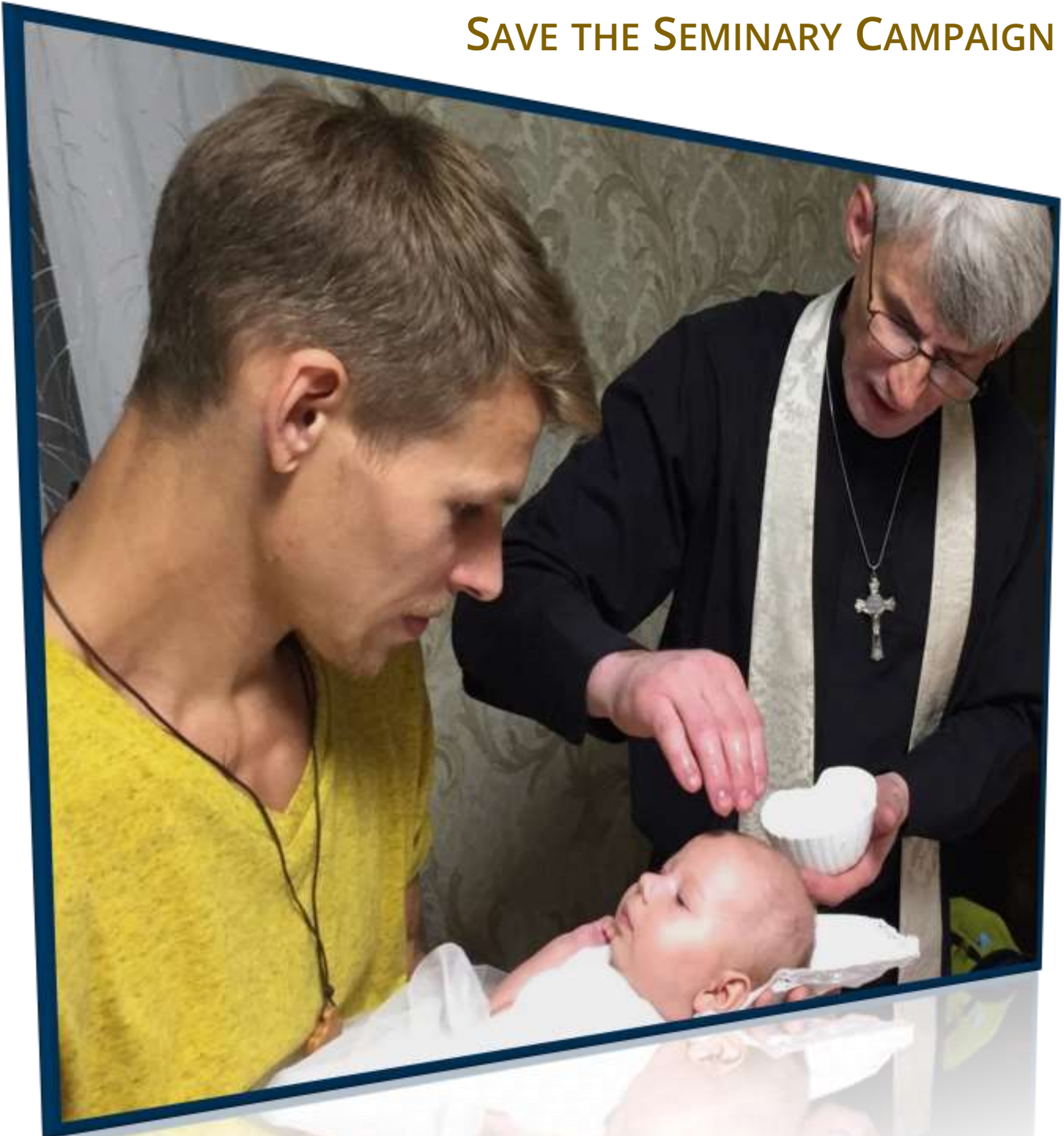




Answered Prayer

Lutheran Theological Seminary, Novosibirsk, Russia

SAVE THE SEMINARY CAMPAIGN



THE SIBERIAN LUTHERAN MISSION SOCIETY

*AND WHAT YOU HAVE HEARD FROM ME
IN THE PRESENCE OF MANY WITNESSES
ENTRUST TO FAITHFUL MEN WHO WILL BE ABLE
TO TEACH OTHERS ALSO. (2 TIMOTHY 2:2)*



Bishop Vsevolod Lytkin, Bishop of the Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church, at the ordination of Novosibirsk Seminary graduate, Pastor XXXXXXX in 20XX. He is assisted by Rev. Dr. Alexey Streltsov, Rector of the Seminary, and Pastor XXXX, from the XXXXX parish in XXXXX.

Prior to the Russian revolution in 1917, the Lutheran Church was the second largest denominational group of Christians living in Russia. The first Lutherans had arrived in there shortly after the Protestant Reformation and accounted for more than three million people at the time of the 1917 communist revolution. The communists were especially brutal, killing or imprisoning virtually all pastors and destroying or confiscating Lutheran churches.

Lutherans endured persecution, and today, the church is making a comeback. Nowhere is that more apparent than in eastern Russia—in Siberia—where many Lutherans, especially those of German decent, were deported in the communist purges of the 1930s. Through the efforts of the Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the pastoral training provided by the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Novosibirsk, Siberia, the Word and Sacraments are again making their way to the long-repressed Russian people.

The ‘Russian Project’ Begins

The Missouri Synod’s call to Russia came in 1996, and was met with enthusiastic response.

In April that year, Dr. Dean O. Wenthe, the newly elected president of Concordia Theological Seminary (CTS) and Concordia’s academic dean, Dr. William Weinrich, were asked if the Fort Wayne, Indiana, seminary would accept a significant donation from a large, American, foundation to develop what would come to be called the “Russian Project.”

Project goals focus on pastoral training

Wenthe and Weinrich subsequently met with Synod President, Alvin Barry, and received his wholehearted encouragement and approval to press forward with the project.

The project charter included three goals:

1. Preparation of men for the pastoral ministry on the Fort Wayne campus to replace the hundreds of Lutheran pastors killed by the communists.
2. Assist Lutherans in Siberia in establishing a seminary for training pastors and lay leaders.
3. Work with the Siberian Church in to organize evangelism/catechetical summer seminars.

Study began at Concordia-Fort Wayne

Since then, nearly 40 Lutherans from Russia and surrounding areas have studied in Fort Wayne, including six women who now serve as translators, church musicians, and deaconesses. Besides Russia, these students came from Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Lithuania, and Latvia. Since the late 1990s, hundreds of laity have attended the annual evangelism and catechetical summer seminars held throughout the region.

THE BISHOP’S LETTER

On September 19, 1996, President Wenthe received a letter from Rev. Vsevolod Lytkin, written on behalf of the West Siberian Christian Mission. The bishop wrote:

“For many years, we think and dream about the foundation of a Confessional Training Center (Seminary) in Siberia. After years of official atheism, the people are mostly unbelieving As Lutherans, we know that only Confessional Lutheran teaching can give people the pure understanding of the Christian faith, so that they could find real comfort in the true Gospel.

“Also, our Christians need to know how to resist the liberal theological influence that is growing in Russia at the present time. According to our experience of studying on the Fort Wayne campus in the summer of 1995, and after our experience this past summer of having professors in Novosibirsk, I can say that only the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod can help us in Siberia to fulfill our dream, and only your seminary can help Russian Lutherans to establish a training center in Siberia So, we ask you to assist us in setting up this training center in Siberia.

“We don’t know how long this religious freedom will last in our country. So, we need to start the education project here as soon as possible.”

Dream of a Seminary Progresses to Reality

Building a seminary is a formidable task. In 1996, the Siberian Lutheran Church appointed Rev. Alexey Streltsov, a Concordia graduate, to work with the Fort Wayne seminary to establish a seminary in Siberia.

The job involved recruiting students, locating facilities to house them and their families, designing curriculum, building a library, identifying and scheduling short-term visiting professors, and a multitude of other tasks. A house was purchased, remodeled, and dedicated in July 1997 as the seminary's first home.

Missouri Synod provides first professors

Classes began the following October with short-term visiting professors from the Missouri Synod. In 1998, Rev. Alan Ludwig, an LCMS pastor from South Dakota, was called to serve as a full-time professor, a position he held until his retirement in 2016.

In 2000, the seminary moved to a larger building in Novosibirsk's "Academic City." Formerly a bank, the building was remodeled and now houses the seminary, the Siberian Church's Consistory, and St. Andrews parish, where Bishop Lytkin serves.

Academic qualifications are first-class

Over the past 25 years, the Novosibirsk Seminary has grown to become the strongest confessional Lutheran seminary in Russia.

Today, the seminary is blessed with a faculty of well-educated, world-class Russian professors, deeply committed to the teaching of confessional Lutheran doctrine and practice. The seminary faculty understands that its purpose is to serve the Church, to prepare the best pastors possible to faithfully preach, teach, conduct the liturgy, give pastoral care



to the faithful, and reach out to the lost throughout Siberia and other parts of Russia and the region.

The seminary is a strong independent institution, fully capable of self-governance. It is no longer necessary for Concordia Theological Seminary to send professors or oversee the administration of the Novosibirsk Seminary.



Siberian Mission Society Supports Russian Pastors

When the first pastors graduated from the Fort Wayne and Novosibirsk seminaries, the Siberian Lutheran Church consisted of two, newly established mission congregations. Seminary graduates were sent into the mission field to plant new churches.

The Siberian Lutheran Mission Society (SLMS) was organized in 2002 to raise funds to support these pastors and their mission stations. Today, the SELC has 23 pastors and 25 congregations, as well as preaching stations in cities and towns from Moscow to Khabarovsk on the Pacific Ocean, serving about 2,500 baptized members.

The 2009-2010 academic year was a major milestone as the Novosibirsk Seminary achieved academic self-sufficiency. In November, the seminary received the long-awaited *License for Education* from the Russian Ministry of Education. It was also the first year that all the classes were taught by the local faculty. The seminary's indigenous, LCMS-trained faculty has

earned graduate degrees in theology and includes faculty members with doctorates. The facilities: classrooms, offices, technology, and student apartments are excellent. The seminary now has the best theological library in Russia when it comes to supporting Lutheran curriculum and research.

TRAVELING SIBERIA FOR THE GOSPEL

Siberia covers a huge expanse of land, perhaps more than most people imagine. With an area of 5.1 million square miles, Siberia accounts for more than three-fourths of Russia's land area. Siberia is home to about 33 million people, one-fourth of Russia's population.

Reaching many of those living in Siberia requires traveling long distances. For pastors and faculty at the Lutheran Seminary in Novosibirsk, travel is a reality they must seriously plan for as they extend the teaching of the Gospel beyond the seminary.

REFLECTIONS OF THE RECTOR

In an open letter that appeared online in both Russian and English in 2000, Seminary Rector, Rev. Dr. Alexey Streltsov, articulated the principles and goals of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Novosibirsk. Today, his insights remain as true and insightful as they were then.

Streltsov quoted 2 Timothy 2:2, *"...and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."*



Then he explained: "We in Novosibirsk are convinced that in our day, serious seminary training comes closest to the meaning of Paul's words in this passage. It is neither lay discipleship training nor short-term leadership preparation, but a serious effort that makes demands upon both teacher and student. After all, the Apostles themselves spent no fewer than three years in the 'seminary' of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"... People will not be satisfied with the shallow talker who is no different from the pop psychologist. People long for deep theology and for the real sacraments. By 'deep theology,' I do not mean scholastic construction, but a truly Trinitarian and incarnational hermeneutic that alone is able to offer hope to people amidst this world of despair and chaos

Moving to a Financially Solid Future

The sole drawback threatening the stability and survival of the Novosibirsk Seminary is fiscal self-sufficiency. Although the Siberian Church continues to grow, it will take many years the church can support the seminary on its own.

By the grace of God, the Russia Project became a reality through the on-going financial support of a generous, American foundation and the dedication, sacrifice, and theological strength of the president and faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary.

With the election of LCMS President Matthew Harrison in 2010, the long overdue fellowship status with the Siberian Lutheran Church was quickly approved. Since then, fiscal responsibility for the seminary in Novosibirsk also was transferred to the

LCMS Office of Church Relations.

The foundation's sole support of the Novosibirsk Seminary cannot continue indefinitely, and accordingly, the foundation has requested that LCMS Church Relations and the Fort Wayne Seminary explore alternate avenues of support. It has become clear to all those involved that the financial strategy must include raising funds to cover the cost of the annual operations of the Novosibirsk Seminary and build an endowment for future operations.

The Siberian Mission Society has been asked to assist with fundraising and to develop a strategy leading to the point where the seminary no longer requires financial support from the foundation.

Help Carry the Gospel to the Russian People

The challenges in spreading the Gospel in Siberia are great. Decades of atheism have numbed the minds of many to the concept of God's ever-present love. Others have been exposed to those who have taught the doctrine of the law without the all-important understanding of the preeminent role of God's grace in man's salvation.

At the request of synod leaders

At the request of Missouri Synod President, Matthew Harrison, and the LCMS Church Relations Office, the Siberian Lutheran Mission Society has been asked to build an endowment to cover the long-term operations of the Novosibirsk Seminary. In response, the Mission Society has established the *Save the Seminary Campaign* to raise \$7 million by 2023.

While the *Save the Seminary Campaign* works to raise money for the endowment, the foundation will continue to support the operational budget of the Novosibirsk Seminary.

Help make a difference

With your donation to the *Save the Seminary Campaign*, you will be working at the side of Russian pastors to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to the Russian people. Please consider supporting the *Save the Seminary Campaign* with a one-time gift, five-year pledge, or with a bequest in your estate plan. Use the donor card enclosed with the brochure when you make your gift to the campaign.

Your gift can make a real, lasting difference in the lives of people in Russia. Your gift will help provide Lutheran pastors as Christ's ambassadors to a people long-starved of the Good News of everlasting salvation.

NOVOSIBIRSK SEMINARY:

TRAINING PASTORS TO PASTOR GOD'S PEOPLE



Your Gift Matters!

Your gift touches the lives of countless people in Russia by helping train pastors to carry the Good News of Jesus Christ to a nation long-starved of Christ's saving grace.

If you feel spiritually moved to help with the important work of restoring the Lutheran Church in Russia or have any questions about the Lutheran Seminary in Novosibirsk, Siberia, feel free to contact any of the following *Save the Seminary Campaign* team members:



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THE SIBERIAN LUTHERAN MISSION SOCIETY

The Siberian Lutheran Mission Society was organized in 2002 to support the work of Siberian pastors and the needs of their congregations.

The Mission Society provides financial support for congregations, rental of church buildings, housing costs, travel, humanitarian aid, and mission outreach programs. The Society also responds to emergency needs and provides opportunities for teaching and preaching for LCMS pastors who wish to teach in Siberia.



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