

TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

725 SW Buchanan Street

Topeka, Kansas 66606-1426

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

TRINITY TIDINGS

May 2018

STAFF

Interim Pastor — Alan Saatkamp

Cindy McGinnis

Administrative Assistant

office@topekatlc.org

Laurie Jackson

Music Director

Marcy Carlson

Custodian

marcyrtpr@gmail.com

OFFICE

Trinity Hall, 725 SW Buchanan St.

Office Hours: 10:00AM-3:30PM Mon.-Thur.

Telephone: (785) 233-0767

WORSHIP SERVICE

Sundays, 10:30 AM liturgical service of Holy

Communion celebrated every Sunday

BIBLE STUDY

9:15 AM Sundays in Trinity Hall Lounge

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Trinity Hall-725 SW Buchanan Street

9:00-10:15 AM (September-May)

Ages 3 through Adult

The mission of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church is to:

- *worship God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,*
- *serve those in need, and*
- *reach out to share the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ!*

Together in Community

Living with Christ

Caring for Neighbors

May 2018

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
EVERY SUNDAY: 9:00 AM CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL 9:15 AM INTERGENERATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL 10:30 AM WORSHIP & HOLY COMMUNION		1 9 am Quilters 5:15 pm W&M mtg.	2 5:30 pm Women's AA	3 7 pm Men's AA	4	5
6 Blood Pressure Checks after Worship	7 5 pm Women's AA	8 9 am Quilters 4:45 pm Learning 5:30 pm Council	9 6:30-8 pm Historic Old Town NIA meeting 5:30 pm Women's AA	10 7 pm Men's AA	11	12
13 <i>Mother's Day</i> Bring treats for BUSN Treat Day 5:30-8:30 pm Youth Group	14 BUSN Treat Day 5 pm Women's AA	15 9 am Quilters	16 10 am Priscilla Circle Bible Study 5:30 pm Women's AA	17 7 pm Men's AA	18 June Trinity Tidings deadline	19
20 Last day for children's Sunday school	21 5 pm Women's AA	22 9 am Quilters 7 pm TLHA	23 5:30 pm Women's AA	24 7 pm Men's AA	25	26
27 5:30-8:30 pm Youth Group	28 MEMORIAL DAY <i>Office will be closed</i>	29 9 am Quilters	30 5:30 pm Women's AA	31 7 pm Men's AA		

Special Items of Interest

- ◆ As of April 17, the total money collected during Lent for God's Global Barnyard was \$1,044.30!
- ◆ Buchanan Street repair begins—see page 3 for info.



725 SW Buchanan St.
Phone: 785-233-0767
E-mail:
office@topekalc.org
Website:
trinitylutherantopeka.org



INTERIM PASTOR ALAN SAATKAMP

Coming in May—Pentecost

What does Pentecost mean? It's only a few weeks away, and if you're in church on May 20 when Pastor Gary Teske is providing pulpit supply, I think you'll find it a meaningful and moving experience. That's all I'm going to write about it—you'll have to attend to experience it yourself.

To some folks, it means the opportunity to wear red and for the altar guild to bring out the red paraments to adorn the church (for one of the few times during the whole year!) For some people it's the reminder of the text recorded in Acts 2:1-21. That's when Peter and the disciples were participating with Jews from the entire region in the celebration of the harvest festival. In some congregations, it's a Sunday when young people express their affirmation of faith, or confirmation. Pentecost means different things to different people.

Recall the words from scripture **“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit**

enabled them.” These common people from Galilee, not educated or able to speak in other languages, suddenly received the ability to communicate with people from many nations. No, they weren't drunk, as Peter pointed out. It was only 9:00 in the morning when this took place. Instead, they were proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ.

More than a history lesson, the answer to the question “what does Pentecost mean?” has a contemporary application for us too. It's a reminder that something is new, and the times they are a changin' just as they were when Bob Dylan wrote that hit song 54 years ago.

Remember Jesus' meeting with Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector who was wealthy? The episode is recorded in the 19th chapter of Luke: “He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.’ So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, ‘He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.’

But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, ‘Look, Lord!

Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.’ Jesus said to him, **‘Today salvation has come to this house**, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.’”

Zacchaeus understood. He got it. Jesus didn't tell him “by your actions you've earned eternal life in the hereafter.” No—he said **today** you are living the life I want you to. So it is for us too. It's our role to proclaim God's salvation at work. It's our role to be agents, communicating about God to others—just as the mission statement for Trinity proclaims.

During the nearly year and a half serving as your transitional pastor, I've met dozens of very well equipped people—people whom God has richly blessed. You might argue we all get the same 24/7 or 168 hours a week, which is true. But among the 70 or 80 members of Trinity who have attended worship, there are many of you gifted with special talents and treasures. As we recently discussed during intergenerational Sunday school while talking about money, how we use and share those gifts is up to us. May we be open to the working of the Spirit as we enter the season of Pentecost.

Transitional Pastor Alan Saatkamp, Deacon

TRINITY TIDINGS

May 2018

Worship Assistants									
Date	Greeter(s)	Usher(s)	Musicians	Lector	Acolyte	Altar Guild	Coffee Hosts	Assisting Minister	Presiding Minister
May 6, 2018	Linda Longren	Diane Bottorff	Laurie Jackson	Debbie Pomeroy	Curt Lewis	Janeen Horton & Team 2	Howard & Loni Reece	Marsha Ridinger	Pr. Alan Saatkamp
May 13, 2018	Don & Charlotte O'Brien	Diane Bottorff	Mitchell Bean	Duane Pomeroy	Parker Jackson	Janeen Horton & Team 2	Donna Allen, Marilyn Heckman & Carol Marker	Ted Murphy	Pr. Alan Saatkamp
May 20, 2018	Pam Kobbeman	Linda Longren	Laurie Jackson	LaVell Winsor	LaVell Winsor	Janeen Horton & Team 2	Bill & Marsha Ridinger	Vickie Jacobs	Pr. Gary Teske
May 27, 2018	Julie Reeves	Linda Longren	Laurie Jackson	Bob Horton	Cindy McGinnis	Janeen Horton & Team 2	Dean McGinnis	Bob Horton	Pr. Alan Saatkamp



Prayer Requests

The prayer chain has not been used for a long time. We are here for you when you need prayers. Contact Barbara Apps at 249-7244 to start the prayer chain.

Have you designated your portion of the Dillons Community Rewards money to go to Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church?



If you are a Thrivent member, have you designated Trinity to receive your Choice Dollars?



This link will take you directly to the AmazonSmile page that directs the donation generated by your AmazonSmile purchase to Trinity:

<http://smile.amazon.com/ch/48-0697751>



BLOOD PRESSURE CHECKS
MAY 6, 2018

Come to the kitchen after worship to have this important health check.

YOUTH group

Youth Group is scheduled to meet
May 13 & May 27

2018 5TH SUNDAY SPECIALS

- July 29 Topeka Rescue Mission
- Sept. 30 Camp Tomah Shinga
- Dec. 30 Lutheran Campus Ministry at KU

Watch for special envelopes in your bulletin on each of these Sundays.

TRINITY TIDINGS

MAY CELEBRATIONS

Birthdays

- 2 Jennifer Grubb
- 2 Chance Hutchison
- 4 Gianni Noriega
- 8 Jim Erickson
- 9 Brandon Soldan
- 11 Donna J. Allen
- 14 Daniella King
- 20 Tony Ibrahim
- 22 David McGinnis
- 23 Evelyn Johnson
- 25 Shane Pomeroy

Baptisms

- 1 Jan Dick
- 1 Helen Laughlin
- 10 Naomi Walker
- 11 Karen Arney
- 11 Marcy Carlson
- 12 Pam Kobbeman
- 12 Emily McGinnis
- 12 Rosie Nichols
- 13 Erin Lewis
- 20 Kali Arney
- 20 Tom Arney
- 21 Breanna Lewis
- 26 Bronwyn King
- 26 Daniella King
- 26 Elania King
- 26 Sara King
- 26 Gianni Noriega
- 27 Larry McGinnis
- 30 Shawn Nowak
- 30 Brayden Winsor

Wedding Anniversaries

- 3 Tom & Karen Arney
- 27 Bill & Laurie Walker
- 28 Conrad & Sharon Youngblom
- 29 Russ & Tresa Johnson
- 31 James & Cathy Tunnell

MAY READINGS

May 6—6th Sunday of Easter

- Acts 10:44-48
- Psalm 98
- 1 John 5:1-6
- John 15:9-17

May 13—7th Sunday of Easter

- Acts 1:15-17, 21-26
- Psalm 1
- 1 John 5:9-13
- John 17:6-19

May 20—Pentecost

- Acts 2:1-21
- Psalm 104:24-34, 35b
- Romans 8:22-27
- John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

May 27—Holy Trinity Sunday

- Isaiah 6:1-8
- Psalm 29
- Romans 8:12-17
- John 3:1-17

ADDRESS UPDATE


Marie Henriksen
 Aldersgate Recovery Center
 3220 SW Albright Dr.
 Elmhurst Room 415
 Topeka, KS 66614-4707

PRAYER SHAWLS NEEDED

With the start-up of lay persons visiting and taking communion to our shut-ins, our supply of prayer shawls has been depleted.

If you like to knit or crochet, please consider making and donating a prayer shawl to replenish our supply.

This website — www.allfreecrochet.com/Prayer-Shawls/11-Easy-Crochet-Prayer-Shawls — has some links to free patterns for crochet. And here is a link for knitters: www.allfreeknitting.com/Knit-Shawls/Prayer-Shawl-Patterns-for-Knitting



Once the much-needed work begins on the asphalt on Buchanan Street, we will temporarily lose handicap parking in front of the church. I am asking that we reserve the parking places on 8th Street to the south of the church for folks who typically use the handicap parking and the rest of us use the Lincoln Center parking lot across the street from the church to the south. Thank you for your cooperation during the road construction. Take care.

Bob Horton
 TLC Council President

TRINITY TIDINGS

DOORSTEP NEWS – MAY 2018

We have recently seen a flyer handed out by Harvesters showing them as The Community Food Network, and the agencies it supports. Harvesters has many great programs, however, we need to clarify how Doorstep works with the agency. Doorstep signed up as a Harvester agency when Bimbo Bakery started donating their bread through them. Many agencies used to pick up bread individually. It was easier for the bakery to load a Harvester semi one time than have several pick-ups each week. Doorstep receives bread free of charge now through Harvesters. We could also receive perishable items such as fruits and vegetables for free for our clients. However, anything else we would choose to get through Harvesters would have a fee attached to it.

Whether it is the “handling fee” per pound for items chosen, or a per case price, we would have to pay for it. If you donate food or money to Harvesters and think you are directly helping Doorstep, you are not. If you want Doorstep to receive your donations to help your neighbors in need, then you need to give directly to Doorstep. Our funding through community individuals was down in 2017. We have had to make hard choices in 2018, starting with eliminating a staff position to save money. We ask that you give donations to the agencies you want to support. If you want to support the community at large, you have several options for donating. Thank you.

Topeka Gives 2018 is Tuesday,

June 5th at Fairlawn Plaza Mall from 7am - 6pm. Doorstep will be there again this year. Please come by and see us and make a donation to Doorstep! Donations must be made in person. You can donate \$25 - \$1,000 to Doorstep on this day at Fairlawn Plaza, and the Topeka Community Foundation will match it proportionately. This year there is \$65,600 available for the match. Last year Doorstep made \$17,404 from our donors to help with agency needs! Donations were down in 2017, and we have had to make some hard decisions. Please plan to attend Topeka Gives on June 5th and **Give to Doorstep!** Save the date and come out on June 5th!

Topeka Gives – a fun day of giving is sponsored by the Topeka Community Foundation.

LEARNING COMMITTEE NEWS

Children's Sunday school will take a summer break beginning May 27 and will resume again the Sunday after Labor Day.

Information about Camp Tomah Shinga summer sessions was shared in the April issue of *Trinity Tidings*. The Reeves Foundation supports camp fees, with each child responsible for \$25. toward the registra-

tion fee (\$50 maximum if more than two children per family). There are camp sessions for grades one through high school. Contact the church office or Diane Bottorff if you would like to register.



ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL MEETS ON SUNDAY MORNINGS AT 9:15 AM.

PENTECOST MAY 20, 2018



Join us for Pentecost and experience a tiny bit of what the first Pentecost day may have been like! On May 20th, we will hear the Lord's Prayer simultaneously in FIVE different

- languages:
- Greek (Walt Laughlin)
 - Swedish (Betty Quarnstrom)
 - German (Helen Laughlin)
 - Pidgen (Pr. Gary Teske)
 - Spanish (Laurie Jackson)
 - English

TRINITY TIDINGS

COUNCIL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS, APR. 10, 2018

- ◆ Home communion & visitation will start soon. During training, we learned that gluten-free wafers must not come into contact with regular wafers. Contaminated wafers were disposed of, new wafers ordered and will be kept separate from regular wafers.
- ◆ Pr. Alan will attend CSS Interim Retreat.
- ◆ Pr. Teske will provide pulpit supply on May 20th while Alan is on vacation.
- ◆ Children’s Sunday school will begin summer break May 27.
- ◆ Susan Fitz is researching what memorial funds may be used to purchase the portable communion kits.
- ◆ Personnel Committee is reviewing job descriptions. They are referring to 1st Lutheran procedure manual as a guide.
- ◆ PCI annual contract for boiler maintenance was approved.
- ◆ Dean asked if Trinity wants to be actively involved with Historic Old Town NIA. Council requested info on events/dates. A May Team Up/Clean up is planned.
- ◆ On Pentecost, the Lord’s Prayer will be done in several different languages.
- ◆ W&M is soliciting favorite hymns from members.
- ◆ Laurie & Loni will clean up the banner room and library.
- ◆ Trinity’s Ministry Site Profile has been submitted to Synod.
- ◆ Pr. Alan asked about financial audit process & mentioned step-by-step process recommended by ELCA.
- ◆ A member request to use church basement May 6 was approved.
- ◆ A member update letter was approved. It will be signed & sent to select members.
- ◆ Bob H. will create a standardized format for our procedures manual & share with council. Then will have 90 days to review.
- ◆ CSS is requesting stories of hope by May 1 for June assembly. Mary will write a story to submit. Pr. Alan will register to attend as clergy; we also have opportunity for a male and a female person to attend.

CONGREGATION COUNCIL

- President** Bob Horton..... 640-5344
- Vice President** Mary Heald..... 221-2790
- Secretary** Dean McGinnis..... 272-0255
- Treasurer** Bob Kobbeman..... 478-0381
- Interim Pastor** Alan Saatkamp 605-214-1469
- Members**
- Diane Bottorff..... 271-7131
- Laurie Jackson..... 224-9683
- Dean McGinnis..... 272-0255
- Ted Murphy..... 817-0372

Psalm 90: 1-2

Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

With grateful hearts to our Generous and Loving God, the Council is pleased to announce that Trinity is officially debt-free as of March 9, 2018. The remaining mortgage balance of \$41,798.96 was paid off with resources from the Building Fund, the Murphy Bequest, and the Donna Allen Bequest. Thank you to all members who generously supported paying off the mortgage throughout its existence.

Now on to the next challenge. General Fund revenue for the first two months of 2018 lags expenses by about \$2,000 so I am asking you to prayerfully consider increasing your General Fund offering. An increase by all contributing members would bring the difference down considerably. Perhaps it could be moving what you were offering to the Building Fund to the General Fund since the mortgage is retired. Or maybe you can increase your General Fund offering each month.

The Council is deeply concerned about how our General Fund imbalance could impact our ability to call a new permanent part-time pastor. Being debt-free and showing that revenue and expenses are in line makes us more attractive to potential candidates.

Thank you again for your support of Trinity and for your prayerful consideration of future giving!

Bob Horton, TLC Council President

TRINITY TIDINGS

WITNESS OUTREACH COMMITTEE UPDATE: UPCOMING EVENTS

Team-Up / Clean-Up

Collaborative event that will bring various city agencies, corporate groups and the Historic Old Town NIA together in our neighborhood during **the month of MAY**. There are many activities planned through-out the month, ending with a celebration on June 2nd with the Historic Old Town NIA Smoke BBQ event (see #2). Look for volunteer opportunities to work along side our neighbors as we CLEAN UP Historic Old Town!

Old Town Smoke Fest June 2nd (Saturday 8am to 8pm) Trinity Hall and Buchanan Street. Historic Old Town NIA along with Clean-Up Team-Up is hosting an all day fun event. Smoke (BBQ) competition, vendors, information tents, games, rides, Touch a Truck (police, fire, ambulance). **WE NEED VOLUNTEERS** to be hosts, work the food & drink tent, respite tent, TLC tent. More information coming soon.

SAVE THE DATE: JUNE 2nd!

Also coming in June is a **Community Meal for Our Neighbors**. Planning is underway for a date to be determined in mid June. If you are availa-

ble and interested in helping with this new Outreach opportunity please let Dean McGinnis know. Keep your EYES open for more information!

You Missed it - **Old Town Board Games Saturday March 21, 10am to 10pm** at Trinity Lutheran hosted by Historic Old Town NIA. Throughout the event about 60 folks of all ages gathered in Fellowship Hall and enjoyed board games and fellowship. This event will be held again in the future, so please keep watch for the next Old Town Board Games day and plan to attend for an hour or all day!

BAKER SCHOOL OF NURSING NEWS

Treat Day at BUSN

On Monday, May 14, we will provide treats for 130 students who are taking end of semester exams that morning. Bring three dozen of your treat, marked Baker, to the church kitchen on Sunday, May 13.

Thanks to those who brought treats in April for the graduating class of 38 students. They enjoyed treats on one of the days they took final exams.

The 2018 class has their pinning ceremony on May 18 at Grace Cathedral and graduation is scheduled for May 20 at the Baldwin City campus.

Garage Sale, May 4 & 5.

Some of the funds from this garage sale will go toward scholarships for Baker Nursing Students going on a mission trip to Kenya. Students, faculty and others make this trip each summer and provide a health clinic in several villages in Kenya. If you have items to donate contact Marlene Eicher, Baker faculty, at 785-230-7360 to make arrangements for delivery of your donations to her home in north Topeka. If you'd like to attend the sale, it will be held at her parents' home in Netawaka (7 miles north of Holton) at 29550 US Highway 75.

DO YOU NEED HELP WITH CHORES? RENT-A-YOUTH!!



Certificates will be available to Rent-A-Youth for 2 hour blocks of time. Suggested donation is \$20 per certificate. This is a fundraiser for our trip to Houston the end of June for the ELCA Youth Gathering. If you need help with some minor chores, clean up or tasks, grab a certificate or two before they are all gone. Funds will be used for:
[1] ELCA Youth Gathering special offerings
[2] Local giving to be determined.
[3] Spending money for the youth during the trip for souvenirs

A special thank you to the Reeves Foundation for funding a majority of the trip to the ELCA Youth Gathering in Houston. We will be leaving by van Sunday June 24th and returning Monday July 2nd. Take a look at the web page and Follow along as three young folks (Parker Jackson, Zane Kennedy and Jake Kennedy) plan and attend the 2018 ELCA Youth Gathering in Houston Texas at the NRG Park.
<http://www.elca.org/YouthGathering>
Sponsors: Diane Bottorff and Dean McGinnis

Russian Correspondent March 2018

Not Giving Up (for Lent)

As we accompany God's children around the globe, missionaries observe, reflect, support, share and witness to their faith. Through these newsletters I let friends and partners know that their prayers and financial support really are making a significant impact, both on those whom we accompany and on us ourselves as we consider on our own faith journeys in light of others' experience.

I named my newsletter *Russian Correspondent* a decade and half ago with the intention that it would bring two images to mind— one of a foreign journalist and the other of a pen pal. The second (and more important) of these remains unchanged – I hope that in these pages you gain some insight and feel (even at a great distance) a personal connection to the people with whom I work, your sisters and brothers in Christ in the former Soviet Union.

There's a problem these days, however, in trying to speak “journalistically” about the context. During my first years in Russia, the country was given little attention in the news. In contrast today Russia is in the news in the West a lot - story after negative story. There is no way in one newsletter to explain how each of these issues look from here. One way to put it very briefly would be to say “more complicated;” as always, I'd be happy to discuss any of the issues with you over email. Yet the task can seem overwhelming. Seeing the way the relationship between Russia and the West continues to deteriorate, it makes me and others with connections in both places feel frustrated, disappointed, deeply sad, sometime even angry. The world has so many serious problems, and instead of joining our resources to address them together, our countries treat one another as enemies and use the (real or imagined) threat of the other as a distraction from serious domestic and global issues. It is a tragedy.

In such an atmosphere, there is the temptation to give up. With people on both sides being bombarded by negative messages, efforts aimed at increasing mutual understanding can seem fruitless. These global issues come close to home when I think about the challenges of finding funding even for our humble mission work in Russia, and when I feel insecure, knowing that as a foreigner in a tense situation, I may end up being a symbolic pawn in someone's large game. I begin to think - “maybe it would be easier just to acknowledge our powerlessness in this situation and turn to issues that seem to be easier to resolve...”

That's where my thoughts go...until I consider the people with whom I work. Even knowing, as the Russian saying goes, that “taking initiative is punishable” these sisters and brothers in Christ keep looking for ways to expand their church's ministries. Even in a context where people seem to be fatalistic and close to cynical, I am constantly running into people who refuse to give up. It seems to be the Lenten discipline that they practice year-round. Whether it be the lay-lead congregation in Chita – the only Lutheran congregation in the entire time zone – or the small but beautiful “kirche” in Muslim-majority Ufa or my former student, Pastor Gleb Pivovarov, fighting aggressive brain cancer, I have the privilege of working with Christians who know how to move forward in their walk of faith even in the face of what seems to be overwhelming obstacles. Having a clear memory of the repression of Christianity in the Soviet Union, they know that God has now granted them the freedom to be open with their faith. Despite cultural, societal and economic barriers and despite the potential for depression that comes from always fighting an uphill battle, they find their strength in acknowledging their own powerlessness (2 Cor 12.9) and in facing the challenges of Christian service, knowing that it is God's grace (and not human power) that will eventually bring in the Heavenly Kingdom.

I am certain that you, too, are facing many challenges. If you or your congregation are involved in Russia in any way, one of those challenges might even be related to why we would have anything to do with “those people.” In any case I hope that on your faith journey you have experienced both giving up (trying to solve the world's problems on our own) and not giving up, knowing that God accompanies us through Lent and into the season of Resurrection. It is my hope that in reading this newsletter you'll find encouragement for your journey in the news and stories I have the opportunity to share about another side to Russia – the real lives of your fellow Christians. Your brother in Christ, Bradn



Witnessing the Wideness of God's Mercy in the Russian Far East

The second half of January took me to the far-flung congregations of the eastern-most deanery of the Lutheran Church in Russia. The goal of this trip was to visit the most “geographically marginalized” of our people in order to provide them with pastoral support and education. The journey began in Chita, a congregation I last visited in 2016 with ELCA Pastor Len Dale from the Central States Synod. They continue to be spiritually hungry there, and they find nourishment in



Baptisms in Komsomolsk

coming together for worship, even with no pastor and or regular lay leadership. While with them I led worship and a study on Revelation, but in the future I hope that I will be able to train one or two of their people so that they might have the skills and self-confidence to take on more responsibility for their congregation's spiritual life. After Chita I began to rack up “frequent rider” miles on the railroad as I moved east to the small home-church in the border (with China) city of Blagoveschensk; there we had worship and a class on church history. The next night train to me to St. John's Lutheran in Khabarovsk, where almost the entire small congregation came out on a weekday morning to meet, have fellowship, and study Scripture. From there I moved north to Komsomolsk, where I was able to preside at the baptism of three sisters (from 3 to 13

years old) and lead a seminar on the basics of pastoral care. By the last week of the month I had made it to the Pacific Coast and St. Paul's Lutheran in Vladivostok. The seminar we held - “God's Congregation – Our Strategy” - is one in demand throughout the church in congregations in transition or seeking renewal; I believe we made a fruitful beginning to that work there.

Before returning to St. Petersburg, I stopped in Central/Eastern Siberia, where I formerly was the Area Dean. I was happy when the most economical flight path took me through Irkutsk, where my friend and colleague Pastor Thomas Graf Grote is bringing to a close his long missionary ministry in the area. I met with their church council to encourage them and give them a bit of consultation regarding the future. The main goal of my visit to the region, however, was to visit Krasnoyarsk; As I mentioned above, their pastor, Gleb Pivovarov is battling brain cancer. Pastor Gleb has assembled a strong team of young leaders in the congregation, and they've all met this challenge with incredible courage and faith. Gleb's spirit remains high, despite unclear prospects for healing (even after a successful surgery and radiation therapy), while the ministries of the congregation continue thanks to the dedication of those involved.

Especially those who lead Bible studies or Sunday worship, however, feel the need to improve their theological education. Besides visiting Gleb, the main focus of my time there was to gather those in the congregation and the wider region who have begun their theological education (especially through our Distance Education program) to give them to chance to have great interaction with one of their teachers. During our 2.5 day seminar -



Seminar selfie in Krasnoyarsk

“Christ in the Center” - we talked about how to carefully read the New Testament and think about Christian living through the lens of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. This was one of six themes in a new cycle of seminars for lay preachers. In the years ahead, we will continue to expand opportunities to participate in these seminars to ensure that all of our lay ministers (many of whom carry out this ministry without the assistance of a near-by pastor) have the basic training they need to respond to the needs of their congregations.

Reflecting on this trip, it is clear that the circumstances our congregations find themselves in are varied, but their common experience is this – the God whose love was shown in Jesus Christ is with them, accompanying them, challenging them to move faithfully into the future.

Return to Bashkorstorstan

While this title might sound like the name of a 19th-century adventure novel, in reality it is simply a reference to a mid-February seminar that is becoming an annual tradition. Last year Dr. Anton Tikhmirov (President of the Novosaratovka Theological Seminary), Pastor Igor Zhuravlev, and I taught about the Reformation in Ufa, the capital city of that region; this year we agreed that we would begin the cycle of lessons for lay ministers referenced in the article above. Thanks to gifts to the "Equipping for Service" project, which covers the logistical expenses related to off-site teaching, we were able to build on what has already been achieved in the region and continue to train the people of the southern Russian for their growing ministries.



In the foreground, Rustem and fellow lay minister, Nikolai

While I hope that my teaching on the New Testament and ethics was valuable (as, I'm sure, the lessons of Anton and Igor were), more important, perhaps, was the support for one of the people who has frequently attended my seminars, Rustem Nafikov. In the three years that I've known him, I've witnessed Rustem's growth in faith and knowledge; on this trip I came to learn just how much the rest of his life has changed as well. Having grown up in a secular (Tatar/ Bashkir) Muslim family, Rustem came to the church through his German-Russian wife, Svetlana. Slowly at first and then with growing intensity, Rustem found that his exploration of the Christian faith brought him to a new sense of life's meaning...and began to feel a call. He pursued educational and ministry opportunities with such great dedication that he was forced to put aside his job as a construction worker; now he and his family are learning to live on one (very small) income, while Rustem serves as the village pastor of Prishib, a village just over an hour out of the city. That congregation, which seemed on the

edge of closing, has turned around, and he and Svetlana (who, as she told me, in their first 15 years of marriage she could have barely imagined him in church, let alone a minister) are experiencing the joy that comes from service. Rustem's growth has been so significant that it seems likely that the church will call him to a large congregation in the future; for now I was happy to be a witness to his success, offer a few words of guidance when he asked questions, and encourage him and his family that the Lord who has done so much with them up until this point will continue to touch people's lives through their faith active in love.

Important Guests

In February, I was happy to welcome the new ELCA regional representative, Viking Dietrich (*below, back right*), to Russia. He and I met in Omsk, where I helped translate and accompanied him to a meeting of lay ministers from the Western Siberia Deanery (*below*), for visits with Bishop Alexander Scheiermann (*below, front right*) and to the congregation in the city of Azovo outside of Omsk. We then flew to St. Petersburg, where we visited partners in the Ingrian (Finnish heritage) Church, theological seminaries in Koltushi and Novosaratovka, and saw a bit of the city and its culture. From there Viking moved on to Moscow, where leaders from local congregations and ministries there met him and acquainted him with the work of the church. Viking showed great interest in learning more about the country and its people, and future visits should be much easier thanks to this.





Then this month, Archbishop Dietrich Brauer, Seminary President Anton Tikhmirov and I met with Matthias Woerhmann, a consultant for organizing church ministries from the Evangelical Church in Germany. While my head hurt at the end of two days trying to follow meetings in German, this visit gave us a good reason to reflect as we sat together, explained, discussed, and to (re-)considered educational missionaries in light of the church's needs. A follow-up meeting will be held in May, during which we hope to consider a number of concrete options that the church might choose in order to best use the resources we have for the task at hand.

Urals Deanery Visit

After the intense activities related to the 500th anniversary of the Reformation last year, 2018 has already presented me with a third opportunity to return to regions where I've had previous successful visits – in this case, it was in early March to the Ural deanery. At their biannual meeting of congregational leaders the theme was personal and cooperate aspects of spiritual life. This seminar, too, is part of the training of lay ministers; the limited hours, however, meant that I focused on practical spirituality through through the lens of confession. I see it as a point a point of intersection between the personal and the communal, between liturgy and pastoral care, between Biblical basis (always important, but particularly so in this pious region) and life experience. This approach was somewhat unusual, but I hope that the “otherness” was still accessible enough that it will bare fruits in new thoughts and practices.



After the seminar I made a visit to the industrial city of Nizhny Tagil, where Pastor Matthias Schindler and his wife Lena have put enormous effort into developing the congregation. Yet, despite their great love for the people and creative approach, their congregation remains miniscule. Their dedicated service, despite a lack of obvious fruits of their efforts, is another example of not giving up, of trusting that the Lord is sowing seeds through Christian presence and through the good news of God's saving love for us through Jesus Christ.

Prayer requests

As I prepare to send this out, news of a tragic fire in a Siberian mall is reaching us; please pray for the families of the 40+ victims. Please pray also for the healing for Pastor Gleb Pivovarov and for his wife, Anastasia. Please pray for the the leaders of the Russia and its neighbors, as well as for the church here as it continues to seek the most effective way to serve its neighbors. As usual I would be thankful for your prayers for my wife (Natasha) and boys – Matvey (13), Martin (11) and Lukas (4).

The basics....

I am an ELCA pastor serving through the Evangelical Lutheran Mission of Lower Saxony (ELM) in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Russia, where I am in charge of an educational program entitled “Equipping for Service.” I maintain relationships with partners (individuals and congregations) in the U.S. and in Germany; if you have any questions for me, please feel free to write to me at: bradnbuerkle@gmail.com. My personal blog is currently on hold: russiancorrespondent.blogspot.com, but you can check out the site with news articles on the church at: elcrosnews.blogspot.com

