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SELC representatives attend ILC conference

By Pavel Khramov

The 25th World Conference of the International Lutheran Council (ILC) was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Sept. 24-27. The Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELC), the Lutheran Church Synod of Nicaragua (ILSN), and the Lutheran Church in Norway (LKN) were accepted into membership of ILC at this conference. Bishop Vsevolod Lytkin and Pastor Aleksey Streltsov, rector of the seminary in Novosibirsk, participated in the conference. We asked Bishop Lytkin to tell about the conference.

Q: Can you tell a little bit about the International Lutheran Council? Why do you think it is important for SELC to be a member of ILC?

A: This organization was started in 1952, and it unites confessional Lutheran churches around the world. Now, with three new churches joining, it numbers almost 40 members.

I think there are at least three reasons for us to be a member of ILC. First, the confessional (or conservative) Lutherans are a small minority in

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Jamboree offers a chance to reach unchurched youth

Editor's note: The first Khakassia Jamboree (scouts' rally) took place July 15-25 in the village of Efremkino in Khakassia. The event had been planned and prepared for since 2012 (see the interview with Pastor Pavel Zayakin in the March issue of the SLMS newsletter). Pastor Pavel Khramov participated in the Jamboree, so we asked him a few questions.

Q: What did you do at the Jamboree?

A: Together with a priest from the Russian Orthodox Church and a deacon from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria, I was one of the "spiritual mentors," that is, I led the talks with scout units on spiritual matters. Every day I gave a short exposition on different topics to the whole assembly. I tried to speak about "eternal" questions, which were raised at our discussions during the day. Finally, I also conducted short morning and evening prayers for those who were willing to pray.

Q: What were the themes of those talks?

A: The so-called "spiritual block or part" of the Jamboree program was

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St. Andrew's expands VBS program this summer

Faith & Hope newsletter #240

Peace to you, dear brothers and sisters in Christ,
During June 8-13, Vacation Bible School (VBS) took place in the parish of Saint Andrew in Novosibirsk. This year, the theme was "Absolution in the Old Testament."

The VBS of the two previous years were about Old Testaments "types" (example, I Cor. 10:6) of Baptism and the Eucharist. Thus, this year's topic completed the "trptych."

Pastor Pavel Khramov, director of the Sunday school at St. Andrew's, explains, "VBS is targeted primarily at children. For many years, we finish the school year at Sunday school with VBS. For the kids, it is a sort of summit of the Bible studies. Thus, the Bible is always the foundation and focus of our summer program."

"Second, we want to encourage our parishioners to learn the Catechism, so we try to incorporate it into VBS. Lastly, we see it as vital to show our children how the Old Testament reveals to us Jesus Christ. This point is very important in our context, as in nearly all Bible study materials, articles, and sermons published in Russian, the Old Testament is presented as a book of parables told for our better Christian living."

"Priests and pastors, scholars and teachers of different denominations in our country think of the Old Testament as a book of instructions for us, as a book of ancient stories in which we can take a lesson for ourselves."

"For two years, we explained how God showed in images and shadow the coming of good things (Heb 10:1), We explained that these things, though not actual Baptism and Eucharist, were not empty symbols, but the real salvation of God's people waiting for the Messiah, the Christ. This year, it was a bit easier. We've been speaking not about a shadow, but body (Col 2:17), about forgiveness for the sake of the One coming, Jesus Christ."

"For the three previous years, we conducted VBS as evening classes. This year, we decided to come back to having the program for a whole day. It gave us more time for Bible study, for games and fun, for practical work, and for fellowship. Besides, the Bible studies, we visited a small local museum of natural history and the science center. We played games and did some work in the churchyard. On the last day, we cleaned the church building and had a grilled wurst [sausage] to



Children attending VBS at St. Andrew's enjoyed fun activities and a trip to the local science center, as well as Bible studies focusing on "Absolution in the Old Testament"

celebrate the end of VBS.

"The children's choir at the Sunday service on the next day became the final element of VBS, as during the whole week the kids were rehearsing the song."

"The bigger program was more difficult to organize and manage, but it attracted kids who are not from our parish. Non-believing relatives of our church members would not let their kids attend Bible studies, but the program with games, visiting museums, and so on, seemed to them worthy of 'wasting time on studying the Bible'."

Please, pray for the children in our parishes, that they grow "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph 6:4), and for the Sunday school teachers, who help parents to raise their kid Christians. ✠

SELC becomes one of ILC's newest members



Bishop Vsevolod Lytkin, left, of the SELC is pictured with the leaders of the other new members of ILC, the Lutheran Church Synod of Nicaragua and the Lutheran Church in Norway

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the world. Thus, it is important for us to know and support each other, to communicate and exchange ideas and resources.

Second, I believe that our church can be a good example and witness of traditional, liturgical, and sacramental Lutheranism among our conservative brothers and sisters. My impression is that among confessional Lutherans, there are misunderstandings about what the Lutheran faith is. Sometimes what people consider Lutheran is Reformed indeed.

Third, it is important for our seminary. Membership in ILC helps to establish contacts, invite and exchange students and professors. We have a great resource here in Siberia, and we are to use it to its maximum. I think first of all about the congregations in Siberia, of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria. It is our older sister, as it was established first as a diocese of the Estonian Lutheran Church and then, as we did later, became an autocephalous (independent) church.

Q: Was the Lutheran World Federation present at the conference?

A: Although LWF and ILC are quite different organizations, they try to dialog with each other. General Secretary Dr. Martin Junge of the LWF sent a greeting to the ILC conference. Unfortunately, the representative of the Federation was a woman

“pastor” from Chile. Just imagine how it looks in countries like Argentina or Chile, where the majority of the population is Roman Catholic! I think it is regrettable, because such “pastors” give an impression that all Lutherans are liberal. I doubt that many people know the difference between ILC and LWF, between confessional and liberal Lutherans. They just see women “pastors” and think that all Lutherans have them.

Q: Besides voting for new members, what else happened at the conference?

A: The conference was a working meeting. The new head of ILC and heads of regional sections were elected. There were discussions in the regional groups. Being very new in this organization, we didn't participate actively. Also, a few papers were presented.

Q: What was your impression of those papers?

A: It wasn't sophisticated theology, with many new ideas. We rather were reminded about the basics of our faith, which is good, as Luther says in the Preface to his Large Catechism, “I am also a doctor and preacher, yea, as learned and experienced as all those may be who have such presumption and security, yet I do as a child who is being taught the Catechism, and every morning, and whenever I have time, I read and say, word for word, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Psalms, etc. And I must still read and study daily, and yet I cannot master it as I wish, but must remain a child and pupil of the Catechism, and am glad so to remain.” The people's remarks showed that some of them have strange ideas about Lutheran theology. For example, someone said that reverence toward the Eucharist is Law. They said that the Eucharist may deter people from the church. So, they say, we need a free and relaxed attitude toward the Eucharist. Then it will attract people. The bishop of SELC (German independent Lutheran Church) presented a paper on the Sacraments. When he said that “we are not unwilling to call ordination a sacrament,” some hearers were very upset and even angry. Thus, the presenter needed to explain that he cited the Apology of the Augsburg Confession (XIII, 11).

It was a pity, but I wasn't surprised too much. There are Lutheran churches so influenced by pietistic ideas, that their theology becomes partly Reformed and not Lutheran. That's why it is important for us to be together and help each other grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ and

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Jamboree gives scouts view of church, pastors



Pastor Pavel Khramov lead spiritual talks and took part in Jamboree activities

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about the Ten Commandments. Due to how full the rally program was, we planned to talk three times with each scout unit. The first talk was to be about the three principles of the Scout movement—duty to God, duty to others, duty to self. The second part was to show that the Ten Commandments coincide with those principles. The third part was about Jesus Christ, as the Keeper of the Commandments for our sake. However, the first day of the Jamboree was ruined by the local authorities, who

demanded that we move to another place. Thus, we were forced to reorganize this program and fit these three topics into two talks.

Q: Could you explain how the local authorities “ruined the first day of the Jamboree”?

A: The government of the Republic of Khakassia (regional authorities) was supportive; last year, they even financed some preparation costs. However, the administration of the district (the local authorities) has opposed Lutherans for a long time. In the 1990s, they tried to stop the legal registration of our congregation in Touim. We went through a series of lawsuits, up to the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation. Thus, they were unhappy that a Lutheran pastor organized a big event in “their” territory. First, they forced Pastor Pavel Zayakin to relocate the rally from the place where it was planned to be, where some preparations were made. When all the participants had arrived and settled at the new location, the head of the district administration’s deputy came and said that we had to leave that place. In my opinion, he hoped that we would just go home, disappointed by all these moves. When he realized that it wasn’t going to happen, he let us go back to the first location. Thus, we spent the whole day relocating the camp instead of working according to our program.

Q: Going back to the “spiritual block” of the Jamboree. You mentioned that a deacon from the Church of Ingria and a priest from the Russian Orthodox Church were mentors as well. How did you get along?

A: We had no difficulties working together. The topics were chosen, especially to avoid confessional disputes. Father Alexey from the Orthodox Church is a quite young and energetic man. He is open to discussion and willing to cooperate in preaching the Gospel. Deacon Vyacheslav from the ELCI is an old friend of ours. He has participated in camps in Khakassia for several years; we know each other well. I was pleased to work together with these two men. I felt real brotherly love and support.

Q: How did the scouts receive the “spiritual talks”?

A: Pastor Zayakin told me that a majority of scout units in Russia have Russian Orthodox priests as “spiritual mentors.” However, the kids and adults I talked to were quite ignorant of Christianity. Some openly said that they were skeptical about religion; some would talk about spirituality, but in very vague and general terms. They consider it as not having something to do with the Holy Ghost, but interest in

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Confessional Lutherans join in Argentina



Members of the ILC joined Sunday worship at a Lutheran church in Buenos Aires, Argentina

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the correct understanding of Scripture.

Q: Did you have a chance to see how the Argentine Lutheran Church lives?

A: The time was short, so we didn't see much. We attended two services in two churches in

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Buenos Aires. The first was Vespers in Saturday and the second was the Divine Liturgy on Sunday. It was a great pleasure to see a few hundred people gathering to the church. We also visited the seminary. It is small and looks very simple, almost ascetic. Though I think seminary should look this way.

Our brothers and sisters in Argentina were very nice to us, very hospitable. It was a very good experience to visit Lutherans on the opposite side of the globe. ✂

Update on summer Jamboree

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non-materials [things], such as music, art, philosophy, or morality. Moreover, at the Jamboree I met many people who a wide-spread stereotypes about Christianity, the Church, and pastors. They thought that Christianity is about morality, Church is boring and aggressively imposing her values on everybody, and pastors have no idea about real life and always use old and unintelligible words. Thus, some people said to me that they were surprised and pleased to see pastors who can talk to teenagers about real issues in their lives. Most of my "spiritual talks" with the scout units were quite open and lively. We discussed such questions as "What does it mean to be human?", "Why should we be good if it causes problems?", "Where can we find strength to be good?", and "What do we do, when we realize that we are not good?"

Q: Can you say if those talks were productive?

A: Well, if we'd planned to convert those teenagers to Christianity, then I need to say that we failed. However, our discussions weren't useless at all. They might realize that the Church has some good answers to the questions every person asks. They saw pastors who weren't afraid of manual labor, who would laugh, who might be upset and angry. It seems to me that some people realized, to their surprise, that the Christian faith is relevant; it has to do with their lives. So, I hope and pray that they will go to church, where they can hear Law and Gospel and receive the Sacraments, and thus obtain the saving faith in Jesus Christ. ✂



Deacon Vyacheslav Shadin of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria at the Jamboree

Parish of St. James growing in Novokuznetsk



Members of the parish of St. James, Novokuznetsk, with Pastor Dmitry Dotsenko

Editor's note: This is the second of a series of profiles on SELC congregations and pastors

The parish of St. James started as a missionary project of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. In the early 2000s, a missionary started to visit Novokuznetsk from Novosibirsk, leading Bible classes and, later on, the Liturgy of the Word. Thus, a group of people was formed. Some of them were confirmed by an American pastor.

However, in 2004, those visits stopped due to a shortage in funds. For a few months, these new Lutherans gathered without any support or guidance. Finally, they came to St. Andrew's parish in Novosibirsk and asked for help.

Though the resources of the Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church were limited, pastors and seminary students started to visit Novokuznetsk every month. The faithfulness and perseverance of the believers in Novokuznetsk brought fruits. This community grew slow but steady.

Dmitry Dotsenko graduated from Lutheran Theological Seminary, Novosibirsk, in 2006. After graduation, he moved to the town of Chernogorsk, near Abakan. He helped Pastor Pavel Zayakin in St. Luke's parish, and traveled regularly to Novokuznetsk. Dmitry was ordained as deacon in 2007 and as pastor in 2010. His regular visits and his pure preaching and teaching caused a good growth in the parish of St. James. Now an average of 40 communicants gathers every Sunday. With financial support from the Siberian Lutheran Mission Society, the parish in Novokuznetsk purchased a good facility for services and activities. Great help also comes from its sister congregation of St. Matthew Lutheran in Spring Lake, MI, in the USA.

Pastor Dotsenko is married to Elena. His daughter Anzhela (Angela) is 20, and studies in Novosibirsk. Their son, Artyom, is 9. The Dotsenko family still lives in Chernogorsk, as in Russia it is not easy to move from place to place. Thus, Pastor Dotsenko makes a trip of 240 miles every week to serve the people 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.

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