

Greetings all, and happy birthday to Martin Luther--at least I think this is the day. As many of you know I spent last month in the USA touring around Churches and other places with Pastor Yaroslav Boychenko--who played several recitals. All of this was officially an effort to raise awareness of the LCMS-NID Volga Valley Mission fund which is hoping to raise money for building the long promises sanctuary in the Capitol of the Russian Federation's Volga District, Nizhniy Novgorod. Yaroslav and I have already admitted that we are not very good at fundraising, but the trip was especially encouraging to us, God opened a few doors to actually witness to the Gospel, and we also hope our visits were encouraging to those who we visited. A special thanks to all those who did receive us--may you be blessed with a special helping of God's peace. Below are some photos with short explanations--I am deviating from my usual format because it is already middle of the month. My having been away for 5 weeks means that things have piled up here as well.

Blessings,



Pastor Yaroslav rehearsing on the piano in the Concordia University chapel

Luke 10: 8 "Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as

are set before you.

Traveling around the USA this last month with my good friend, Yaroslav (Slava for short), witnessing, his performing on piano, by translating, all that--traveled about 4500 miles by car--had us both at one time or another wondering about why we were doing what we were doing. Yes, originally we had received some names at a pastoral conference of those interested in possibly hosting a piano recital if and when Slava returned. As it turned out, however, only one of those on the list actually invited us when we did return--scheduling conflicts, miscommunication, whatever--these things are what they are. This freed us up to visit other places, go through other open doors. Besides the congregations we visited, Slava was invited to play after chapel at Concordia Seminary St. Louis, he played at a Lutheran retirement community, he also met with students and played for both chapel and a separate recital at Concordia University, Chicago (which is still in River Forest, go figure), and even was invited to play some Bach pieces in North Carolina at a Blue Grass BBQ Barn on a piano that hadn't been played in 20 years (or so the owner told us). Such places we visited are not places where one has the opportunity to raise funds for the building project, but are places where sharing our faith and mission experience seemed meet, right and maybe salutary, but that last I can't judge myself.





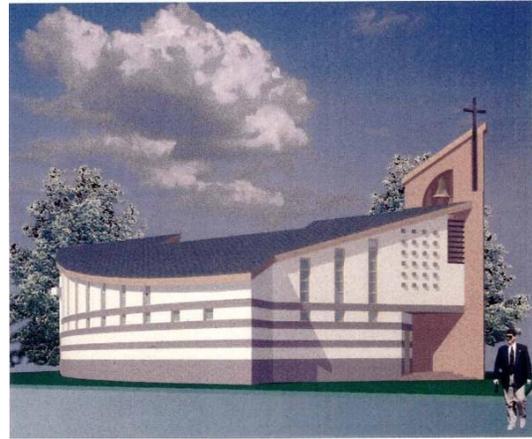
Romans 14:19 Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

In our visit Slava was able to see many different LCMS Congregations--some dwindling in size, some thriving, some holding their own; some with only traditional worship, some with contemporary or blended worship. After visiting one parish and helping out with a School Chapel service, Slava commented, "now I see why you dream of having Lutheran schools in Russia and why you see them as important." Meeting with different pastors, seeing various congregations and meeting with members, gave him a glimpse of the possible future of the Lutheran Church in Russia. This may seem strange to some who are in struggling congregations in the USA, but he was overcome by all the gifts God has given all the Churches we visited--faithful pastors, faithful members who actively volunteer, and the overwhelming availability of good pianos (he could not fathom how many congregations had really good pianos as the conservatory he studied at in Nizhniy Novgorod only had two grand pianos and neither was available to students).



One of the high points of Slava's visit was seeing the Bach Bible held in the rare book room at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis--he also got to see the facsimile version at Concordia University, Chicago





Pictured above is the Congregation in Nizhniy Novgorod (top), below are pictured (left) the Lutheran Church that was taken over by the Communists in 1927 and finally destroyed in 1968 and (right) the proposed sanctuary. 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 1st 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

**Prayer Requests (remember you can send me your prayer requests as well):
Pray for both Yaroslav and me as we return to our ministries here, pray for**

God's will as far as the building of the Church in Nizhniy Novgorod and for His will concerning another visit with Yaroslav to the USA. Prayers for thanksgiving for all those places who did invite us and for the blessings we received through our visit. Continue to pray for my ministry at St. Anne's in St.. Petersburg, my ministry at the Ingrian Lutheran Theological Institute outside of St Petersburg, for guidance on inviting pastors and professors-- and for facilitating their paperwork (visas and so forth), Pray also for the LCMS missionaries who are already here--Alyssa Anders and Connie and Charles Cortright, and pray for the possibility of sending more. Pray as always that God grant me more wisdom, faith and strength that in all things I would discern, trust and be able to carry out His will.

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

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