

So now what? Well I am actually sitting in the basement of the University Chicago writing my prayer letter a few days late--I arrived Monday evening. Yes, i am back in the USA for a few weeks. Yaroslav Boychenko arrives Saturday the 6th and we have a month of recitals and visits scheduled once more trying to raise awareness of Lutheranism in Russia and maybe even raise some funds for building the Church building in Nizhniy Novgorod, the Capitol of the Volga Valley (where Yaroslav is pastor). Donation information is given below--along with the schedule of places we will be visiting. This month English worship services at St. Anne's continued--but now I have help, so my my month hiatus won't be too difficult on the group; my ministry as campus chaplain at the Ingrian seminary also began--the month will be a bit more difficult, but I put some of the upperclassmen in charge; I visited several congregations in the Ural district of our Church leading a seminar on stewardship; finished work on the Chapel of the Martyrs in the Basement of St. Anne's; continued work on the museum of the Martyrs of St. Anne's--which might actually be finished before I return (or shortly afterwards). All this and more below. God has been good.

Blessings,  
Leif

September 2018

A GOOD WORD FROM CAMP

St. Petersburg, Russia



The Bench of Reconciliation in Chebaktzar--there is also one like it in Volosovo outside St. Petersburg

**примирение--pre-mir-RAIN-ee-yeh--  
reconciliation**

*Colossians 1:21 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconcile*

Of course, our bench of reconciliation is the Cross of Christ which first reconciles us to our Creator God and Father and calls us to forgive and be reconciled to each other. The shape of the bench in the above picture clearly is designed to draw people together. I am tempted to make some sort of connection between benches of reconciliation and our church pews--benches, but that is not really the point. God draws us to Himself, reconciles us to Himself in and through Christ. And yet, we so often draw away from God in willful disobedience. To be reconciled is not to continue in our willful sin--the sin which separated us from our heavenly Father in the first place. Rather, to be reconciled is to rejoice in our forgiveness and in that joy begin working with the Holy Spirit begin to conquer the sin that formerly ruled over our lives.

**Lutheran Martyrs Remembered**

*2 Corinthians 4:8 We are hard pressed on every side, yet not*

**Volga and Ural District Parish  
Stewardship Seminars**

*1 Peter 4:10 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*



A couple of months ago Pastor Konstantin Subbotin, Probst of the Ingrian Lutheran Ural District, asked if I might come to some of his districts parishes to teach on stewardship. I agreed, and this last month saw me hooking up with Konstantine in Saransk and then travelling to the parishes in Oshkar Ola, Chebaktzar, Birska, and Kazan. In each parish we led a Bible study/Seminar on stewardship--in short, our our thankful, proper use of all that which our loving God and Father has given to us. Stewardship, of course, is not simply dropping money generously into the offering plate each Sunday, but includes using all our God given time, resources and talents in God pleasing ways, not just to help the Church but our families, friends,

*despair; I persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed -- I always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.*



In 1917 as a result of the Communist revolution in Russia was a slight shift in borders, and with that shift, there was no longer a Lutheran Seminary in Russia. The Lutherans soon put an end to that problem by establishing their own seminary which was housed at St. Anne's in St. Petersburg. To make a long story short, in 1934 the seminary and parish were closed, and all the pastors, professors, students and even prospective students (i guess there were even databases of sorts back then) were arrested and either deported, shot or sent to the Gulag to die there. Many of these

communities and even our enemies. My trek actually began in Nizhniy Novgorod--I figured I would try it out on a friendly audience before I took it to parishes I had yet to visit (the last time I was in Saransk was 8 or so years ago). The above pictures are of the Church building in Saransk, Oshkar Ola, and Birk--I featured a picture of the Kazan church not too long ago. Below are pictures of the seminars in these Churches.



Acts 20:32 "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

serve as a great example to the young Christians of today as these Lutheran Young people held on to their faith to the end. The word "martyr" means witness--witness not to the saintliness of any particular martyr, but a witness to the grace of our Lord and Savior, a witness to His death and His resurrection for all sinners. A martyr's witness to the faith is a witness especially before those who are enemies of the faith, attackers of the faith, so that even they might repent and come to knowledge of the Truth.



Over the years I find myself in the USA for a month of visiting parishes and as a side benefit family. Pastor Yaroslav is on the way and we will again be talking about the need to build the sanctuary in Nizhniy Novgorod. You are probably even more tired about hearing about that than I am talking about it. Of course, if I were a real master and fundraising, I would say that if you want me to shut up about building the church there, help us build it. The goal of building that Church, as with the purpose of I suppose building all Christian buildings, is to serve the spreading of the Gospel. The building of the Church is not the end goal, but rather equipping the local congregation with another tool to use in spreading the Good News. I think this is why both Slava and I look at each visit more as an opportunity to share the Gospel, each recital he presents as an opportunity for the places we visit to invite both those outside the faith and those in the faith to hear the Good News of how our



Last year the Ingrian Lutheran Seminary students asked if I might serve as part-time campus chaplain. That ministry continues--I even planned for some things to take place while I am away (it is actually fairly light duty...)



St. Anne's in St. Petersburg has become a favorite "venue" for all sorts of events--the space is big. Concerts, Art shows, multi-media productions (like this one on the cosmos--a huge model of the moon was hung from the ceiling). It has even been used as a set for Russian film making. These events do help raise money for the reconstruction of the sanctuary, but that is not the primary goal--In all cases and with all events, we very intentionally share the Gospel to all those involved behind the scenes and with all those who attend such events.

God and Heavenly Father. For those not yet of the faith, that seeds would be planted, and that those already of the faith might be encouraged. This is probably why we are not doing so well at raising the necessary building funds, but we figure even if we do not ever raise the money--as much as this will impede the spread of the Gospel in Nizhniy Novgorod, it is still a great excuse to spread the Gospel and encourage and be encouraged by fellowship with you all. Churches will someday crumble, all our ministry will someday fade and end, but the Word of the Lord stands forever--giving reconciliation, forgiveness and eternal life to all who believe in that Word, the Word made flesh.

Pray for me--the various ministries God has called me to, and that we travel, visit, play and witness--OK, raising the necessary funds would be nice, but better still that seeds of the Gospel are planted and believers encouraged, pray for all those you know who need reconciliation--first to God and then to each other, pray for those you with whom you need to be reconciled. Pray for the Ural parishes that they grow in faith and understanding, for Dr. Charles and Connie Cortright as they begin their service at the Ingrian Lutheran Seminary and Russia in general, for the Lawson family (we are still hoping another professor and his family will come to serve here), for Alyssa Anders who continues to serve, for all our partners in Ministry--LCMS World Mission, Lutheran Heritage Foundation, Lutheran Hour and Orphan Grain Train (we have a meeting this month in Iowa). Pray for the Martyr project at St. Anne's that it plant seeds and strengthen faith, and special blessings for those who have helped: Tanya, Gregory, Yuri, and Matt. Please continue to pray for me--the various ministries God has called me to, and that

will.

**Our Schedule:**

Yaroslav and I will be visiting parishes in several places. Write me for the details-- some of which have not yet been completely ironed out.

Sunday Oct 7, open

Saturday Oct 13 Wapello Iowa

Sunday Oct 14 Wilton Iowa

Tuesday Oct 16 Mission Central

Wednesday Oct 17 CUC

Saturday and Sunday Oct 20-21 Seymour Indiana

Tuesday Oct 23 Concordia St. Louis

Thursday Oct 25-28 North Carolina

Tuesday Oct 30 CUC

Saturday and Sunday Northern Illinois

If you are so moved by the Holy Spirit to help with the building of the Church in Nizhniy Novgorod, there is a way you can help—a project fund has been set up by the Northern Illinois District of the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod: Donations can be made by check: Checks should be made payable to **NORTHERN ILLINOIS DISTRICT LCMS** with designation to: **VOLGA VALLEY LUTHERAN FUND** and sent to:

**Northern Illinois District / LCMS**

**2301 South Wolf Road**

**Hillside, Illinois 60162**

Electronic donations may also be made thru the NID website:

<http://www.ni.lcms.org/> On the 1<sup>st</sup> page is a “Donate Now” button. In the “Specific Mission” area, the donor would enter “Volga Valley Fund”. If you have any questions you may also contact the Northern Illinois District office 1-708-449-3020

For all the Saints who from their labors rest,  
who Thee by faith before the World confessed,  
Thy Name, Oh, Jesus, be forever blessed,  
Alleluia, Alleluia

LSB #677

Blessings,  
Leif

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feel free to share this prayerletter with your Church, friends, or enemies if it will help.

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