

God's Mission ...as told from the perspective of Alyssa Anders

HEADED TO MOSCOW

January/February 2020

We're off!
Поехали!

Last Friday I found myself, with fellow LCMS missionary Rev. Charles Cortright, whizzing through the countryside from St. Petersburg to Moscow on the fast train. Although I've lived in St. Petersburg for over three years, this was my first trip to this historical and awe-inspiring capital city. This quick weekend trip was my first opportunity to see the iconic sights of Red Square and the Kremlin, but also to see a bigger picture of the Ingrian Lutheran Church, of the system for theological education, and to meet fellow Lutherans—we are joined by faith even though we are separated by quite large distances. As we can appreciate in the United States, the tremendous size of Russia, and the wide spread of the Ingrian congregations across the nation can sometimes isolate them from one another. This trip was a chance for me to see another part of Russia and of the Lutheran Church, and also for them to benefit from theological education and trained theological educators.

Theological Education

Theological Education is a large part of the LCMS' focus in foreign missions. In Russia, we are not focused on starting a church, but on encouraging, supporting, and building up the church that already exists. The task changes from finding people to become a congregation to training those already there to lead, pastor and work in these congregations.

In this task of theological education in Russia, we partner with the Theological Institute of the Church of Ingria (known as "the seminary" or locally as "TICI"). One of the programs they offer is designed for people who are already serving in congregations in various parts of Russia and don't have the opportunity to travel to St. Petersburg (an expensive and sometimes very long trip) for seminars of courses. The solution? Bring the courses to them! Intensive, weekend seminars help them to complete the course requirements for various Institute programs.

Prayer Requests

"I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."
Ephesians 4:1-3 (ESV)

- Pray for the newly elected bishop, that God would guide him to be a faithful servant leader of the church
- Pray for me as I prepare for a Russian language test at the end of February
- Pray for theological educators and those studying theology—that all these efforts would lead towards Christ



Holy Trinity church: outside (Rev. Cortright and I with the pastors and translator, Alexei Zybstov) and inside



One of my coworkers, Rev Charles Cortright, was asked to do a weekend seminar in Moscow on the topic of the Old Testament as part of an introductory theology course. I volunteered to accompany him to help with navigating Russian trains and train stations and to assist with the seminar as needed.

The Seminar

The lectures started Friday evening, continued all day on Saturday, and there was even one lecture on Sunday morning

before the service at noon. In addition to pastors and church workers, any member of the congregation was welcome to attend. There were several individuals who attended all of the sessions, but people regularly came and went in accordance with work and kids'

schedules. Altogether, there were about 15 people who came at one point or another.

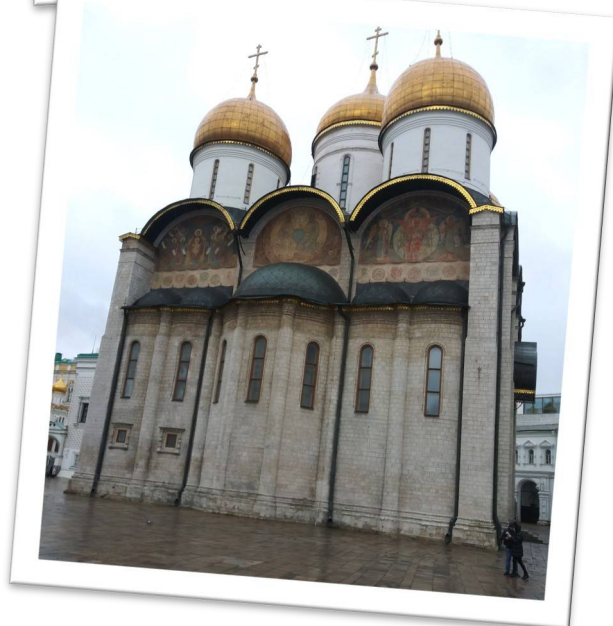
Rev. Cortright presented a general overview of the Old Testament, and another professor gave an introduction to the New Testament—it was a lot of material crammed into one weekend! Afterwards, everyone expressed their great appreciation and gratitude for what they had learned and the information that had been shared.

Sightseeing

We also had a couple of hours to see the sights of the city, including the Red Square, where the iconic St. Basil's Cathedral is located as well as GUM, the most famous department store in Russia. We also toured inside the Kremlin, where

many of the government buildings are still located although we only had entrance tickets to the various collection of cathedrals and chapels. (I should also clarify: I did NOT meet Putin while I was there!) We visited the Dormition Cathedral where the tsars were all crowned and the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael, where Ivan the Terrible is buried. There was so much history, and such ancient history everywhere!

It was a packed trip, and by Sunday evening I was glad to get back to St. Petersburg and to my own apartment. I hope this isn't the last chance I have, though, of seeing the world of the Ingrian church through the lens of theological education!



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