters of Holy Baptism and fed by the holy precious food of His body and blood. They may speak a different language but they are all baptized in the name of the same LORD and eat and drink the same Jesus. These are a people who know the mission of the Church – a mission which begins and finds its conclusion in the Word and Sacraments properly administered. We invite you to read this newsletter with a prayer of divine grace for our Lutheran brothers and sisters in Siberia. Their challenges in a land of pagan Buddhism, shamanism, and atheism is great. Your prayers and continuing support is appreciated.

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