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After My Baptism

by Galina Shvetsova
translated by Alla Okorokova

Editor's note: This is part 2 of a 3 part story. Part 1 appeared in the **SLMS** September 2011 newsletter.

After my baptism the question of churching arose. A friend of mine and I began to go to [the Seventh-Day] Adventists. They had meetings on Saturdays, so problems with work appeared. In that church, women were allowed to preach, communion was taken from separated [individual] cups, which were filled with grape juice, and works of Helen White were studied at the meetings. I asked questions and got addled answers.

Once, my friend invited me to the Novosibirsk State University for biblical lectures on the Gospel of John. She said, that the teacher was an interesting young man, Vsevolod, who explains unintelligible fragments intelligibly and gives historical references. This way we got acquainted with our future pastor, later to become bishop, Vsevolod Lytkin. Soon we began to attend Sunday services, which were held in his apartment. Doors of that flat were open the whole week, not only on Sundays. Students, teachers, medical workers, scientists, even doctors of science were coming to Vsevolod with their questions. I was astonished by steadfastness and patience of Vsevolod's wife, Darya, who had time to take care of their children and help her husband using all her numerous talents: she played at services, sang in the choir, translated articles, kept her home in order, welcomed guests and so on, and so on, and so **continued on page 4**



Interview with Vitali Gavrilov

by Pavel Khramov

Translator's note: Last year, from the Fall of 2010, Sunday School in Tuim was in format of "Christian School of early child development." There were altogether five "students" of age from one to three. Pastor Pavel Khramov took an interview from Pastor Vitaly Gavrilov, who serves in the parish of Transfiguration of our Lord in Tuim.



Q: How did the idea of Sunday School for "under threes" appear?

A: That was idea of my wife, Anna. She worked in the kindergarten in Ekaterinburg and wanted to use that experience and skills. The "big idea" is "Christian school of early child development." But of course it's a long way to go. So, we decided to start on weekly basis, as a Sunday School. Besides those plans, we had a very concrete need — around that time in our congregation there were four babies of age from 1 to 3. By the spring of 2011 my youngest son, Semyon joined the group. First we had a VBS in summer of 2010. Then we realized that we can and need to have regular classes, not just summer VBS.

Q: What does a the normal class look like?

A: We have these classes in our apartment, as church building **continued on page 3**

The LOST. Just survival...

by Pavel Zayakin

translated by Daria Lytkina

Do we know how to survive? If, for example, we are left in the woods without a tent and a sleeping bag, with just a knife and a matchbox? Or if we find ourselves in the mountains, surrounded by rocks? Where does our survival start from, if we turn up to be in an external situation? With starting the fire, building a shelter, looking for food?



Bible study with Pr. Dmitri Dotsenko

No! Our survival should start with a prayer. We are not to let panic break through into our mind and flood it with terror. We are not to let despair weaken our hand and obediently wait for death to come. We are to find support in Him, Who is stronger than all the circumstances, and together with Him make a step towards our rescue.

Such was the unusual topic of our Christian camp this

painless but school is school, as the great General Suvorov said: "Hard in learning, easy in campaign." And the campaign was waiting for us at the end of the camp. On



Rafting with Prs. Dotsenko and Ivolda

July 26 and 27 we entered the routes, different for every squad. We moved light-handed from one point to another, tracing our way on the map, finding in each destination further instructions, and some food. We had to cook it, to make cakes out of flour, or to bake meat and fish.

But the main lesson was that we had to grasp the "golden rule of prayer": **"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."** And now we have a chilly night under the tarp, fire, supper made of what we found or got. Usual tea is replaced by herbs, usual bread is replaced by the cakes burnt in ashes, and we can bake fish in coals, wrapping it in toilet paper!

And we say a prayer, everybody already knows the "Our Father," and the warmth of the fire doesn't let to

destroy our friendship despite of the cold and rain. And in the morning, when we reached the final point of our route, we see a giant raft and two catamarans which move to us over the river like angels.

We are back home. We have survived...

Thanks to all who has been with us in that test, who taught us to survive and pray, and who financially supported this camp.

See you in 2012! ✕

NO! OUR SURVIVAL SHOULD START WITH A PRAYER. ... WE ARE NOT TO LET DESPAIR WEAKEN OUR HAND AND OBEDIENTLY WAIT FOR DEATH TO COME. WE ARE TO FIND SUPPORT IN HIM WHO IS STRONGER THAN ALL THE CIRCUMSTANCES ...

year, a camp which was named, "School of survival." More than 40 participants from Tuim, Abakan, Sayanogorsk, and Novokuznetsk came this year to our camp site "Ijus interfluve" to learn two things: how to survive and how to pray. On July 21-28 we split into three groups and comprehended the wisdom of those sciences: the "Little Worms" squad, kids from 8 to 12, and the "Taiga Robinsons", the teenagers. We also had a squad of the 2 to 7 years old, the "Kindergarten." And of course a squad of the organizers - the administrative squad.

At first, right after the opening ceremony we just listened and learned. In the morning Pastor Dmitri Dotsenko gathered us to talk about prayer, and after that, we went to the training grounds: wayfinding, extreme camping, making food in the forest, and rafting. Not everything was easy and



The "Kindergarten" squad

Editor's note: Pavel Zayakin, the director of the camp, "School of survival," is an ordained clergyman of the SELC. He has led Christian camps for children in the Khakassia Region for many years. His present camp is located in Ephremkino, Khakassia Region.

Interview

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is cold in winter time (it means from middle of October till middle of April). Classes take place on Saturdays for 3-4 hours. We start with prayer, then have a breakfast. The Bible study goes next. It rules all the activities of the day — games, paintings, singing etc. We may spend two or three Saturdays on the same topic from the Bible. After the Bible study we have games for kids to relax. Then we continue with “development activities” — development of speech, manual dexterity. Kids paint, model from clay, make cutouts, assemble puzzles etc. Then we have some relaxing time again before the musical class, where children get acquainted with different musical instruments, sing. The last part takes place outdoor. Often we finish by lunching together.



Children at local zoo

our kids to know that they are children of merciful Father and not of blind accident, that their ancestors are humans and not apes.

When we started, we realized that how weak we are before our babies. They cannot grasp the abstract conceptions, they need to touch, taste, smell things. So, we thought that talking about creation will be easier, as it is about things around us. We talk about trees, and we can walk outside and touch them, look at their leaves, smell them, and then draw them. As the next step we began to tell about Christ, Who created us, Who loves us and cares for us. That was the theme of our summer VBS of 2011.

Q: Who does teach the classes?

A: Our coordinator is Anna. One of our parishioners and mother of two kids, Vika, helps. Also two older children Sonya (13 years) and Pavel (9 years) were helping. I was leading Bible studies.

Q: What is your attitude about teaching the Bible to babies?

A: Rather quickly I understood that it is impossible to talk to them with abstractions. Their thinking is very concrete. They need touch, taste and smell what we are talking about. Once I wanted to explain to them that even forgiven sin might have consequences, using the story of David and Bathsheba. But Anna told me that children at this age do not see the connection between cause and effect.

Another difficult thing is to talk about invisible God. Also I do not always understand what children grasped and what they did not. Every time I remind myself that God's word is living and powerful, and it will get to the kids mind and soul.

Q: How was this summer's VBS? What was the topic?

A: The main theme was “Meeting Christ.” We wanted kids to know that Jesus is almighty God, and in the same time He is merciful and close to every one of us in His Word and sacraments, in His church. Besides Bible classes we played a lot, kids drew and sang. We visited a zoo in Abakan. So, it was very special time for our children.

Q: What is good about VBS and about regular classes?

Weekly classes give a basis. They are routine in very good sense. It helps children to learn and to memorize prayers. Summer VBS is something outstanding. It gives more opportunities to see something new, to do something new. Many things get to the children's mind and soul easily, and stick there firmly. I've noticed how my son was replaying a sketch and continued to repeat the name, “Jesus Christ.”

Q: Can you see any progress? What have the kids learnt?

A: It was important to me that children would learn the name of Christ. Now they know that He is struggling with evil, and He protects us.

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THE MAIN THEME WAS “MEETING CHRIST.” WE WANTED KIDS TO KNOW THAT JESUS IS ALMIGHTY GOD, AND IN THE SAME TIME HE IS MERCIFUL AND CLOSE TO EVERY ONE OF US IN HIS WORD AND SACRAMENTS, IN HIS CHURCH.

Q: Beside the Bible study what is taught about the Christian life in this part of your School?

A: We learn “Our Father” and prayers before and after the meal. I can't say we have a lot of specifically “Christian” games or paintings, or singing. Our students are very small and we do not always have something especially Christian for kids under three.

Q: What was the most difficult in the beginning?

A: It was difficult (and still is) to find materials, guides. Everything that we can find is prepared for kids older than three, and our group is just the opposite. Thus, we need to work out and think up a lot.

Q: What were the themes of the Bible studies?

A: We decided to start with creation. We wanted



Christmas sweets

My second home, my family

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on.

For the first time I saw a young Christian family, which followed Jesus and served their neighbors. And a question about churching was solved very easy. In this parish I found my second home, my family. Our parish grew very fast. Soon the possibility appeared to rent a one-room apartment for services. How happy were we to have it!

There was plenty of everything: Sunday services, fellowship, interesting meetings with Christians, and reflections on the Bible. That time was special for me. I have never lived so intensively, fully, sensibly, and gladly. I was falling asleep with a prayer and waking up with the words of psalms and hymns. I saw wonderful dreams, where I flew or swam, or drove a car very fast and was free and happy. My 17-year-old daughter was a third-year

student at the music-pedagogical college. She wondered where her mother spent so much time and began to come to services on Sundays. "For the Word of God is living and powerful." On Nov. 7, 1992, she was baptized in our "Bible Lutheran Church". **[Editor's note: For more on Galina's daughter, Alla Okorokova, nee Shvetsova, see the December 2005 edition of the [SLMS](#) newsletter].**

Probably, I need to say a word about this name, Bible Lutheran Church. When the question of confession arose in our parish, there were no ardent discussions among us. We have already known about Luther, the Reformation, and we have been acquainted with the Small Catechism of Martin Luther. Vsevolod was the undisputable leader, a big authority for us, and we liked the name Bible Lutheran Church. It corresponded with our understanding of Lutheranism.

"Faith without works is dead" -- said the Apostle James. We had a lot of opportunities to do good works. In December we carried out Christmas celebration with other Protestant churches in city hall of our district of Novosibirsk. We handed out food to the poor with



At Lytkin's house in 1996. (l to r) Elena Streltsov, Alexey Streltsov, Galina, Daniel Burlakov

Catholics from "Caritas", organized showing the "Jesus" movie in schools, universities, libraries; we went with evangelical programs to the villages and so on. We wanted to do a lot for people, who didn't know Jesus yet, and share the Gospel with them.

Vsevolod was an initiator of many of our projects. He came to school, where I worked as a music teacher, with lectures about Christianity. Many teachers at that time were interested very much in religion. Students from high school and secondary school also came. That time a young Christian family from the Netherlands (Pim and Monique Kalkman) lived temporarily

in Vsevolod's flat. They came to help the Christian student

movement in Siberia. Darya and Monique decided to start work with children in cooperation with the Scripture Union

FOR THE FIRST TIME I SAW A YOUNG CHRISTIAN FAMILY, WHICH FOLLOWED JESUS AND SERVED THEIR NEIGHBORS. AND A QUESTION ABOUT CHURCHING WAS SOLVED VERY EASY. IN THIS PARISH I FOUND MY SECOND HOME, MY FAMILY.

movement. This international organization unites and



Galina at school Christmas Program

supports Christian children workers from more than 125 countries all over the world, has half a century history, and helps people to learn to read the Bible every day.

Darya and Monique asked me **continued on page 5**

New impressions

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if I was ready to open the doors of my school for that work. I could not even dream about it. Of course I was ready. So in our school a Christian club started to work.

There were four age groups in it: pre-school, primary school, secondary school and high school students. Group leaders were great: university students, where there were future pastors: Pavel Khramov, Danil Burlakov, Alexey Shilin, Gennady Artin and others. I remember, how bright Christmas and Easter celebrations were in 1992-1997 years. The school administration supported us: gave us rooms for lessons and festivals, helped to solve organizing problems, assisted in summer camps organizing, demonstration of Christian movies at school. It was a miraculous transformation for me as all principals in schools always were communists, and one of them once said a phrase, that became an aphorism: "If the Party would tell me to do the splits, I would do it without thinking."

"Nobody knows Lord's ways." The Lord called that woman, leading her through a number of life's trails. Looking at pictures I remember episodes of that joyous celebrations: bright speech of Alexey Streltsov, who got into contact with children very quickly by playing a game "We are hunting for the lion"; a beautiful Jewish dance performed by Darya Lytkina, Tatyana Khramova and Natalya Yuj; Christmas performances with the participation of Alexey Shilin, Gena Artin, Andrei Ivolvega; the singing of Christian songs all together; joy on the faces of people.

In the summer 1995, a big group of Christians from Lutheran churches of Eastern Europe was invited to the USA for short study: men went to the seminary in Fort Wayne, women went to Seward, Nebraska. I was in that group. God is so generous!



Galina receives recorders for her music class. A gift from her American friends.

He gave me to see with my own eyes real life of a great country not in a big city, but in small American towns, where simple people, who follow Christ, live, work, take care of their land, families, houses and eventually, about their country. The town, where our study took place, was small (about 6,000 citizens). There was a small factory, where props for electric power transmission were produced, a few small stores, a big supermarket and Concordia college. I was pleasantly surprised by cleanness in the streets and around the houses. Of course, there were new impressions of supermarkets; we did not have such stores yet. But the biggest impression was about the richest experience of children Christians' work, which was shared with us. I remember at one of the practical seminars we divided into few groups and got a task to tell the story about creation using different kinds of creativity. My group had to tell it with colorful shawls and scarves. We turned scarves into trees, flowers, birds, and animals. We showed appearance of light from darkness, water, mountains, moon and stars. And it was fascinating. I wish those moments had not stopped. In the group there were girls from Lithuania, Byelorussia, and Siberia. We were glad as children; we felt unity with each other and were really happy. On Saturday we visited Christian families in other towns of Nebraska. I was lucky to get acquainted with the family of farmer Harry, his wife Dorothy and their sons. I

WE WERE GLAD AS CHILDREN; WE FELT UNITY WITH EACH OTHER AND WERE REALLY HAPPY. ... WE RETURNED FROM THE USA FULL OF NEW IMPRESSIONS AND BIG WILLINGNESS TO WORK WITH KIDS.

was in their church service twice. Pastor Blaze conducted the bell orchestra there and I was lucky to play in it. We returned from the USA full of new impressions and big willingness to work with kids. ✕



Scripture Union meeting in Lytkin's kitchen, 1996.

Vitali interview

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Q: Tuim is quite small town, you do not have craft or hobby stores, there is no shop that would sell stuff for developmental classes. Where did you find necessary



Children take part in a Bible study project as part of Sunday School.

materials?

A: The parish of St. Andrew in Novosibirsk helped us a lot. Children in Sunday School collected money and then some stuff (like toys, children tables and chairs) was bought in Novosibirsk that money. Also people in Novosibirsk

have brought splash-paper, children scissors, modeling clay and a lot more stuff for craft. From Novosibirsk we also get guides for Bible studies. Some ideas for classes could be found on Internet, and we think up a lot, using almost literally what lies under feet — tree leaves, gravel, sea shells (Anna brought it after visiting her friends).

Q: How do you pay expenses?

A: Most of the materials for crafts came from Novosibirsk. Meals are prepared by our family with help of other parents. When

we were preparing for VBS, I announced it in congregation and asked for special donations.

Q: As a pastor in this parish, what good does Sunday School do?

A: First of all, kids hear and study God's Word. It is most important. Secondly, I see how their parents become more

interested in studying the Bible, Catechism. They begin to realize their responsibility in Christian upbringing of their children. And our parishioners give little bit more, as they know it is necessary for teaching our children.

Q: What is most significant about what you learnt this year? Can you say that you grew up as father?

A: Every minute together with kids I can call a lesson for dad. I do not know what is most significant, because everything is. Until the last year I mostly dealt with teenagers of ages from 13 to 17. But with babies under three you need to be more careful, you need to find a very special way to every one of them. Teenagers have a life experience, they can correct in their mind what was said or done wrong. But small children cannot do this. They learn not so much by listening, but with fingers, tongue, eyes, and nose. So, explaining theology to them we need to give them something to touch, to taste, to smell, and to see.

Q: The last question. This interview was taken about three months ago. What is going on in Tuim now?

A: For a while we decided to turn back to "usual" Sunday School. The first reason is that Sonya and Pavel need classes as well, and we are not sure if we can have both "Christian school of early child development" and Sunday School. The second reason is that we see three new small children, who might join our group, but their parents would feel very uncomfortable to come to our apartment. They are not our parishioners, so they'd prefer to come to church as "official" building, than to come to pastor's place — it would look too personal, as if you are visiting your friend. Thus, our Sunday School becomes a "missionary" project.

Q: Do you plan to return to the idea of a Christian School?

FIRST OF ALL, KIDS HEAR AND STUDY GOD'S WORD. IT IS MOST IMPORTANT. SECONDLY, I SEE HOW THEIR PARENTS BECOME MORE INTERESTED IN STUDYING THE BIBLE, CATECHISM. THEY BEGIN TO REALIZE THEIR RESPONSIBILITY IN CHRISTIAN UPBRINGING OF THEIR CHILDREN. AND OUR PARISHIONERS GIVE LITTLE BIT MORE, AS THEY KNOW IT IS NECESSARY FOR TEACHING OUR CHILDREN.

A: I hope so. It was a big fun and great experience. Hopefully, we'll have enough people, strength, resources, boldness and faith to handle this.

Q: Thank you very much. ☒

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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