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We thank Wheat Ridge Evangelical
Lutheran Church—Arvada, CO for financial
assistance and clerical assistance in
the printing of this newsletter.

Chinese women join Novosibirsk congregation

By Pavel Khramov

On the first Sunday after Trinity Sunday, Bishop Vsevolod Lytkin baptized two young Chinese ladies, Li Eemo and Li Zyahun, and confirmed one, Zing Ghe. The story of their coming to St. Andrew’s parish in Novosibirsk illustrates very well that it is not for us to save people. In our boldest dreams, we would never have thought to reach Chinese people in Novosibirsk.

We should start with the baptism of Ghy Yan and Ya May in 2014. Ya May’s husband moved from China to Novosibirsk to establish a small business here. Ya May was a member of a church in China, so she was looking for a congregation to join. Living nearby, they found our church. Then it was challenging to understand one another. She didn’t speak any Russian or English, so her son, Ghy Yan, served as translator. We also needed to contact our parishioner in Moscow, Yui Su Hua, who is native Chinese but was born in Russia. Thus, she speaks fluent Chinese and Russian and, what is more important, she is a faithful church member. So, she knows “theological Chinese” and she helped with translating

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Inna’s story—An ‘unsafe hobby’ leads to SLMS

By Pavel Khramov

My name is Inna Kichigina. I was born in 1978 in the Stavropolsky region (the southern part of Russia), but my parents moved to Kazakhstan when I was 8-months-old.

My family was atheistic. All the adults were members of the Communist Party. Thus, in my childhood, I had no idea about God. However, I had fallen from a swing at the age of 8 and was seriously injured. I was in a coma for a week, having two cardiac arrests. A year after this event, my aunt had me baptized in the Russian Orthodox Church. It wasn’t really an act of faith on her part. She did it “just in case.” So, I was told to say nothing about this. I can’t remember why I started to attend the services, but I was going to church alone. It was summer, and I was 10 or 11. None of my relatives supported me; they considered this an “unsafe hobby.”

My church life might have stopped that summer, some Protestants

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Zinnurov ordained deacon for Yurga parish

From Faith & Hope newsletter #245

Peace to you, dear brothers and sisters in Christ.

Recently, our Bishop Vsevolod Lytkin ordained Ruslan Zinnurov into the diaconship. He is a Lutheran Theological Seminary (Novosibirsk) graduate who served as a subdeacon for several years in St. Luke's parish, Yurga.

We asked several clergymen who know Deacon Zinnurov for many years to tell us about him.

Rev. Alexey Streltsov, rector of Lutheran Theological Seminary, "We've known Ruslan for a long time. He was a member of the parish of St. Andrew (Novosibirsk) prior to his admission to the seminary. For several years, he was interested in the opportunity to obtain a theological education. So, even before training, he had time to reflect on his vocation. During his studies, we could see his serious commitment to education, perseverance, good obedience, respect for the Church hierarchy. After graduation, he also did not immediately say that he must now serve in the Church. For me, it is a good sign.

"Talking with him, I noted that Ruslan is well aware of the responsibility of the holy ministry. He sees that in Yurga, where he lives, there is no one to do it, and he is ready to serve. He feels his vocation. But, at the same time, he does not act like an arrogant man who believes that he will immediately succeed. And his prudence shows me that he can and should be a good minister.

"During his examination, he referred to the deep impression that the treatise of St. John Chrysostom "On the Priesthood" made on him. Ruslan noticed that, like the character of this book, he attempted to run from the holy ministry while seriously thinking whether he was worthy of it or not.

"As a rector, I feel great satisfaction that a seminary graduate is serving the Church. It is a culmination of his studies, because the seminary prepares ministers for the Church. This means that we all do our job, and our efforts are rewarded in this event, in Ruslan's ordination into the diaconship."

Deacon Vitali Smirnov (Novosibirsk), "I believe that Ruslan will be a good servant because he got an excellent theological training, and he has life experience. He is a 'good manager of his children and his own household' (1 Tim 3:12).

"Undoubtedly, it will be difficult. He is the only clergyman in Yurga. Pastors from Tomsk and Novosibirsk come there only on Sundays. In addition, like the majority of clergymen in our Church, Ruslan

earns money from his secular work.

"He is teaching children in a high school, and it takes a very large part of his time and requires a lot of effort. For example, for the examination before his ordination, he came right after working in the school. But I am sure that with the help of other pastors, with the support of our prayers, he could serve the parishioners of Yurga."

Rev. Pavel Khramov, "Although I knew Ruslan before his admission to the seminary, I think of him, of course, first as a student whom I taught. Daily meetings for several years are helpful to know a person from different sides. Ruslan was not a perfect student, for example, some written work he handed over very late. But there was always a reason as he always tried to make the work the best as possible. I believe that this attitude is very important for a minister of the Church, to whom is entrusted the care for the flock of Christ. Therefore, I think Ruslan will be a good deacon, who will faithfully give God's Word to the parishioners of Yurga."

Bishop Lytkin, "Once, in the good old days, the bishops ordained deacons for themselves (so that the deacons were servants of the bishops). This tradition has gradually changed, and in our time deacons are no longer servants to bishops but to parish pastors. It is quite pathetic, and now I would say that I envy the ancient bishops. Because I am sure that Ruslan will be a very good deacon and co-worker.

"For many years Ruslan has shown himself as a very churched, decent, honest, and kind man. Thus, he should be a deacon, according to St. Paul's description.

"May God bless him, so please pray for him as we prayed at the end of the rite of ordination—'Almighty, most merciful God and Father, through Your dear Son You commanded us to pray for the faithful laborers in Your field. With all our heart we pray to You: to this Your servant, as to all of us who are called to the ministry of preaching the Gospel, grant with abundance the Holy Spirit, so we remain faithful and steadfast during all temptations, and through us Your name is sanctified, Your Kingdom multiplied, and Your will fulfilled. Prevent and defeat the enemies who are rebelling against Your name, destroying Your Kingdom, and opposing Your will. Hear us for the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.'"

Please pray for the newly-ordained deacon and for all Lutheran clergymen in Siberia. ✠

St. Andrew adds members from China

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Zing Ghe receives communion for the first time at St. Andrew parish, Novosibirsk

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some important notions. Finally, Ya May was confirmed and her son was baptized.

A few months ago, a group of Chinese people suddenly showed up at the liturgy. After the service they came to the bishop and asked how they could become members of our church. Later, when we asked Zing Ghe how they found our church, she told us she works in the restaurant nearby. So, she regularly walks by our church. She was a member of a church in China, as well. When she came to Novosibirsk, she started to attend the Chinese church downtown, but the trip to the service and back takes three hours. As Sunday is one of the busiest days in

the restaurant business, she found it very demanding. Having met some Chinese girls who came to study at the university, she tried to study the Bible together with them. But, she said, they felt it wasn't enough. Then they met Ya May, and it became the last reason to come to us.

Catechizing this group wasn't easy. Classes were held in three languages—Russian, English, and Chinese, when Zing Ghe translated to her friends what we said in Russian. We needed to use the Scripture as much as possible, because we could refer to the Bible verse and the students could find it in their Chinese Bibles. There is no need to say that it is the best way of teaching Catechism, even if we speak the same language as the hearers.

Despite the language difficulties, it was always a pleasure to talk with these ladies. They asked very good questions about the Bible, the liturgy, and the life. It was clear that they take faith very seriously. They want to live according to their confession. One of the most touching moments was when we discussed the last chapter of the Catechism. Zing Ghe asked, what it means to receive Communion worthily. She said that in the Chinese church, she was told that a person should look into his life and if there are no sins, then he can partake in the Body and Blood of Christ. Then we explained that the opposite was true. Worthy are those who see sin in themselves and seek forgiveness of it. Christ died for all sinners, not for some elected. Those who think they are whole (Mark 2:17) do not ask the Physician to heal them. They do not believe in these words, "given for

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A Chinese woman is confirmed at St. Andrew

‘Without God, I cannot live in this world’



Inna with adopted son Ivan (“Vanya”)

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visited our town and showed the “Jesus” movie. They gave me John’s Gospel and I persuaded my grandma to buy me the New Testament. I started to read it by myself. Later, on TV, I watched “Superbook” and saw an announcement that I could order two Christian booklets. I did it and studied these brochures as well. As I was growing, I kept attending church from time to time, but I didn’t feel at home in the Orthodox Church. There were many things I didn’t agree with.

In 1995, I entered Tomsk State University, but almost immediately became ill because of the change in climate. I got married in 1997, and a year later my oldest daughter, Anna, was born. Thus, I didn’t finish my studies. In 2001, my oldest son, Daniel, was born. Both of them have serious problems with their health. At first, I couldn’t understand it. Why did young parents, who don’t drink alcohol or smoke, have such unhealthy children? For awhile, I was even ashamed of Daniel. He walked with a permanent stumble; saliva was running from his mouth. I felt aggrieved that such cute and beautiful children had such diseases. Then I realized that they are such as they are. They are different, that’s all. And a thought started to sound in

my mind constantly, “Let it be Thy will.”

A few years later I started wondering about adopting a child. First, I thought it will be just some day when we have a bigger place to live. Realizing that this day would not come soon, I decided to join a volunteer team, visiting an orphanage. We were taking kids outside. Mine turned out to be small and slim. His hat was constantly slipping over his eyes. We played outside and then I went home. The next visit was planned in two weeks. Suddenly, I noticed I couldn’t stop thinking about that boy, Ivan. And by contrast, I stopped thinking about all the difficulties, like the small apartment and so on. I just realized that he is mine. Sometimes our kids are born in other families. I began to collect all the necessary papers and was talking with my husband, Yury. At first, he didn’t want to hear about it. Then he agreed on the condition that Ivan would be my kid. I need to say that when Vanya {editor’s note—a nickname for Ivan} came to our home, Yury became a very careful father. Anna and Daniel accepted their new brother well. They helped me look after him. Vanya is a kid with special needs and he is our loved son and brother.

Last year I saw a picture of a boy with ICP who was waiting to be adopted. I asked Yury if we could take him. He said that if we take another child, it needs to be a girl. Thus, the second Anna appeared in our family. Although she has some serious problems with her health, we do not mind. With all sorts of difficulties with our first three kids, we are ready for anything. During my life I tried to come to church many times. I was sure that without God I cannot live in this world. I always felt emptiness. I had my children baptized in the Orthodox Church, but still something was wrong. I didn’t belong there. I couldn’t attend the services without understanding what’s going on. One day a friend of mine took me to her Pentecostal group. That place was more comfortable for me. I started to attend services with my kids. However, this group wasn’t right either. Everything was too cheerful, the songs were not churchy. It was like a show, a circus.

I always knew where the Lutheran church was located. My kids studied at the school

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St Andrew parish grows

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The sign of the cross is made on the forehead of a woman recently confirmed at St. Andrew parish, Novosibirsk

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you,” “shed for you.” One could see what a relief was reflected on the faces of these ladies who heard the pure Gospel of Christ.

Please pray for these three new members of St. Andrew’s parish—Zing Ghe, Li Eemo, and Li Zياهو—that in the midst of studies and work they continue to be in the church and grow in faith. ✕

Inna—Being God’s family eliminates emptiness

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nearby, so we walked by the church every day. One day I decided to visit this church. When I came, it appeared to be the right church. Everything was exactly as I thought it should be in church—worship, the attitude toward Communion, relationships. I immediately felt at home here. Then there was a time of catechizing, when we learned the basics of the Christian faith.

I’m very grateful to God, that He led me to our church. Otherwise, I would wander around. I would try something without real strength. Being forgiven, being taken through Christ into God’s family, being in Christ is what fills life, eliminates the emptiness. ✕

Yurga congregation

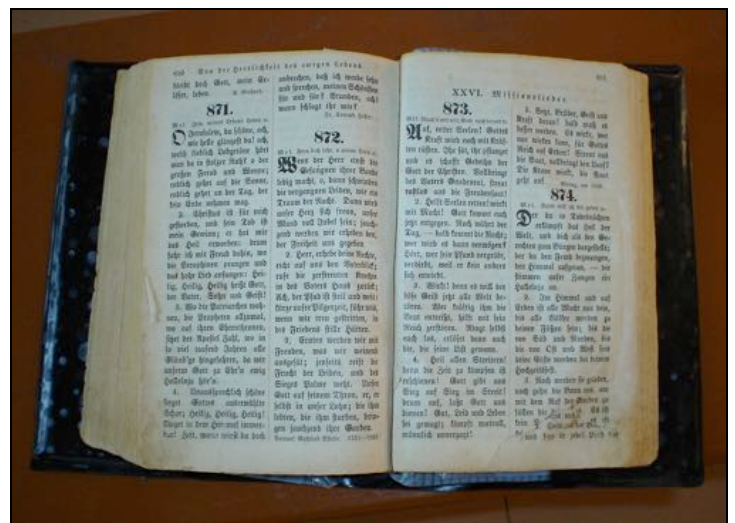
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The congregation consisted solely of laypeople, as the last Lutheran pastors in Russia were killed in 1937. So-called “senior brothers” led services where people sang, prayed, and read the Bible. In the 1990s, when Germany started a program of re-immigration, many Germans returned to the land of their ancestors. Thus, the congregation at Yurga shrank significantly.

Seminary graduate Deacon Alexander Hahn moved to Tomsk in 2004. His wife, Olga, knew one of the ladies from the Yurga congregation very well. Thus, Hahn started to visit the people. In the beginning of 2005, the Yurga congregation officially became the SELC parish of St. Luke. In 2007, Hahn was ordained as a pastor. The same year premises were bought for the parish with the help of the Siberian Lutheran Mission Society.

Until recently, St. Luke’s had no local minister. However, pastors from Tomsk (Hahn and Daniel Burlakov) drove to Yurga every Sunday to serve the people there. Now this congregation has gotten even smaller, as many young people move to nearby cities to study at the universities and colleges and stayed there. Some old parishioners have died. Thus, about 10 people gather for the liturgy on Sundays.

Recently, on the fifth Sunday after Easter, Bishop Vsevolod Lytkin ordained Ruslan Zinnurov as a deacon for St. Luke’s parish. Zinnurov moved to Yurga with his family after graduating from the seminary. His wife, Natalia, was born in Yurga. Her grandmother was a faithful Lutheran who helped the congregation to survive. The Zinnurovs have a son, Arthur, who is 6. ✕



An old German hymnal formerly used at Yurga

Yurga parish created in 1940s, receives new deacon



The congregation of St. Luke's, Yurga

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

Yurga is a small town in the Kemerovo region, located about 65 miles from Tomsk and 110 miles from Novosibirsk. A Lutheran congregation existed here from the mid-1940s. On Aug. 28, 1941, the Soviet government issued a decree of deportation of Germans from the Volga River. Many people were sent to Siberia and northern Kazakhstan. Some settled in Yurga. After World War II, those Germans who were taken to Germany by the Nazis were not allowed to come back to their homes. They were also sent to Siberia. So, more Germans arrived in Yurga. At that time, one-third of the town's population of 27,000 were Germans.

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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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