

# Answered Prayer

The Lutheran Theological Seminary – Novosibirsk, Siberia



Save the Seminary



Restoring the Lutheran Church in Russia

## Save the Seminary Campaign

**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, of the Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church, at the ordination of Novosibirsk Seminary graduate, Vitaly Smirnov, in 2018. He is assisted by Rev. Dr. Alexey Streltsov, rector of the seminary (left), and Pastor Daniel Burlakov.*

## **THE BISHOP'S LETTER**

On September 19, 1996, Rev. Dr. Dean O. Wenhe, then president of Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana, received a letter from Pastor Vsevolod Lytkin, now Bishop Lytkin, written on behalf of the West Siberian Christian Mission. Pastor Lytkin 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.”

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## The ‘Russian Project’ Begins

Pastor Lytkin’s plea for help was met with enthusiastic response from LCMS leaders.

In April 1996, Dr. Dean O. Wenthe, the newly elected president of Concordia Theological Seminary (CTS) and Concordia’s academic dean, Rev. Dr. William Weinrich, were asked if the Fort Wayne seminary would accept a significant donation from a large American Foundation to develop what would come to be the “Russian Project.”

### Project goals focus on pastoral training

Wenthe and Weinrich subsequently met with then Synod President, Alvin Barry, and received his wholehearted encouragement and approval to press forward with the project. Concordia-Fort Wayne called Rev. Dr. Timothy Quill to oversee this new initiative as the Director of the Russian 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 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. These included Seminary Rector, Rev. Dr. Alexey Streltsov, and his wife Elena, who is a translator at the Novosibirsk seminary. Six other women, who now serve as translators, church musicians, and deaconesses in Russia, also have studied at Concordia–Fort Wayne. Besides Russia, students came from Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Lithuania, and Latvia.

Prior to the Russian revolution in 1917, the Lutheran Church was the second largest Christian denomination in Russia. The first Lutherans had arrived 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, but 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 descent, 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 Sacrament are again making their way to the long-repressed Russian people and those in surrounding areas.



# Dream of a Seminary Progresses to Reality

Building a seminary is a formidable task. In 1996, the Siberian Lutheran Church appointed Rev. Streltsov to work with Concordia–Fort Wayne 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. Today, a former bank building in Novosibirsk’s “Academic City,” houses the seminary, church offices, and St. Andrew parish, where Bishop Lytkin serves.

Classes began in October 1997 with visiting professors from the LCMS. In 1998, Rev. Alan Ludwig, a pastor from South Dakota, was called to serve as a full-time professor, a position he held until his retirement in 2016.



## Academic qualifications are first-class

Over the past 25 years, the Novosibirsk seminary has built an excellent reputation and is now recognized as a leading pastoral training school in Russia. In fact, it is one of just two confessional Lutheran seminaries still fully operating in Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan, of the 11 that were founded in the area in the 1990s. Today, the Novosibirsk seminary is a strong, independent institution, fully capable of self-governance. Concordia–Fort Wayne no longer sends professors to teach at the seminary nor oversees the school’s administration.

The Siberian seminary is blessed with a faculty of well-educated, world-class Russian professors, deeply committed to preparing the best pastors possible to faithfully preach, teach, conduct the liturgy, care for the faithful, and reach out to the lost throughout Siberia and surrounding areas.

## Pastoral training continues, even in times of conflict

Even in these difficult times of world conflict, restoration of the Lutheran Church in Russia goes on, as the seminary continues to provide training for future pastors of the Siberian Lutheran Church and regular catechetical instruction for others in their parishes. Professors conduct some of their classes online, a necessity for reaching students who are close to areas of conflict or have been affected by the worldwide pandemic. And, just recently, the seminary completed another of its annual summer youth programs, something they have done since the school’s founding.



## Seminary Achieves Academic Self-Sufficiency in 2009

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 classrooms, offices, technology, and student services are excellent. The seminary now has the best theological library in Russia when it comes to supporting Lutheran curriculum and research.

The SELC continues to grow, but it will take many years before it can support the Novosibirsk seminary on its own. At the request of LCMS leaders, the *Save the Seminary Campaign* is building an endowment to underwrite the operations of the seminary for the foreseeable future.

Your help is needed to accomplish that goal. Combined with gifts from others throughout the Missouri Synod, your contributions will help the seminary remain a vibrant voice for confessional Lutheran teaching for years to come, and help it continue restoration of the Lutheran Church in Russia and surrounding countries.

### TRAVELING SIBERIA FOR THE GOSPEL

Today, the Siberian Lutheran Church has more than 25 pastors, serving parishes and preaching stations in cities and towns from Moscow east through Siberia to the Pacific Ocean. The church has about 2,500 baptized members.

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 and 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.

# A Word from the Seminary 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 comments 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 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 ... .”

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## Moving to a Financially Solid Future

While the seminary in Novosibirsk is academically strong, the sole drawback threatening its stability and survival is financial autonomy. Although it is growing, the Siberian Church will be unable to support the seminary on its own for many years.

By the grace of God, the Russian Project became a reality through the commitment and on-going financial support of a generous American foundation and the theological strength of Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne. That commitment to confessional Lutheran teaching is as strong as ever as Russian professors and Siberian Church leaders press on with training pastors to carry God’s Word and Sacrament to people long-repressed by communist tyranny.

In 2017, LCMS President Matthew Harrison, and the Church Relations Office, asked The Siberian Lutheran Mission Society to build a fund to cover the long-term operations of the Novosibirsk seminary. In response, the mission society established the *Save the Seminary Campaign* to raise an endowment of \$7 million. While the campaign works to raise money for the endowment, the foundation will continue to support a large part of the budget needed to keep the Novosibirsk seminary operating.



# Training Pastors to Pastor God's People

The challenges associated with 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 in Christ. Others have been exposed to ministries that have taught the doctrine of the law without the all-important understanding of the preeminent role of God's grace in man's salvation.

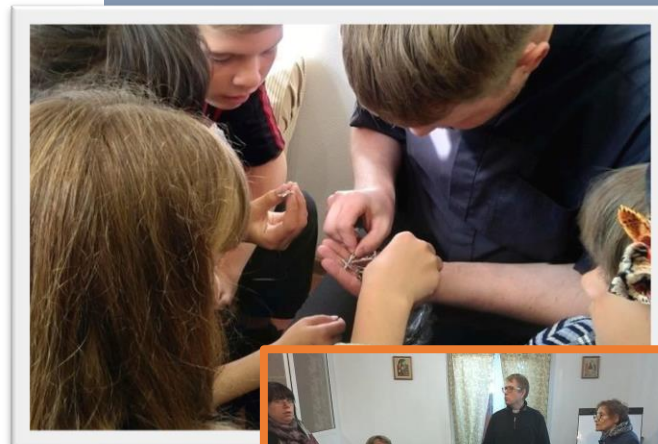
## Help carry Christ's Good News to Russia

You may not be able to serve as a missionary, but you can help the Lutheran seminary in Novosibirsk, Siberia, make the name of Jesus Christ known to a people long-starved of God's Word and Sacrament. The seminary is one of just two confessional Lutheran seminaries still fully operating in Russia and the surrounding area, of the 11 that were started in the 1990s. 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 and others in neighboring countries.

## Your gift will make a lasting difference—now and eternally

Now more than ever, your gifts to the *Save the Seminary Campaign* are needed. They can make a real, lasting difference in the lives of people in Russia. Your monthly or annual pledge, a one-time gift, or remembering the seminary in your estate will help provide everlasting value to saving the seminary. Your gift will help provide seminary-trained Lutheran pastors as Christ's envoys to a people looking for the Good News of everlasting salvation.

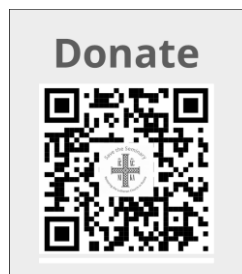
**Your gift has eternal value. It matters today and forever.**



# Your Gift to the *Save the Seminary Campaign* Matters

Your gift does more than support the Novosibirsk seminary and build up the Lutheran Church in Russia. Every gift to the *Save the Seminary Campaign* will touch the lives of people wherever pastors graduating from the seminary are called to minister and preach the Word. As recorded in 1 Peter 1:25, "The Word of the Lord endures forever."

Contributions to the *Save the Seminary Campaign* are safe and will remain so. All gifts to the campaign are banked in the United States, and professionally managed by the Lutheran Legacy Foundation and the LCMS Foundation.



**Donate**

You can give to the *Save the Seminary Campaign* by using the QR Code at the left. It will connect with the campaign website at [savetheseminary.org](http://savetheseminary.org). If you prefer to use a check, please write *Save the Seminary Campaign* on your check.

If you have questions about the campaign or the seminary, please contact:

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## THE SIBERIAN LUTHERAN MISSION SOCIETY

Organized in 2002, The Siberian Lutheran Mission Society supports 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 teaching and preaching opportunities for LCMS pastors who wish to teach in Siberia.



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