

THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

October 2019

Beginning *Начало*

Ecclesiastes 3 reminds us for everything there is a season. We see this clearly in our lives; there are beginnings and endings, times of separation and times of gathering together, times of breaking down and times of building up. The life of the Church also happens in seasons, there are beginnings and endings and then beginnings again. We experience times of immediate growth which are followed by times when growth is not evident and we simply continue with our callings, trusting that God is working.

This past month has been packed with activity, a bustle of classes and homework and meetings as well as finding a new apartment and helping the Lawson's settle into St. Petersburg. As I thought over all the rush of events, trying to organize them for this newsletter, I realized a common thread connecting them all—the life of the Church. Beginnings and endings, different seasons through which God is leading the Church to accomplish His will.

Election of Bishop

There was one event that created the most stir among the Russian Lutherans—the election of a new Bishop for the Church of Ingria. This was an ending and a new beginning. The current bishop, Arri Kugappi, will be retiring in February of next year. He has served the church faithfully since his own election in 1995. During his time fulfilling this calling, he saw the church go through many struggles and also much growth. He witnessed many changes and also helped to guide the church so that God's Word remained at the focus of everything they do. Now it is time for him to pass on the mantle to someone new. In the Ingrian church, the bishop serves for life, so this historical event may not be repeated for another quarter of a century and the newly elected bishop, pastor Ivan Laptev, will be responsible for charting a course for the Ingrians for the foreseeable future.

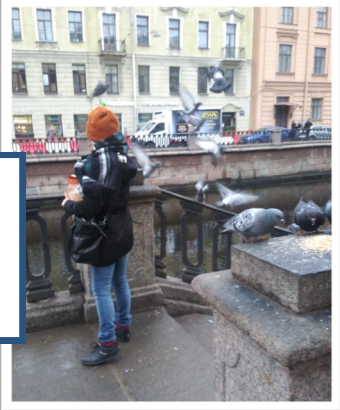
Prayer Requests

“Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me!
O LORD, be my helper!”
Psalm 30:10 (ESV)

- Pray for the retiring bishop, Arri Kugappi, and the newly-elected bishop, Ivan Laptev
- Pray for Nikolai and all who have been recently baptized or confirmed, that God would continue to perfect the good work begun them
- Pray for each English class, that God would use these gatherings as opportunities to spread His truth
- Pray for me as I continue to learn Russian
- Pray for all the Reformation Day celebrations in and around St. Petersburg



"Liza" feeding the pigeons



Support

I'm now online! If you would like to support my work in Russia, visit:

www.lcms.org/anders

You can also send your gifts of love to our Friends at:

MISSION CENTRAL
40718 Highway E-16
Mapleton, IA 51034

Make checks payable to Mission Central

Write "Russia/Alyssa Anders" on the memo line

If you receive this newsletter through the mail, but would prefer the email version, just let me know!

Send me an email at alyssa.anders@lcms.org and I'll gladly make the change.

New Life through Baptism

The day after the election, we witnessed another significant event in the life of the Church—the baptism of a boy named Nikolai (see the picture to the left). I don't know how old he was, but he was old enough to stand and answer the questions of the pastor, together with sponsors and parents. We all watched as he received the healing waters of baptism in the name of the Triune God. This is a new life beginning, a life of obedience to God and regeneration through Jesus Christ.

Life through Action

The life of the church also involves the daily work of reaching out to those around us. Very tangibly, I saw the body of Christ in motion helping the homeless this month. Being homeless in St. Petersburg is a very sad situation indeed. The nights are cold, people are unfriendly and in a big city like St. Petersburg, it's possible to get lost and disconnected from those who might help. I met one such girl (we'll call her Liza), who had been living on the streets for several months. In addition to not having family in the city, she struggled with mental disabilities which keep her from being able to take care of herself. With the approach of winter, her situation was becoming more desperate. Several of the congregants at St. Mary's Church noticed her and her needs and decided to help. We provided Liza with new clothes, food, hot tea and more importantly found a room for her at the Salvation Army and made sure there was someone with her every night while she stayed there. In addition, we were able to put her in contact with a psychologist who was able to recommend a hospital for long-term care. Dealing with the physical needs was the most pressing concern, but those involved were also concerned about her soul. Talking with her was difficult, but we

could pray with her and read Psalms to her. She carried a small Bible which she would take out and look at every once in a while.

Another parishioner, a friend of mine, told me about a homeless women with two children she met while enjoying a walk in the city. Where many people would have simply "passed by on the other side," my friend stopped, asked questions, and found ways to help. She was able to put the woman in contact with the diaconal department of the Ingrian Church, which is helping to provide her with temporary housing and put the kids in school. These kinds of situations don't happen every day for most of us, but in the life of the Church, they do happen, and Christ asks us to be His hands and feet.

Distance Students

There are also seasons of training in the life of the Church. This month, distance students spent two weeks at the Seminary for intensive on-site classes before returning to their respective cities with homework and coursework to complete on their own. I graded final projects of some of the 3rd and 4th year students in their English course. The students had read an academic article in English and prepared a summary and critique in English. The topics were varied and interesting, but I was most encouraged by the level of English the students demonstrated. I hope that this project helped them to see that English is not only an academic subject, but it opens up a new world for them of resources and community in the theological and Lutheran world.

Life continues. I wouldn't complain if this season of busy activity gave way to a more manageable schedule, but until then, I am rejoicing to see life—it proves that God is still working in His Church.