



Dmitry—A story of God’s mercy

Board of Directors

danieljohnson@siberianlutheranmissions.com
www.siberianlutheranmissions.com

Rev. Daniel S. Johnson,
President
2905 Cooper Lane
Marshalltown, IA 50158
641/753-9565

Rev. David Mommens
Vice President

Dcs. Kimberly Schave
Secretary/Treasurer
1078 Hayward Circle
Milford, OH 45150
513/309-3268

kimberlyschave@siberianlutheranmissions.com

Mr. Robert Kiefer,
Assistant Secretary/Treasurer
8811 St. Joe Road
Ft. Wayne, IN 46835-1037
260/438-1385

Rev. L. Daniel Johnson
Rev. David Riley
Rev. Frank Frye
Rev. Michael Brockman
Rev. Josh Genig
Rev. Michael R. Scudder
Mrs. Judith Bascom

Staff

Rev. L. Daniel Johnson
Fund Developer
517/610-1834
ldjohnson@siberianlutheranmissions.com
Mrs. Valerie Kister
newsletter editor
valeriekister@siberianlutheranmissions.com

Contributions may be sent to:

SLMS

Ascension Lutheran Church
8811 St. Joe Road
Ft. Wayne, IN 46835-1037

The newsletter for THE SIBERIAN
LUTHERAN MISSION SOCIETY is
edited by Mrs. Valerie Kister
St. Peter’s Lutheran Church
3197 141st Ave
Bellingham, MN 56212
605/949-1365
valeriekister@siberianlutheranmissions.com

We thank Redeemer Lutheran
Church - Marshalltown, IA
for financial assistance and to Mrs.
Linda Smith and Mrs. Karen Frohwein for
clerical assistance in the printing of this
newsletter.

Editor’s note: Dmitry Kutsenko is of member of St. Mary’s congregation (Tomsk) of the Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church.

“My name is Dmitry, I’m 37 and I must be dead for 12 years already.
“The first part of my life up to the conversion could be described by the saying ‘There is a black sheep in every flock.’ Both of my parents graduated from two universities each, there was no alcohol or cigarettes at our home. I do not know whether it was my attempt of self-assertion or teenager’s rebellion against all authorities, but I always tried to act in my own way, on my whims. And as further I went as broader were becoming the limits of that ‘my own.’ I will not describe my life, the life of young man getting from the world as many pleasures as it was possible. Though I was charged in some crimes, I wasn’t imprisoned. Maybe God had mercy towards a stupid young man.

“Everything has its price. One day I realized that I became drug-addicted, who cannot live (shall I say ‘exist’?) without heroin. Medical examination showed that I had about one and half months to live. A doctor

Continued on page 4

Serving God’s people in Sosnovka

Since 2009 Pastor Andrey Ivolga has conducted regular Divine Services in the small village of Sosnovka. This place is situated about 30 miles to the west from Angarsk (Irkutsk region, near Lake Baikal), the city where Pastor Ivolga resides and serves in the St. Peter’s parish of Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church.

The story of the small missionary congregation in Sosnovka has started in 2004, when Pastor Ivolga’s family moved from Touim (Khakassia) to Angarsk. His wife, Venera, immediately joined amateur choir

Continued on page 3



Pastor Andrey Ivolga

Bishop Lytkin marks 25th anniversary of his baptism

Editor's note: The following is reprinted from the Faith and Hope newsletter.

Peace to you, dear brothers and sisters in Christ.

Recently our Bishop Vsevolod Lytkin celebrated 25 years of his holy baptism. He didn't make it public, but we remembered it anyway and decided to ask him to tell us how it was in that distant Soviet time.

Here goes the Bishop's story: "I was baptized as an adult; it was my conscientious choice. As a majority of people in the Soviet Union, I was not baptized as an infant, and nobody told me about God.

"I was born in Akademgorodok (University district of Novosibirsk). My parents were scientists, both of them holding PhDs in mathematics. As many scientists, they were in opposition to Communism. Of course, it was a "quiet" opposition. They did not participate in the public actions of protest and did not go out to a central square, but they were critically inclined toward the regime.

"Very often I heard how they sit in a kitchen with friends and disapprove the Soviet regime. While falling asleep, I heard from another room my parents listening to the "Voice of America" and the "Radio Liberty" at the small transistor radio receiver. These radio stations were silenced in the USSR, but one could hear certain programs from time to time.

"My parents taught me critical thinking so that I would not be gullible towards official propaganda. If the authorities said "yes," we understood it as "no" and vice versa.

"In a way, it was my parents who were responsible for me coming to faith. Because when I heard that God did not exist, I thought, what if He did, what if He were out there? This is how my parents taught me to think.

"At that time the Bible was the forbidden book. And one could learn about religion only from the atheistic books. Thus the atheistic books have become the main books for me. I found out much about Christianity from them. Of course, these books spoke about Christianity only to criticize it, but we were the Soviet people, we knew that if they said "no" it meant "yes." If they say there is no God, then, perhaps, there is.



Bishop Vsevolod Lytkin (kneeling) is ordained by Archbishop Kuno Pajula (center) of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church. Pajula died Nov. 26, 2012.

"I've read dozens of books; I carefully wrote down biblical quotations from them. I tried to get them in order so as to understand what the Bible was talking about.

"When I finished school, I practically thought of myself as a believer. And I knew a lot about different confessions from the books, and I realized that it was Lutheranism that was the purest biblical teaching. Of course, there was a terrible mess in my head at the time, as nobody was teaching me.

"(By the way, I am still sure that it is Lutheranism that confesses the purest evangelical doctrine.)

"I knew that I had to be baptized, and finally I decided to go to Leningrad (which is St. Petersburg now) and from there to Riga (it was the capital of the Soviet Republic of Latvia at the time). I knew there were Lutherans there, and I hoped I would be able to find an open church there (all the Lutheran churches in Siberia had been destroyed) and ask to be baptized.

"It was supposed to be a long journey of about 2,500 miles, but it was no problem for me: inhabitants of Siberia are used to such distances. I came to a train station in Leningrad and tried to buy a ticket for a train to Riga. But there were no tickets available. Instead, there were tickets to Tallinn (capital of the Soviet Republic of Estonia). So I went to Tallinn.

"Later on I thought about it on a number of

Continued on page 4

Parish life in Sosnovka



Pastor Andrey Ivogla baptizes a baby at the missionary congregation of Sosnovka.

continued from page 1

in Angarsk. She met there Marina Gildebrant, then a member of a charismatic group. Two women became friends and, with the help of seminary students from Novosibirsk, organized small concert on Easter of 2005. Concerts became regular and their fellowship grew, so Marina decided to join the Lutheran Church. She was confirmed in January 2006. A little bit later two of her sons were baptized.

In 2008 Marina moved to Sosnovka. With public transportation it takes two buses to get to Angarsk. When it is -40 degrees F, which is normal in Irkutsk region, coming on Sunday to liturgy becomes difficult.

Marina asked Pastor Ivogla to visit her and conduct service at her place. Thus, Pastor Ivogla has started to come to Sosnovka regularly, about once a month. Another lady, Galina, was baptized in 2009. A few guests were visiting services from time to time, but nobody joined the church.

In 2011, Marina got the job in the local social center (the so-called "house of culture"). It gave the possibility to have services there and invite people to the concert and to the liturgy. At the end of the same year, Marina was promoted to be a head ("director") of the social center. Her subordinates were making denunciations, as if Marina lets "sect" to gather in public facility, but she continued to hold Christian concerts and invited everybody to the divine services and Bible classes. the conservative clergymen are imprisoned for

Sosnovka is small village – about 700 inhabitants. There is almost no work there. Many people go for a few miles to the near town to work there; others have their own vegetable gardens and cattle and live by it. Rather untypically, people in Sosnovka drink not as much as people in similar small villages, but it does not mean that they are more responsive to the Gospel. Pastor Ivogla says, "They are so consumed by their daily worries, that they cannot find time (indeed, they do not want to find it) to come even to something entertaining, as a concert, not speaking about liturgy."

This fall the newly-elected mayor of Sosnovka, an ardent communist, decided that the village does not need the social center. Therefore, the administration took the building and will move there in January.

Marina is looking for new job. The services again will be conducted at her place.

Pastor Ivogla says: "Four of my parishioners live in Sosnovka – Marina, two sons of her, and Galina. So, I need to take care of them, to preach them Word of God, and give them the Sacrament. I go there once a month. After the liturgy, we have Bible class and time to drink tea and chat. For a while this small parish was able to pay for my gas, now it become rather difficult to them. But every time I visit Sosnovka, they give me something – a sack of potatoes, a can of pickles, a piece of pork.

"Though the distance is not big, the roads are quite bad, so it takes an hour to drive from Angarsk to Sosnovka. Once I was caught by a storm. The road turned into river, all the pits were covered by water, so I drove very slowly, trying to avoid the crush of my car. A tree fell near to me. At home I found out that I lost the front license plate – obviously, the water stream tore it off."

Pastor Ivogla sums up: "Of course, we tried and keep trying to get in touch with new people in Sosnovka. But right now we are not successful in it. I see as my main goal to feed the faithful sheep of Christ, who already there. We look for opportunities to invite people, but now it will be more difficult, with services being held in a private home.

"We pray for our friends and colleagues, who might be more comfortable to come to Marina's place. Please, pray for our small congregation in Sosnovka, that they would stand fast and new people would join the community, where Lord graciously gives His forgiveness and salvation." ✕

‘What the Lord did for me’

Continued from page 1

told me: ‘You’d better bring in order some of your business.’ I was not too upset. I felt so tired of my life, so death seemed to be not a bad way out. But at that time a friend of mine convinced me to come to a church. That guy was really a bad guy, so he was a sort of authority to me and I listened to him.

“What happened next was whether very simple or very complicated – depends on somebody’s point of view. I was converted, and went to a rehabilitation center. I still try to understand what really happened. I kneeled and prayed God for forgiveness and help. Therefore, I survived. I have learned that mercy cannot be revealed to a person who feels OK, who is sure that he is not guilty.

“However, a crushed person can get the mercy very easily. Do not punish him, if it is within your power. That what the Lord did to me, He just didn’t punish me. Can I pay back this debt to Him? Of course not. His grace and mercy are too big. I try to remain a human and thank Jesus Christ that He was not just, but merciful to me.”

Pastor Daniel Burlakov, who serves in St. Mary’s Lutheran Church, says: “Dmitry came to our church about four years ago from the Baptist congregation. He is rather reserved person, even shy. You may notice it from the shortness of his story. Later Dmitry said that one of the reasons to join our church was the style of communication among the people. He liked that they know how to keep distance, when a person

doesn’t want to open up. He complained little bit about artificial friendliness among some Protestants.”

Pastor Burlakov continues: “Dmitry is a thoughtful person. Being in a Baptist group, he read a lot and started to ask questions. And he couldn’t find answers there. He visited our services regularly for half a year, but he always was leaving before the Holy Communion, thinking that he is not ‘eligible’ to be present at this part of liturgy. Therefore, I couldn’t talk to him after the service. One day he came earlier than usual, and we talked. He explained that he want to be in the church where there is not only the Bible, but also the sound biblical teaching and Sacraments. After the Catechism class, Dmitry was confirmed in our church.

“Despite his dramatic past, now Dmitry is doing very well. He has a family with two children. For longtime his job was in a security service, now he works as fire fighter. It prevents him from attending all the Sunday services, but in such a case, he tries to come during the week. He never fails to use the Sacraments of the church. Dmitry is one of the few of our members who comes regularly to the private confession. He brought both of his kids to be baptized. Christ definitely changed him, and I thank our gracious Lord for this great mercy.” ✕



Dmitry Kutsenko, a member of St. Mary’s Church, Tomsk, has worked in security and currently serves as a firefighter in Siberia.

The Bishop’s baptism

Continued from page 2

occasion: what if I had gone to Riga then? I would have become then a member of the Latvian Church instead of the Estonian. It is interesting how life turns out sometimes.

“I went out to look for an open church in Tallinn and found it not far from the train station. It was the Holy Spirit Church. There was a guard there who spoke some Russian. We talked about politics. I said I sympathized with the Estonians that their country was occupied by the Soviet Union. The guard said, “Oh, you are a good man. But you are Russian; you must be baptized in the Orthodox Church.” I said, “No, no, please, I came here specially.”

Continued on page 5

SELC congregations remember anniversary of Bishop Lytkin's baptism

"He said, "Fine. Come then tomorrow, there will be a wife of the parish priest here, you can talk to her." The next day I came and got acquainted with the wife of the priest Jaan Kiivit (the future Archbishop of the Estonian Church). She happened to be a very kind and intelligent woman.

"And still one day later I met Jaan Kiivit himself. He gave the Luther's Catechism to me and said that I should go home and memorize it, and then he would baptize me upon my return. I said that I had come a long way to be baptized and that I could not go home unbaptized. Then he gave me three days and said I should know the Catechism by heart.

In a way, it was my parents who were responsible for me coming to faith. Because when I heard that God did not exist, I thought, what if He did, what if He were out there? This is how my parents taught me to think.

"I did not have a place in Tallinn to live and I had almost no money, so I spent nights at the train station. It was warm there. Various homeless and drunk people gathered there in the evenings, and I slept in their company. I memorized the Catechism in three days, and Jaan Kiivit baptized me. I returned to Novosibirsk already a Christian.

"And then step by step people came around who were interested in Lutheranism, and we began to gather together and read the Bible. But this is another story."

Please, pray with us for our Bishop Vsevolod and pray for many people in Siberia to be able to hear the Gospel, believe, and be saved. ✠

Bishop performs baptism, ordains subdeacon at Novokuznetsk parish



Bishop Vsevolod Lytkin (center) baptizes Barbara Dmitriev on the Sunday of the Fulfillment, Nov. 25, 2012, at the Novokuznetsk parish.

Continued from page 2

Editor's note: The following is reprinted from the Faith and Hope newsletter.

Peace to you, dear brothers and sisters in Christ.

The last Sunday of the Church year (Nov. 25, 2012), our Bishop Vsevolod Lytkin visited Novokuznetsk. During the liturgy there, he baptized the newborn daughter of parishioner Evgeni Dmitriev. Barbara is the fifth child in the Dmitriev family. Because the family is poor, the bishop brought a lot of gifts that had been collected by the people of Saint Andrew parish in Novosibirsk.

Next, the bishop blessed a parishioner to serve as a subdeacon. (Subdeacons are laymen who help the clergymen during the liturgy. Subdeacons may light candles on the altar, read the Old Testament and Epistle, and pray the litany.)

Our new subdeacon's name is Vadim Raskin. He has been a parishioner for many years. He is a physician and owns a small private medical center

Continued on page 6

Siberian congregation celebrates baptism, ordination



Bishop Vsevolod Lytkin, right, blesses Vadim Raskin. Raskin will serve the Novokuznetsk congregation as subdeacon.

Continued from page 5

in Novokuznetsk. His dream is to be ordained as a deacon.

During the order of blessing the subdeacon, Bishop Lytkin said, “Beloved brother, God the Father revealed the mystery of salvation, and completed it through His Son Jesus Christ, who became Man and, after He told us all, has entrusted to the Church the responsibility to preach the Gospel to all creation.

“Becoming a reader, you will proclaim the word of God, assisting the Church in the fulfillment of this duty. You will obtain a special mission in the community of God’s people and will be

“For you will proclaim the word of God in the liturgical assembly, will teach the faith among children and adults, and prepare them to receive the sacraments properly. You will also proclaim the message of salvation to people who do not already know it.”— Bishop Vsevolod Lytkin to subdeacon Vadim Raskin

assigned to the service of faith, rooted in the word of God.

“For you will proclaim the word of God in the liturgical assembly, will teach the faith among children and adults, and prepare them to receive the sacraments properly. You will also proclaim the message of salvation to people who do not already know it.

“Thus, with your help, people will come to know God the Father and the Son, whom He sent, Jesus Christ, and obtain the eternal life.

“Proclaiming the word of God to others, you take it in obedience to the Holy Spirit and attentively consider it every day, so that you may fully experience its living and sweet action.

“With your whole life imitate our Savior Jesus Christ!”

Please pray for the Siberian Lutheran clergymen and their lay helpers, and for Barbara Dmitriev, the newly baptized Christian in Novokuznetsk. ✠

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.

Articles and photographs from this newsletter may be reprinted for publicity purposes. Please give credit to the author and [THE SIBERIAN LUTHERAN MISSION SOCIETY \(SLMS\)](#).

All donations may be sent to the [SLMS](#) c/o Ascension Lutheran Church, Mr. Robert Kiefer, 8811 St. Joe Road, Ft. Wayne, Indiana 46835-1037. For more information on how you can become involved in the work of the [SLMS](#), visit our website at

www.siberianlutheranmissions.com