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# Preparing for the Jubilee

By Pavel Khramov

Pastor Pavel Zayakin serves in St. Luke’s parish in Abakan, Khaassia. Since 1997, he has organized camps for teen-agers and youth. This year, the biggest project is being undertaken—in cooperation with the Scout movement in Russia, Pastor Zayakin is preparing the regional Scout rally, usually called the Jamboree. Up to 500 participants are going to come to Khakassia from Siberia, the eastern regions of Russia, the Urals, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kazakhstan, and possibly also from Germany, the United Kingdom, and Hungary.

The name of this year’s event is “The Wheel of Time.” Khakassia is an open-air museum. There are a lot of historical places here, such as old tombs, an ancient observatory, and cave art. Magnificent and beautiful nature, rocks, rivers, and valleys add to Khakassia’s charm. The main goal of the Jamboree is to build relationships between Scout groups, share experiences, and further develop the physical, social, intellectual, and spiritual potential of each participant. Although the Jamboree is not primarily a Christian camp, there is still the spiritual part of the program. Pastor Zayakin says that today in Russia, about 80 percent of Scout units have relationships with the Russian Orthodox Church; that is, they have

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## ***SELC reaches out to ethnic Estonians***

The Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELC) was, at the beginning of her history, part of the Estonia Evangelical Lutheran Church (EELC). Though SELC is not an Estonian church and we have quite a few Estonians as our members, we consider as part of our mission to take care spiritually of the native Estonians in Siberia. A good number of them moved here at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, looking for free land. Even more people were deported from Estonia in 1940 and after World War II, when the Soviet Union took control over that small country.

Though many people returned to Estonia in the 1970s and 1980s, there are still villages where people remember their history, their tradition, and their language. We look for such places, visit them, and try to remind the Estonians there that the Lutheran faith is part of their history and tradition. In some places, such as Beryozovka in the Tomsk region, it brings good fruit. Our pastors, Daniel Burlakov and Alexander Hahn, go there regularly and now there is a small congregation in Beryozovka. In some places, the people grew indifferent toward Christianity or joined the Russian Orthodox Church, like in Nikolaevka in the Novosibirsk region.

Recently, Pavel Khramov, pastor at St. Andrew’s parish in Novosibirsk, visited two villages in the Novosibirsk region—Rosental and Uskal, located about 300 miles from the city of Novosibirsk. These places

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# ***Christmas gifts in Siberia are not only sweets***

By Pavel Khramov

A few years ago, some parishioners from St. Andrew's Church in Novosibirsk came up with an idea to collect special Christmas donations. The money was to be spent on Christmas gifts for children in the Khakassia, Buryatia, and Chita regions. We have parishes in small towns or villages in those regions. There are almost no jobs for people; they grow their own food such as potatoes and vegetables. Elderly parents support their grown-up children, as the parents have regular income through their pensions. Thus, we wanted to give the kids some candies and chocolates to make Christmas happier.

In the Russian Orthodox Church, there is a tradition of fasting before Christmas. So, we often call Advent, "the Christmas fast." From here grew the idea how to collect money. We made small cardboard boxes and everyone who wished to participate in this collection took one home. During Advent, people limit their spending on nice but unnecessary things like chocolate, the cinema, or something else. They put that saved money into the boxes and brought them back to church by Christmas. This is the reason we called this collection, the "money-box."

The advantages of this project are manifold. First, and the most important, we give something to the kids. They are really happy to get a Christmas present. Moreover, we can talk about the greatest gift God gave us—His only Son. Second, our parishioners learn to care about those brothers and sisters who live far away, who are not members of our "immediate family." Third, people in our church have the opportunity to fast properly, namely, not just avoiding some sort of food, but to do alms as well. Finally, the money-box supposes collecting change. It means everyone can participate, and it doesn't matter how much you can give. Quite a few children from our parish take those boxes to collect something from their pocket money.

In 2013, we collected 40,000 rubles in the money-boxes, which was about \$1,200. In 2014, we were close to it. The total was 35,000 rubles. However, the dramatic fall of the ruble turned it to \$540. Still, it was much more than we needed for the Christmas gifts. That's why we use this money for other charities. This year, besides buying candies and chocolates for the kids, we helped a Ukrainian family who moved to Novosibirsk from the Donetsk Novosibirsk region [editor's note—this region has seen heavy fighting between Ukrainian forces and pro-Russian separatists during the past year]. This family has eight children. They arrived at Novosibirsk



**Nadezhda and her son, Dmitry, received assistance through the Christmas collection at St. Andrew's, Novosibirsk.**

in the middle of December and while the father, Alexander, was looking for a job, they had some really tough times. We also helped a woman named Anna. She is a friend of our parishioner, Nadezhda, who moved to Omsk a few years ago. Last summer Anna's husband died in an accident, and her father died the following month. She remained alone with two small children, with no job and no relatives. We helped to pay her electricity and water bills, and bought some baby food. This money allowed those two families to survive in really difficult situations. Alexander has found a job so he can provide for his family. Anna finally got a pension from the state, as she lost the only supporter of her and her children.

Alexander and family are Christians. They go to another Lutheran church in Novosibirsk (not St. Andrew's). Our gift was for them a strong witness of brotherly love and care. For Anna, the help from the church was unexpected. She still struggles with God. She feels bitterness toward Him because of her husband's death. However, Nadeshta says the money from the church gives her the opportunity to talk about Christ and His love and care for all people. So, God's biggest Christmas gift, His only Son born for our salvation, moves God's people to give generously. And their gifts become more than sweets. ✕

## ***'Where is your treasure?'*** ***SELC marks Ash Wednesday***



**The ashes and a candle are prepared for the Ash Wednesday service in Ekaterinburg.**

**Editor's note: The following is reprinted from the Faith & Hope newsletter 236**

Peace to you, dear brothers and sisters in Christ.

Now as the Church enters the time of Lent, we would like to bring your attention to part of the sermon that Pastor Pavel Zayakin preached during the Ash Wednesday service in the parish of St. Luke, Abakan:

"Where is your treasure [Matt. 6:21], brothers and sisters? Or is this question incorrect? Because everyone has his own treasure, in a bank account or under a mattress; for some of us, their treasure is children, or work, or a dream.

"And sometimes people dream together. Isn't it much easier to achieve anything together? Do you remember how we were forced to build the 'best society on earth,' so that at least if we did not reach it, our children would? It was the same dream as an earlier one to build a 'tower whose top is in the heavens' [Gen 11:4].

"Socialism and the tower of Babel were the most vivid collective dreams, but both had a bad end. And you know why, don't you? Because there was no God within these collective dreams. Or, let us say more precisely, these were humans who tried to take His place. It was similar to the first 'collective dream' near the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, 'You will not surely die ... you will be like God' [Gen 3:4].

"So much blood was poured in the name of these collective dreams, and it still flows like water. All because of the greatest temptation to force people to follow your idea, your ideology. Maybe, but not everyone 'will be like God' according to this ideology—just those who are closer to a dictator ruler. And all others are just 'building material' to be consumed for the next 'tower of Babel.'

"But none of our aspirations and efforts to reach the heavens by ourselves will be successful. All our towers will turn into ashes sooner or later, like our bodies will turn into dust. We cannot 'breathe the breath of life' [Gen 2:7] into our towers. All our attempts will be buried in history—the Roman Empire, Byzantium, 'Moscow the Third Rome,' communism, the Third Reich, 'the Russian world.'

"All our human attempts, which yesterday seemed to be the last steps up into the heavens, will turn into the cold ashes in the museum of humankind.

"The answer is that we are only dust and ashes. And all plans will fall, and our dreams will be crushed. Because there is only one way to reach the heavens, the one that begins with repentance, in the humble confession that we are by nature only 'dust and ashes.'

"In the beginning the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground [Gen 2:7]. And we are still alive today only because He continues to 'breathe the breath of life' into us. Only His breath is able to give us eternal life.

"Every year, these ashes touch our foreheads. 'For you are dust, and into dust you shall return,' as we say at funerals. But every year God gives us a chance. Because the ashes that touch us have the salvific form of the cross. This is because Christ came to save us, to fix us, to change our dreams, to crush our towers, and to elevate us to His heavens, where our treasure is. Amen."

We wish you a blessed time of Lent! Please pray for the Lutheran clergy and laity in Siberia. ✠

# SELC members help prepare for summer Jamboree



**Pastor Pavel Zayakin has worked with the Scout movement to help prepare this year's Jamboree in Khakassia.**

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priests as their "spiritual mentors." A few of them will come to Khakassia for the rally. Thus, Pastor Zayakin developed the program where we can speak and teach together. The core of the spiritual part of the Jamboree consists of Bible classes on the Ten Commandments. There will be Matins and Vespers every day as well. The third part of this program is building the wooden chapel.

We asked Pastor Zayakin a few questions.

**Q:** The project seems quite big. How long have you worked on it?

**A:** The first initiative from the Russian Scout Association came in 2011. The decision to organize the regional Jamboree came in 2012. Since then, I've worked on this project with a team of volunteers. Two camps were held in 2013 and 2014, as a part of the preparation for Jamboree and a sort of "try-out" for this rally. We have built some structures, which will be used at the Jamboree, and we tried the field.

**Q:** So, it looks like a lot of work. Do you see this project as helpful for the church?

**A:** Sure. It helps our church in different ways. First, Lutherans become known as starters of the well-known and respected Scout movement in Khakassia. Second, we bring here people from all over Russia and, hopefully, from other countries. Thus, the government of our republic will look at us not as a small and unimportant religious group, but as a church that brings some changes. Third, working on organizing the Jamboree and participating in Scouting in general helps us to build brotherly relations with members of the Russian Orthodox Church. We present to them our confession and demonstrate that we are not strange sectarians, as many

people in Russia still think, but a sober part of Christianity. Fourth, I plan to use the infrastructure built for the Jamboree for a big festival in 2017, dedicated to the 500<sup>th</sup> jubilee of the Reformation. Last, but not least, teen-agers and young people from different parishes of our church have an opportunity to participate in something big. They came the last two summers to help build the climbing wall and other structures for the Jamboree. We were working together, we talk to each other, and we prayed and read the Bible together. It was building our church. Using the experience, we organized a few church camps for children and families. The family camp in 2014 was especially exciting. Quite a few families came and enjoyed being together with the kids, studying the Bible, and growing as Christian families.

**Q:** What is the biggest need now in preparation for the Jamboree?

**A:** I want to see more of our pastors coming to lead Bible studies, to be spiritual mentors for the kids who will participate in this rally. So, please pray for this.

The Jamboree is planned for July 15-25. It will take place in the village of Efremkino, Khakassia. ✕



**A structure to be used at the 2015 Jamboree is tried out.**

# 'We knew nothing about this'—reaching ethnic Estonians



**Pastor Pavel Khramov at a presentation given to ethnic Estonians in Siberian villages.**

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were founded by Estonians who moved to Siberia in 1906-1911, during the Stolypin agrarian reforms. For a long time, they kept their national identity, speaking almost exclusively Estonian. However, after 1937, when teachers were killed or arrested, the erosion of the culture and traditions increased. According to the 1926 census, Rosental had 343 inhabitants and they were only Estonians. Today, 145 people live there and only about 10 of them are Estonians. Many moved back to their motherland in the 1980s. Until the fall of the Soviet Union, the links between the people of Rosental and their relatives in Estonia were very strong. Today, visits have become problematic because of visas and the cost of travel.

The second village, Uskul, kept the traditions better. Although the children and grandchildren of the first Estonian colonists are

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## *The witness of grandparents*

**Editor's note: The following was written by Elena Eletsкая, a parishioner of St. Mary's Church in Tomsk, about her grandparents.**

My grandparents, Lydia Krause (nee Engel) and Otto Krause were born in the Saratov region, on the Volga River. During World War II, when Stalin deported all Germans from that area, they arrived at the village of Kozhevnikovo located about 65 miles from Tomsk. They were hard-working people with strong character. Their life wasn't easy. My grandparents went through indignity, hunger, and repressions. However, they never lost heart and remained faithful to each other. My grandparents had six children.

From my childhood, I saw believers who tried to live according to God's Law. I was baptized when I was a baby at home by my grandmother. She taught me to pray in German. I remember this from my earliest memories. When I spent a night at my grandma's home, I prayed at night, and then she made the sign of the cross over me and said that I could sleep peacefully, as the dear Lord protects me. I remember that their house was very clean in every sense; it was like a church. Lutherans in Kozhevnikovo didn't have a place for worship for a long time, so they gathered at their homes in turns. I remember those days very well, when believers came to my grandparents' place. The preparation for those services was very careful. The elderly people came, gathered in the largest room, shut the door, and prayed there and sang German hymns. Later, they bought a house for worship services. My son, Artyom, was baptized there.

When my grandma couldn't go to church due to her sickness, she read and sang at home. She had a lot of books and notebooks filled with her accurate German handwriting. Sunday was a day dedicated only to God. They did no work on the Lord's Day, despite their love of labor and a lot of work that needed to be done in the village.

My Grandma Lydia wanted all of her children and grandchildren to be baptized. She tried hard to grow us as believers. She and my grandpa presented all of their grandchildren with the Children's Bible. Mine then went to my son. I remember well how precious that big and colorful book was to me. I read it and treated it very gently.

Later, when I grew up, I visited my grandmother

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## Faithful grandparents set example for descendants



Elena Eletskaya's grandparents, Lydia and Otto Krause.

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often. I spoke a lot about God and faith. She told me her story. I felt in her great wisdom, strength, faith, and confidence. I loved to be with her. She was never afraid of physical death. She kept saying that she was going home.

My grandparents died 10 years ago, but I remember them very well and thank God for them. ✕

## *Ethnic Estonians see continuation of culture, history in Lutheran faith*

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hardly speaking their native language, they try to keep it. A small folk group there learns traditional Estonian songs and dances, performing at the different festivals throughout the Novosibirsk region. The elderly ladies constantly amaze visitors with their original Estonian dishes.

Unlike the first village, where only two ladies came to the meeting with Pastor Khramov, here about 15 people showed up. They listened attentively to the presentation about the Lutheran Church and her traditions. With bitterness they said, "You see, we grew up in the Soviet time. Our parents didn't teach us to believe. We knew nothing about this." Pastor Khramov gave everyone who came Luther's Small Catechism and explained it briefly.

Many took some extra copies for their relatives and neighbors. It was obvious that these people, being un-churched, are open to the Gospel.

Seeing the Lutheran faith as part of the national identity, they want to know Christ and not just to absorb more traditions.

Please pray for these people and for the pastors and parishioners of the SELC who visit such villages. ✕

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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