



Faith, family life in Touim

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by Galina Shvetsova
translated by Alla Okorokova

Editor's note: This is the final part of a three-part series. Part 1 appeared in the September 2011 [SIBERIAN LUTHERAN MISSION SOCIETY](#) newsletter.

In 1997, I went to town Touim, Khakassia for a year. Our parishioner (future pastor) Pavel Zayakin moved there with his family that winter.

Formerly that town developed actively, people from other places of Khakassia and Krasnoyarsky region moved there willingly. Copper, molybdenum and other non-ferrous metals were extracted in Touim. A big factory of non-ferrous metals refinement was open there.

At the beginning of perestroika more than 14,000 people lived in the town. In the middle of the 1990s the factory stopped working fully. Only few workshops were left. People started to leave the village, and those who didn't leave had to search for any job in Touim or regional center.

Quite a lot of people came to the church looking for consolation, hoping to find support in cracked life. People were coming to the Bible classes led by Pavel Zayakin. And gradually a Christian parish

continued on page 4

'For all the saints ...'—Siberian Lutherans mark anniversary of martyr

by Alexey Streltsov

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the death of Gennady Artin. In the Acts of the Apostles, after the original idyllic state of the Church in Jerusalem with people coming to the Church in mass numbers, staying together and having all things in common, a return to severe reality of life takes place at one point. Ananias and Saphira cheat, which ends for them in a bad way, members of the Sanhedrin beat the apostles, Hellenists quarrel with the Jews, and finally, the first Christian

continued on page 3



SELC pastors travel to help with needs at Easter



Nina (kneeling), a deaf woman in Chita, is confirmed on Easter Sunday by Fr. Dmitri Dotsenko. He is assisted by Deacon Roman Kislov, left, who is also deaf. Nina is looking at the sign language interpreter during the rite.

by Pavel Khramov

In our church, we are still experiencing a lack of pastors, and so every Easter there is a great challenge for many of them. Many of our clergymen after they serve the liturgy in one parish travel to another, sometimes for several hundreds miles. For example, when we did not have a resident pastor in Touim (Khakassia), Pastor Pavel Zayakin went there from Abakan on Saturday (100 miles one-way trip), conducted Easter Vigil in Touim, then went back early in the morning to Abakan to conduct an Easter service there. And in the afternoon that day he drove another 100 miles to serve our congregation in Sayanogorsk.

Sometimes pastors travel even longer, when we need to help pastors far away.

This year, pastors Alexey Streltsov (rector of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Novosibirsk) and Andrey Lipnitski went to Novokuznetsk to conduct divine liturgies there on Good Friday and Easter day.

Pastor Streltsov says, "Pastor Dmitri Dotsenko, who serves in the St. James parish, went to Chita in order to teach at the pre-seminary program known as

the Biblical School and help Pastor Igor Kizyaev to serve in our remote congregations in the Transbaikalian region. Thus, we went to Novokuznetsk to fill in for him. Anyway, Holy Week and Easter are always the busiest days for pastors.

"It always feels good in our parish in Novokuznetsk—people here nicely combine great respect for liturgy and informality. They are really pious and open toward newcomers. About two years ago I went to Novokuznetsk together with our theological student from Germany to conduct the Christmas service. When we were on our way back home he said, 'I'd love to serve in this parish.'

"St. James parish acquired its own place rather recently (with the great help of the Siberian Lutheran Mission Society), but it looks like soon the nave will be not spacious enough. Probably they will need to pull down a wall to add a tea-room to the nave. Definitely it's a problem, but it is a good problem.

"I plan to visit Novokuznetsk again in May, when our seminary will organize theological classes for parishioners and all interested people.

"At the Easter service a new member of our Church was confirmed. Andrei works as a shovel operator at an open pit. His ancestors were Lutherans. He found our Church on the Internet. 'When I came here, I realized at once it's for me,' Andrei said. After the divine service, we had a great time with tasty food, informal talks, and listening to songs composed by one of the parishioners."

Pastor Dmitri Dotsenko tells his part of this story:

"A few months ago we already planned my trip to Chita to teach there in pre-seminary program. But the dates were not set. So, when the time came to finalize plans, the idea appeared to send me for the whole Passion Week to help Pastor Igor Kizyaev and Deacon Roman Kislov. The trip from Chernogorsk, where I live, to Chita is long—about 1,600 miles. It takes three days on the train. Of course, I wanted to be with my family and my parishioners on Easter, but I also knew that my help in Chita and the Transbaikalian region is needed. Moreover, it gave me a chance to visit my parents who live in Chita.

"I wanted to help as much as possible, so the 10 days were really busy. We had Palm Sunday and Passion Week with a few services. At the end of the week, classes of Biblical School took place. The theme was the book of Exodus, which really fits to the time before Easter. Finally, Easter came. At that service, there was the baptism of Nina. She was buried into Christ's death and has been resurrected in the day when the Church celebrates His victorious resurrection.

"The next day we went to Edinenie (200 miles from
continued on page 5

Remembering Gennady



The grave of Gennady Artin in Rezina, Moldavia

continued from page 1

martyrdom takes place, the one of Stephen. Stephen was not an apostle, he was appointed to be a deacon to help the apostles. But he also carried out a ministry of the Word in a way. Stephen's martyrdom forms a foundation of the Church. The Church can not be without martyrdom, because Christ the Cornerstone of the Church was crucified. Witnesses of His death and martyrdom spread the word about it. But martyrdom is also the highest witness (the Greek word is the same anyway), because according to the ancient Christians it was in the death by martyrdom that a Christian was most conformed to Christ.

In some ways martyrdom stands at the foundation of the Church in any given place. For example, the Roman Church is traditionally associated with the names of Apostles Peter and Paul, even though they did not found a Roman congregation but rather arrived to Rome when that congregation was already in existence there. However, by their death in martyrdom they have placed themselves in the foundation of this apostolic see.

It doesn't mean that the Church cannot exist without martyrs, but in Acts in describing the first apostolic church gives us an understanding of what is to be found in the Church. There is preaching, Baptism, Eucharist, deeds of mercy, mission, and martyrdom. Therefore the martyrs appear sooner or later where the Church comes into being. It happened rather soon in our Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church, even before the church was canonically and legally organized. Gennady has become the martyr of SELC. He did not seek this way: people do not look for martyrdom on their own accord. Rather, this way has found him.

Our paths crossed several times in an almost

mystical way. I got acquainted with him in the end of 1993. We were together at a student Christian conference in Belarus in the beginning of 1994. It was a strange conference. I suspect that it was very inexpensive for its organizers, but quality matched the price. In the rooms there was absolutely no heating. It was January and even though Minsk is not Novosibirsk, we felt inside like we were on a North Pole. We had to sleep dressed in winter's clothing under blankets, steam coming out of our mouths. In addition Gena put a fur hat on his head. I made fun of him and took pictures of him while he was asleep as he looked very funny in that hat. We also had Andrey Ivvolga there as another member of our Novosibirsk congregation. All of us were NSU (Novosibirsk State University) students then, even though we studied at different departments. Gennady was a physicist.

There were students from different cities of Russia at that conference. There were Ukrainians and Belarusians. There were even not a few students from the Baltic counties, even though Soviet Union had fallen apart a couple of years previous, and the Baltic republics never entered the CIS, having opted to be a part of Europe instead. Certainly, it was very interesting to talk to people from all these places, but sometimes people who are capable of changing our lives live not that far from us. At that conference I couldn't help but pay attention to one girl from the Foreign Languages Department of Novosibirsk Pedagogical Institute. Gena noticed her as well. Every morning he was on duty outside the room where those girls lived in order to wake them up in time and remind them not to skip breakfast. Among other things, he did it because he naturally cared for people. Later on our lives turned out in different ways. I happened to be "luckier." But Gena would have necessarily found his human happiness, only God chose a different way for him.

Gennady was a parishioner of a kind that pastors can only dream about. When I returned to Novosibirsk for a practicum after the first year of instruction at the seminary, I conducted parish classes on the basics of the Christian faith. There were not many people in that class, sometimes only three people, other times four or five. Gena attended almost always. He was a very committed Christian. And even though he was successful in his studies of physics, at one point he decided to dedicate himself to the ministry in the church. And so he went to study at the seminary.

Gena was from Moldavia, and he constantly remembered that sunny land. He talked about the local foods there such as mamalyga. He invited people to come and visit his family, but I got a chance to get acquainted with his family only after his death.

Gennady did not have many friends. He was shy and very modest in public, but he really opened up when talking one on one. At Concordia Theological Seminary Gennady spent most time with Andrey – a student from

Continued on page 6

Story of Galina, Touim congregation

Continued from page 1

was formed. A church building was bought and reconstructed, where the Lord's services started to be held in September 1997. Many children were coming to the church. Pavel invited me to lead work with children. I moved to Touim for a year.

A remarkable team of children workers was gathered. Every week we conducted Bible classes for different ages in Sunday school, we held round-table discussions with teenagers, organized watching of videos with discussion following, arranged festivals (harvest feast, Christmas, Easter), actively helped Pastor Pavel Zayakin in the preparation and conducting of summer camps.

"And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people" (Acts 2:46-47) We lived as one family and followed Christ. That year was very important in my life. I had understood the value and wealth of missionary service.

A year of missionary work gave me strength for the further service in the world. I returned to my habitual work in 1998 and continued collaboration with Scripture Union. But I didn't return home to my husband, Yuri. He didn't give up drinking.

In March 1999, my husband was hit by car and got

many fractures and became bedridden for a long time. In the hospital he made the very important decision to be baptized.

God had called Yuri for a long time through me and my daughter, through our pastor, Vsevolod Lytkin, but he turned aside hard and relied on his own strength. Only being on the edge between life and death in the silence of a hospital room he had heard God's call. The whole situation reminded me of the biblical story of Lazarus, where Jesus raised him from the dead and said to his relatives: "unbind him, and let him go."

All the recovery year was full of Christ's mercy for Yuri. All spring Rev. Pavel Khramov came to our house and explained to Yuri the basic foundations of Christian teaching – the Catechism.

In the summer my husband went with us to theological seminars for the first time. Yuri walked with difficulty, his legs were in Elizarov's device, but his spirit was raised. He began to understand Christ's words: "I am the resurrection and the life." In the autumn my husband could walk with crutches and we started to attend Sunday services.

In the summer Yuri with other Sunday school teachers worked at the Church Bible day camp and taught children painting (when he was a schoolboy he had finished art school and painted quite well). In succeeding years he painted a lot and some of his pictures are hanging in St. Andrew Church.

We were always helped by pastors--Vsevolod, Pavel, Alexey Streltsov--with Christian teaching and solving other everyday problems. When our family moved to a new flat Vsevolod organized some parishioners to help us. Pastor Khramov patronized Yuri in difficult year of his recovery. Alexey talked much with Yuri, answering his questions. In the spring of 2000 Yuri was confirmed in our church. It seemed that all my sufferings were finished. My family became Christian, we were in one church.

But as apostle Paul said: "there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure" (2 Cor. 12:7).

The chronic illness of my husband (alcoholism) continued to torment the whole family. But now Yuri knows that it is necessary to fight the flesh and satanic temptations. And this fighting continues to present day.

The appeal of the Apostle Paul to put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil is very relevant for our family. "Stand therefore, having your loins girt

Continued on page 5



Galina, lower right, at Touim with Tatiana Kozina, Fr. Vitali Gavrilov, and Galina's husband, Yuri.

The conclusion of Galina's story

Continued from page 4

about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6).

I am constantly thanking the Lord for the strengths He gives to each member of our family to carry his or her own cross. And I am thankful to our Lord for American missionaries, pastors, teachers, who helped me in my Christian life.

For more than 10 years pastor and theologian Alan Ludwig has worked in our seminary. He is a very modest man with profound knowledge in different spheres of theology.

Besides teaching students at the seminary he teaches our parishioners Catechism on Sundays. Explaining to people the essence of Christian teaching Alan Ludwig helps us to separate wheat from the chaff, to clean consciousness from all sorts of modern and old false doctrines.

I'm very grateful to all people who helped to organize the summer seminars in Siberia and taught there: Dr. Timothy Quill, Dr. Arthur Just, Dr. David Scaer, Dr. William Weinrich, their wise wives and many other American pastors and teachers, who preached the Gospel to us in far away Siberia.

And, of course, I am heartily thankful to Daniel Johnson, who helps us through his newsletter to understand how we, who live in different countries, speak different languages, are grown up in different cultures, could find (telling about ourselves) understanding, sympathy and support on the other side of the Earth.

And my heart turns to the book of Psalms, to my favorite psalm of David, Psalm 139: "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."✠

Easter in Siberia



Ekaterina Kizyaev signs for Fr. Dmitri Dotsenko during Easter divine service in Chita.

Continued from page 2

Chita) where we have a small congregation. People there were so pleased that pastors came to them on Easter. Due to distance and some financial difficulties, Pastor Igor Kizyaev cannot visit them often, so their joy grows bigger when pastors come. On the way back to Chita we also served in a prison in a place called Olovyannaya.

"So, that was an exhausting time, but it is always so. I'm glad to have a chance to visit my parents, my friends, and that I helped my brothers and colleagues. But also I am glad to be back home with my family."

Please pray for new seminary students and for new pastors who will serve in the congregations in Siberia. ✠

The death of SELC's first martyr is remembered

Continued from page 3

the Ingrian Church. Andrey even came later to Novosibirsk upon Gena's invitation for a special intensive course at our seminary.

He was not very fast in life. Slower than usual speech, calm manners. But along with that he had perfect self-control, the other side of which was a lower sense of danger. Among people invited to study at the seminary, there could occasionally be some random people. One of them was a student with the resonant name Gorbachev. In the dorm where we stayed there was a computer in one of the rooms with the Internet access. Gorbachev lived in a different building. Once he got drunk and came to intrude. Hanging over Gena who was working at the computer at the time, he began to yell at him, demanding to let him use the place immediately, threatening to beat him in case he wouldn't cooperate. But Gena kept working there as though nothing has happened. It looked like he did not pay any attention at drunk Gorbachev. Somehow it reminded me of how Jesus was writing on the ground in John 8:8. I was impressed by Gena's self-control. Gorbachev was impressed too. He stood there for a while and kept yelling, but then he gave up and left.

I remember Gennady in Fort Wayne quite well, as he was contemplatively walking back and forth around the seminary campus, holding the Greek textbook in front of him and memorizing conjugations of the Greek verbs. I can still picture his contemplative silhouette in front of my eyes.

Gena never graduated from a seminary in his lifetime (a master's degree was awarded to him posthumously). He had not that much left in his studies. His future ordination could be seen on the horizon. But at that time Gennady, like Stephan, was an assistant to the priests. According to human standards he did not get to the end, but what are human standards when we are talking of life and death, over which human beings have no power.

The Church sent Gennady to Tomsk for a vicarage

and service there. He had to find an apartment to rent. One of my Akademgorodok friends inherited an apartment from her aunt in Tomsk who died shortly before that, so she offered that apartment for a rent. It was a one-bedroom apartment, practically in the city center. They talked about it, but then Gennady decided not to go that way: "That must be a church apartment and we need to have an extra room there to conduct services and Bible classes."

Finally, he has found a two-bedroom apartment in a more remote location. The drunk or stoned son of an apartment owner came there once, started knocking on a door, asking for money. Gennady opened the door. I don't know how long they were talking. Perhaps, Gennady tried to bring him to his senses. It didn't happen. That degenerate man hit him multiple times with a knife, and a number of these wounds happened to be "incompatible with life." Gennady's body was transported to Moldova and buried there. The martyr of the Siberian Church rests in the town of Rezina.

Why did it all happen? This is a perennial question: "Why do bad things happen to good people?" This question is especially acute when one is talking about children. And young people who have not yet had a chance to live, to enter mature age, to get to know joys (and disappointments) that come with experience.

There is no easy answer to this question. In such cases symmetrical answers do not work. Life can sometimes provide some hints for answers, but on this side of reality we would barely be able to understand it fully.

In the case of Gennady his death led to at least one new birth. His mother, who came to Novosibirsk to claim the body, received the Holy Baptism and was born for eternal life with Christ. And the mission in Tomsk continued, and now St. Mary's parish gathers at a new wonderful building, which was not there when Gennady started his work in Tomsk. We can be sure that one of the reasons it came into being was his prayers, which continue until now. He is one of "all the saints," with whom we continuously pray at the liturgy. ✠

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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