



THE SIBERIAN LUTHERAN MISSION SOCIETY



Reflections about life of Shvetsova G.A. Part 1

By Galina Shvetsova



My name is Galina Shvetsova; I was born in 1951 in Novosibirsk. My parents moved to Siberia because of World War II (we call it Great Patriotic War). My mother was evacuated from Voronezh, as she worked at the factory, which was moved to Novosibirsk. My father was forbidden to live in Leningrad after the war, where he studied as a postgraduate student. From there he went to the war as volunteer, but got to encirclement and fell prisoner. *[Translator's note: Our state was suspicious towards all people who were for a while under Germans, thinking that they might be enrolled as spies]* He came to Siberia to his mother and met my mother and they got married. One after another children were born, my brothers and sisters. I came into the world miraculously. My mother wanted to interrupt pregnancy; she has already got two small children and experienced the death of her first born. My father was insisting on my birth, because he knew the value of the human life very well, having gone through the hell of German concentration camps. But my mother defended her "rights." She came to the hospital and the doctor there stood for my protection: he showed my mother the remains of unborn children and furnace where they were burnt. My mother was shocked by all what she saw, and she said: "I don't want my child to be burnt in this furnace." So I was born. The Lord gave me life. And after me, my younger brother and **continued on page 5**

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Easter charity fair: helping with fun

by: Pavel Khramov

The first Easter charity fair took place in our parish in 2004. I do not remember who came up with this idea, but it seems that it was in the air — so quickly many people responded and joined in organizational work. Since then we have a team of young adults who take care of this fair. They produce a colorful announcement that invites and inspires people to bring

items to sell. They collect all this stuff, they arrange it beforehand, they are in charge during the sale. Altogether it becomes not a small job, not the work of just one day. Planning takes several days.

What I like about this fair is that we reach a few important goals with one event. First of all, our church members are taught to fast properly. They prepare different thing for the sale during Lententide. Fasting could not be only a diet, but we should also devote ourselves to liturgy, Scripture, prayer and deeds of mercy. Our Lord Himself united prayer, fasting and alms-giving in His Sermon on the Mount. So, when we spend our time and money for preparing things for this sale, we give to needy people.

At the Easter fair our parishioners can see that their talents and creativity can really serve a neighbor and bring glory to God. Moreover, we **continued on page 3**

With God, all things are possible

by Larry Beane

Thanks to the work of the [SIBERIAN LUTHERAN MISSION SOCIETY \(SLMS\)](#) – especially the newsletters and videos – members of my congregation, Salem Lutheran Church in Gretna, Louisiana, have become aware of the tireless missionary work of faithful pastors and parishes in Siberia and the ongoing faithful ministry of Lutheran Theological Seminary in Novosibirsk. We have been sending a small amount of money on a monthly basis to help one of our sister parishes in Russia: Holy Spirit Lutheran Church in Chelyabinsk.

And thanks to technology, we have been able to become internet friends with Father Vladislav, Deacon Victor, their families, and others in the parish and all over Siberia. But how wonderful it would be to actually meet in

MY DAYDREAM BECAME TRUE IN WAYS THAT FAR EXCEEDED WHAT I COULD IMAGINE. THE HOPES AND DREAMS OF RUSSIAN CHRISTIANS HAVE BECOME TRUE IN WAYS NO-ONE COULD HAVE IMAGINED.

person and to partake of the Holy Sacrament together! Until recently, this was only an idle daydream for me.

But with God, all things are possible: be it the miracle of a reborn and revitalized confessional Lutheran Church in Russia, or the lesser miracle of allowing me the privilege to finally make my daydream a reality. Out of the blue, I was invited by the bishop and several pastors to teach at some of this year's summer seminars!

By God's grace, a lot of help from Pastor Daniel S. Johnson, and with donations from friends and parishioners, I was able to spend 23 days in Russia this past summer. I visited seven SELC churches, gave papers in three places, and preached at St. Andrews in Novosibirsk. I not only saw firsthand the work of the pastors and laity, I had the joy to speak at length with them. I traveled with them. I communed with them. I became friends with them.

It was indeed a trip of a lifetime, and I came away with even more respect for the bishop, priests, deacons – and the men and women in the pews – who have suffered and struggled, and who continue to faithfully confess the faith once delivered to the saints!

One of the many high points of my adventure was to meet Father Vlad, Deacon Victor, their families, and congregation in Chelyabinsk. Due to a scheduling conflict at the place where they normally meet as a congregation, we celebrated the Divine Service in a beauty salon. There, we shared the true and eternal beauty of the Word and Sacraments, of the forgiveness of sins, and of eternal fellowship in that humble and yet glorious environment where Christ was truly present for us and with us. I was able to present a hand-made cedar plaque bearing the

congregation's name that was made months ago by a member of my congregation, a token of the bond of love and friendship between our congregations. We also enjoyed an extraordinary outdoor meal around a campfire and partook of wonderful conversation and fellowship.

The church is indeed universal and is comprised of men and women of every tribe and tongue. The church is eternal, and cannot be stamped out by anyone or anything. The church is a worldwide family of the redeemed who are called upon to share one another's joys and burdens.

I encourage Lutherans in the United States – whether individuals or congregations – to consider having such a relationship with a fellow Lutheran congregation in Siberia. The personal connection between Christians strewn around the globe has been enabled by not only facebook and Google Translate, but more importantly, by “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.”

My daydream became true in ways that far exceeded what I could imagine. The hopes and dreams of Russian Christians have become true in ways no-one could have imagined. The real miracle is the fact that the Word is preached, sacraments are administered, the Gospel is proclaimed, and Jesus continues his saving work reconciling poor miserable sinners to one another and to God all over the world. And that is not a dream, but the ongoing reality of the church! Indeed, with God, all things are possible! ✕



The plaque from Salem Lutheran Church – Gretna, LA is presented to Holy Spirit Lutheran Church – Chelyabinsk, Russia. Pictured l to r, Dcn. Victor, Pr. Beane, Pr. Vladislav

Editor's note: A blogged version of Pastor Beane's travel journal can be found (with links to pictures and videos) here at:
<http://fatherhollywood.blogspot.com/search/label/Siberian%20Trip%202011>

Fair supports Children City Hospital

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all have a chance to look at our brother or sister from an unexpected side. Suddenly, we learn that this young man can bake very tasty pirogi. We see that this shy woman makes funny postcards. A boy, who seemed to be able only to make noise at the service, can make clay dinosaurs. Of course, in the church we are brothers and sisters in Christ, united by His blood shed for us. It is most important. But it helps to be friends, too. And when we know each other better, we can feel more comfortable with each other – not as people who just come together for a couple of hours every Sunday morning.

Our “fair team” tries to bring some fun in this event. They invented special money “lutik.” In Russian it is consonant with “Lutheran” and in the same time it is a name of a flower (*Ranunculus*). Sometimes they organize a “secret auction”, when people are bidding for an unknown lot. Thus, Easter fair becomes also a social event, when people can chat, have some snacks and enjoy the time together after the festival liturgy. It fits nicely into the celebration of Resurrection of our Lord.

Of course, we do not do it just for fun. The main goal is to collect money and help needy people. For a few years, already, we bring necessary stuff to the Children City Hospital, especially for babies without parents who are treated or rehabilitated, there. There are abandoned kids among them, that is, kids who were left by their moms in the maternity hospital. There are also babies whose mothers did not refuse them, but could not take care of them, for the moment. There are babies who were taken away from problem families by welfare officers.



Natalia Leonova, the chief doctor of this hospital, told us that they had three-year kids, who did not know, what a spoon was even, or what soup was. Apparently, they were fed inappropriate food at home, and so they could not eat soup even at age three (soup is a very common food to give to small children in Russia when the breast feeding is over).

In past years we have bought some equipment for this hospital: heaters, air-sterilizing devices, baby cots and cribs etc. This year the hospital administration have asked us to buy cloth, sandals, disposable diapers, and toys. Doctor Leonova then explained this request: "Now the city is funding our hospital quite well. But still this budget does not include expenses on shoes, as kids are supposed to be inside. But we want to take them outside, so that they can play in the playground, and in the sandbox. The same

situation is with toys. They are not in the budget, but kids need to play and grow. The bedding is in the budget, but the hospital always needs more. When a baby is taken from the problem family, their bedding could be only thrown to the garbage, it is extremely dirty, and torn. When this kid goes to an orphanage, he is not sent there naked, but takes the bedding cloth he got in the hospital. Something is different with diapers. We can buy them for money designated for different sorts of medicine, but medication proper is more important than diapers within that category."

As in the past years, it was again, a great pleasure to visit this hospital, to meet doctors, nurses, and volunteers helping to care for children and teaching them. It is obvious that all staff care about babies, they want to create the best conditions for their treatment, rehabilitation, and living. And because they care, they are so grateful for any help.

FOR A FEW YEARS, ALREADY, WE BRING NECESSARY STUFF TO THE CHILDREN CITY HOSPITAL, ESPECIALLY FOR BABIES WITHOUT PARENTS WHO ARE TREATED OR REHABILITATED, THERE. THERE ARE ABANDONED KIDS AMONG THEM, THAT IS, KIDS WHO WERE LEFT BY THEIR MOMS IN THE MATERNITY HOSPITAL.

Children staying in the hospital become a little bit better, funnier, more home-like due to equipment, toys, cloth and shoes we bring there. When I see kids there, it is clear that they are cared for very well. They smile, they play. It is very good that we can make the work of doctors, nurses, and volunteers easier.

This year we had the eighth Easter charity fair. A couple years ago we thought that probably this idea would not inspire our parishioners any more. That year we had just a few items for sale when it was a week before the Easter. But finally people brought a lot of stuff and we collected more money, than in the previous year. I'm glad to have this tradition in our parish. We provide a real,

though small, help. I'm glad that kids of our parish participate in the fair. They learn to care about their neighbor (even if he or she is not so close to you), they learn to be selfless. And I'm sure that it helps us to overcome "poverty syndrome". I mean that we learn to give and to



help, not only to receive. We learn to see needs outside our parish and our church. We learn to be the salt and the light to the world.

I like the idea of Easter fair very much, and I do hope to have the tenth fair in two years. But I think, we must be ready to leave it and do something else, if people would not be interested in this project anymore. Finally, helping people is much more important than nice traditions. ✂

Andrei Lipnitski travels to Nikolaevka village

by Vsevolod Lytkin

Several days ago pastor Andrei Lipnitski made a trip to Nikolaevka village, which is located in Kyshtov district to the north of the Novosibirsk Region.

He had to make the last part of the trip on a military vehicle, which was provided by the authorities, as there was simply no road to the village. The easiest time to get to the district is in winter when the roads are covered with ice and so are solidified. While it is possible to do it in the summer, it must be at a time when there has been no rain. After rains, there are simply no passable roads, and the local people are completely cut off from the rest of the world.

The goal of pastor Andrei's trip was to meet the inhabitants of two Estonian villages. As a matter of fact, many Estonians settled over time in these places, as well as in many other regions, such as in the south of Krasnoyarsk region and in Tomsk region.

It is important for the Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELC), formerly a deanery of the Estonian Church, to locate such villages and somehow try to help their dwellers to return to the faith of their fathers.

"We feel responsible for these people, as their ancestors were strong in the faith.

Siberian Lutherans irrespective of their ethnic background encountered numerous trials: revolution, civil war, compulsory collectivization, confiscation of property, persecution for faith, relocation to other places organized with the aim to deprive people of their roots.

In Siberia, there are hundreds of villages with Lutheran roots. In the Soviet times many of the believers were executed by shooting or perished in the prisons or

camps. In some places groups of believers, not tied up with the external world, remained. Sometimes they are situated very far from cities and towns.

We are always happy to find such people and to assist them. Our great concern is to



Pr. Andrei Lipnitski's car on road to Nikolaevka after rains

provide pastoral care for the villagers, who have been deprived of it for such a long time. We desire for these people to recall and learn of Jesus Christ, believe in Him and be saved. Their ancestors were the ones who brought Lutheranism into Siberia. Now our understanding of responsibility for these people includes visiting such

villages, conducting services and catechizing people there. It is a pity that there is still a small number of pastors in our Church and few resources to travel to those remote places," bishop Vsevolod Lytkin said.

Thus, the clergymen of St Mary parish in Tomsk began their visitations to Beryozovka village located about 200 miles north of Tomsk [see *Faith and Hope Newsletter* #156]. And a year ago Bishop Vsevolod Lytkin consecrated the monument to Estonian settlers in Estono-Semyonovka village in Toguchin district of Novosibirsk region [see, *Faith and Hope Newsletter* #195].

And now Nikolaevka village entered the picture. This Estonian village exists for over one hundred years. First settlers came from Estonia in the end of the nineteenth century. The majority of the local people still speak the Estonian language, and many speak Estonian even better than Russian.

Still, there was never a Lutheran parish in the village,

THE SOVIET TIME GENERALLY CONFUSED EVERYTHING THERE WAS, AND MUCH OF WHAT WAS BEFORE IS FORGOTTEN BY NOW. ALL THE VILLAGERS REMEMBER, HOWEVER, THAT THEIR ANCESTORS WERE LUTHERAN, AND THE MAJORITY OF THE BAPTIZED HAD BEEN BAPTIZED BY LAY-PEOPLE ACCORDING TO THE "RITE OF BAPTISM IN CASE OF EMERGENCY."

and no Lutheran pastor has ever visited that village.

Village residents no longer remember which parish their ancestors were a part of – either the parish in Omsk (which is geographically closer) or St Mary parish in Tomsk.

During the Soviet time there was much confusion. Much of what existed before the October Revolution is forgotten by now. All the villagers remember, however, that their ancestors were Lutheran, and the majority of the baptized had been baptized by lay-people according to the "rite of Baptism in case of emergency." As one of the meeting attendants said: "I know how Lutherans differ from the Eastern Orthodox: the Orthodox baptize their children in the church buildings, while among Lutherans *babushkas* [Russian grandmothers] baptize their children at home."

Alas, she said so, because there was never a church in the village, and no current inhabitant of the village had ever seen, either a Lutheran church or a Lutheran pastor. Pastor Andrei Lipnitski became the first Lutheran clergyman who visited this village since its establishment.

Unfortunately, he was not able to take pictures. Even though electricity was available in the village club, where the pastor met the local residents, there was only one weak bulb for the large room, and so it was very dark.

Please pray for the mission work of the Lutherans in Siberia, and that all people, whose ancestors were Lutherans, would return to the Church. ✠

Editor's note: This article first appeared in the SELC newsletter "Faith and Hope #205." This version has been edited.

‘What hinders me ...?’

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sister were born. After the war in many Russian families there were many children.

My childhood was a happy time for me: I lived in the family, where I was loved. On the playground there were many children. We organized sport competitions, different games, ran with all the children to the river, went to the cinema, and participated in popular festival on Victory

... [T]HE DOCTOR THERE STOOD FOR MY PROTECTION: HE SHOWED MY MOTHER THE REMAINS OF UNBORN CHILDREN AND FURNACE WHERE THEY WERE BURNT. MY MOTHER WAS SHOCKED BY ALL WHAT SHE SAW, AND SHE SAID: “I DON’T WANT MY CHILD TO BE BURNT IN THIS FURNACE”. SO I WAS BORN. THE LORD GAVE ME LIFE.

Day. My brothers, sisters and I studied in two schools: comprehensive and music. My older sister and I studied to play the piano, my brother studied to play the button accordion, and my younger sister the violin.

Our family was big, our grandmother, my father’s mother, lived with us. And when I was 10 or 11 years old my mother’s parents moved to us from the village near Voronezh. Our grandfather served in the Tsar’s army, participated in the war of 1914, was contused, his one arm didn’t move. But he was literate and loved to read very much. He couldn’t read to himself and always read aloud. Most often I saw the thick book of Psalms in his hands. I didn’t understand the Psalms, but his reading assuaged me. When something went wrong in my life I went to my grandparents’ room and listened to my grandfather’s muttering. Grandmother Aksinya sometimes went to the church and at Easter she always went to the vigil service. In the morning she came back very tired with holy water (blessed or sanctified water) and told my grandfather about the service. In summer they lived in a dacha, but in winter with us in the city. And of course I had a question: Why do they believe in God, but we don’t? It was explained that it was a belief of old people, that we shouldn’t make them change their mind, they were grown up in it, and they didn’t have education. But we are another generation: well-educated, modern, we already conquered the space and Yury Gagarin said that he didn’t see God in the space. At school we were taught to believe in the bright future of communism, popular phrase was “Lenin lived, Lenin is alive, Lenin will live”. In songs we sang: “Sun is for ever, happiness is forever – so man commanded”. The results of communist propaganda reached the absurd. When in the seventh grade we were given a composition theme: “How do you imagine a future man?”, my classmate wrote: “People in the future will have a lot of

free time: they won’t cook food and eat, they will be satiated by work and rest.”

Also I remember the fear that appeared after great scandal in press, where it was said, that a church watchman killed a boy with a gun who went to the bell tower for pigeons. Then there was a film on TV “Black clouds above Borskoye” about a fate of a girl, who was decoyed in religious sect and almost immolated, she was rescued by a miracle. These feelings scared and repelled from church. After the eighth grade I entered Music Pedagogical College on music department. And on the first course I met with church rejection again. In the college was a student, who sang in a church choir. She was in her fourth year, almost a graduate. Somebody denounced her to the college administration and she was discussed on pedagogical meetings and was expelled. A Soviet teacher couldn’t be a slave of God.

But my spiritual seeking continued contrary to reality. I

started a diary, where I wrote wise thoughts from the books I had read, reflecting on them. In the Institute of Arts, which I entered just after the college, I had read Bulgakov’s novel “Master and Margarita”. And again I became interested in Christ. Our music teacher, whom we trusted, answered to our question “Who is Christ?": “He was a real man, a teacher of Jews, He preached beautiful, humane teaching, which was called later Christianity (Love



Galina with two brothers

your neighbor as yourself; you shall have no idols and etc.). As time went by, many fictions and legends appeared around His name: about the Immaculate Conception, His miracles, resurrection and so on. We are modern people,” said our teacher, “and we should know how to separate fiction from reality.” **continued on page 6**

While I was a student, I got married to a graduate student of the same institute, a talented musician, the conductor of the folk instruments orchestra, but, unfortunately, he was already addicted to alcohol. After graduation and bearing my daughter I worked for a few years at the Palace of

Culture, where I taught children to play the piano, conducted a children's choir and then came to comprehensive school to teach music. Later I quite often quoted from James about this time in school: *"My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment."* In overcrowded school, in badly equipped classroom I taught children from the first to the eighth grade (more than 30 lessons in a week). More than 1,000 children a week went through those lessons. To get acquainted with children and their families better, I asked pupils to write diaries of music impressions, where they wrote favorite family songs, drew pictures to the music they listened to, got grades from their parents for the performed songs and so on. Through those diaries I have known children and their creative potential better. There were many concerts to different holidays: Teacher's Day, Anniversary of the Great October Revolution, Constitution Day, and calendar feasts. So much time and strengths was spent on aggrandizement and praise of Lenin, Soviet authorities, and the Great Revolution, "Not many of you should become teachers." Of course, we listened to classical music of Tchaikovsky, Bach, Beethoven, Schubert, and Prokofyev at the lessons. We sang Russian folk songs, played music, attended classical operas and ballets in the Novosibirsk Opera. How much I

I WAS NOT BAPTIZED IN MY CHILDHOOD. LIKE THAT ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH, I SAID: "WHAT HINDERS ME FROM BEING BAPTIZED?" ON THE JUNE, 29TH OF 1991, 10 DAYS BEFORE MY 40TH BIRTHDAY I WAS BAPTIZED

didn't understand then and wasted time! I think, the Lord patiently waited and was preparing me. My spiritual search strengthened by sufferings, which I experienced living with my alcohol addicted husband, and fear for the future of my daughter. I got acquainted with so many movements and

teachings: For abstinent Russia, Rerikhs' teaching [Translator's note: New Age movement of Russian origin], Hare Krishna, Porfiry Ivanov's teaching (*another Russian sect*). I didn't think that time about the harm of those teachings. Now I remember with horror, that all those sects and cults I met in my school. Freedom of speech, which came to us with Gorbachov, also brought this

spiritual permissiveness. Different teachers and preachers came to schools and worked with trustful and tired teachers, alluring them by lies.

In June, 1991, I finally heard the Gospel. A big

evangelism rally was organized in the "Palace of Culture" of Novosibirsk. It was organized as a cultural event with concert items, slides, and preaching of American missionaries. There I heard the Gospel. The Bibles were freely given to listeners. So the Bible appeared in my house. Reading the Bible was shocking for me. I gathered wise thoughts of many people for many years, but real wisdom

was in that Book. After acquaintance with the Bible I couldn't read other books. At

the end of the project "Biblical meetings," organizers called listeners to be baptized. I was not baptized in my childhood. Like the Ethiopian eunuch, I said: "What hinders me from being baptized?" On June, 29th of 1991, 10 days before my 40th birthday I was baptized. ✕

Editor's note: This is part 1 of a 2 part series. Part 2 will appear in the December 2011 issue of the SLMS newsletter.



Galina gives music lessons

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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