

September 13, 2009 Newsletter from Nadia Krongolm

On the 6th of September we had the holiday (dedication of the new building) in the church. According to the plan that should have been the date when the new church should start working but by that day only the first floor of the church was ready. There was a place for 700 people - guests in the church hall. Plus the members of the congregation. So there were about 900 on the whole. □ For me personally it was important to see that there would be enough space for the ministry in the church. There was also a very touching moment when God made me realize that there is a little bit left to wait till it will be opened. Soon very soon => We hope =>

There was a special press-conference organized for the local mass media where the responsible people for the construction building said that they need from 6 to 12 months to finish everything (building project). Still much depends on financial support, you know.

Another special moment was (for me) to present a present from our Sister Congregation



First Lutheran (Duluth). So I was honored to do it and our main pastor Victor was receiving it on behalf of the church (Note from editor: see the picture of Nadia holding up the banner with Pastor Viktor Grenevitch; the banner was a gift from our church paid for by the Sunday School and made by member Jeanette Pauslon). These are not just big words—the moment was really special I can say it seeing people listening very attentively to the word of greetings and smiling back. So **please send our words of thankfulness back to First Lutheran and the pastor =>** I include a picture from the event => □ The youth choir was singing at that holiday. The youth sang very well. I talked to some members of the congregation and I heard that they were very glad that the youth prepared for the singing so well.

This week we started the youth meetings at Zaitseva (Note from editor: youth flat available to the church). They will be regular on Thursdays. Sunday school started to work from today as well.

□ Next week it will be the first meeting of the teenagers group. It is the group where the youth are mostly new-comers. Of course, perhaps some of them have been to the church once or twice in their lives but they are really new-comers. Vika will be responsible for this group. So we ask you for the prayer support. But Alex and I will be helping. Cause the teens are very different. Some are rather difficult. But no closed doors for God => you know.

Pentti and Terhi Smeds (Note from editor: were head of the ELCIR Youth Committee for 12 years, from Finland) visited us this weekend. It was very important to have a word of support in such sad time when many people are shocked with the news of Ana's father's sudden death and all the situation around it. Pentti and Terhi also shared words of God's love and mercy in Derevjanka and then conducted the services in Petrozavodsk together with Alex. They left today back to Finland after the services. So I think they will come back home only tomorrow morning since they go by car.

Nadia Krongolm

**Newsletter from Nadia and Alex**  
**4/12/09**

## **Our dear friends in Christ!**

Greetings from Petrozavodsk!

Thank you for all your prayers for the youth and children ministry in Petrozavodsk and also for your support in prayers for the youth and children ministry all over Karelia.

We want one more time to thank you so much for your support of a car. Due to this purchase many more opportunities are available for our ministry now. It would be impossible without your support. Thank you!

## **From Nadia:**

Almost in every letter I mention the work with the families in Petrozavodsk congregation. But, unfortunately, the systematic work with the families of our congregation doesn't exist still. (We hope the situation will change when the new building is ready.) But there are some seminars that we try to organize together with some pastors-missionaries from time to time. So this time such seminar took place in the middle of the February. Some representatives of the diaconal (social work department of the Ingrian Church) came to help us to conduct it. They were the pastor and his wife, and also Lilia Stepanovna who is the leader of this committee. She had wanted to see the ministry of our congregation for a long time. Unfortunately, there were very few families at the seminar – only three of them (though there were some young couples also who are dating now). But we were glad that there were mostly new people who had never participated in such seminars before. There were the Bible studies, the quizzes, the questions - the answers in the program. It was very friendly atmosphere and a lot of good humor took place there.

One more youth event took place at the end of the February. It took place in our church in Petrozavodsk. This event is getting to be the traditional one. It takes place every year on the 22-23rd of the February. The thing is that on this day the whole Russia celebrates the day of the army. So we decided to organize “the day of men” – this is some alternative to some secular holiday. On these days we invite all men and boys from all churches of Karelia to our congregation in order to spend time together, to help the congregations and to abide in God's Word. This time it was the second time (the first took place the previous year) when such event took place and we already could see some particular results. This year it was twice as much people as it was last year. The main topic of the event was called “I am in ministry”. The main idea was to show men and boys in the congregation can not only be pastors but there are a lot of other things that they can be responsible for and minister in it “from their knees”. The ministry to Christ is to be “from your knees”, with a humble heart. That was the idea.

This year the question about future confirmants aroused. The thing is that every year we have the group for the youth who are going to be confirmed in the following year or the youth who are planning to be confirmed in several years. So this youth usually

came to such meeting during the year. The confirmation camp takes place in the congregation in Koltushi. But since last year the age limits for being a participant of such camp have been changed. Now it is appointed that the youth who are from 15 to 21 can only participate in the confirmation camp. But in our congregation the youth come to the church when they are usually about 19-20. So they need some time to say definitely that they really want to be confirmed. That's why we have gathered together with the youth who want to be confirmed and Alex started to conduct this confirmation studies. Such confirmation studies takes place once a week during 4 months. It was interesting that at first we plan this group only for the youth but a little bit later some parents of this youth, who usually come to the services but they are not the members of the congregation yet, came up and asked to take this confirmation studies too. Therefore now it is a group of people of different ages.

There was a youth camp on March 25-29 in Sortavalan church. There were 57 teens there. Many of them were new and it was their first experience of a spiritual event. The topic of the camp was "Friends forever". In our modern world we lack so much good and loyal friends, the friends for whom you are very important and who are important for you. Nowadays rudeness and strength prevails in the relationships among the youth. In order to join some company of friends you need to be cool, selfish and rude. Only if you have all these qualities you can easily find "a friend". These are the standards of friendship the youth have at present according to youth's testimonies given in this camp. The point of this camp was to show that not the power and rudeness define the true friendship, and that the true authority has nothing to do with showing off, but that the true authority can be earned only by respect, love and understanding. The goal of the camp was the Bible study on the topic "Christ – the true friend". Once He said: "...you are My friends if you follow My words..." In order to have friends you shouldn't just sit and wait until they begin to love and respect you. You should make the first step. We should just follow the example of Christ, He made this first step, He loved us first when we were yet sinners, and He loved us when we didn't love Him. Today Christ has a lot of friends so maybe we need to learn from Him without waiting for something in vain. The camp went very well.

New church building in Petrozavodsk: The big day is coming and I guess everyone is looking forward to it=) The official date for the Church opening holiday is already known. It is September 6, though it will be claimed in May only after the Karelian Dioceses meeting officially. So the church will start sending invitations only from May. But I know there are many of you who are reading this letter and who are friends of Petrozavodsk congregation and who may want to put this date in your calendars beforehand. So you are very welcome!! Come and share this great joy with us=) Regular meetings of preparation are held in our church. There is still a lot to be done. Please join us in prayer =) Thank you!

Clown mission is continuing to spread. Gods love and care not only in Petro but in the places around. Last summer Sid Taske came with the team for the language camp.

He had done a terrific work in the camp the year before. So when he came he did a course for those who wanted to learn how to do Clowns mission. We encouraged our Sunday school leaders to come and be in that course. As they said later after the course they had never thought they would continue to do it. They planned to use only elements of it in children programs but God knew better=) Now there are regular classes which are held by our clowns in Derevjanka church and there are some orphanages which opened their doors and hearts to two funny and caring clowns. From time to time clowns do classes for Chalna and Petrozavodsk Sunday school children. Last week a leader of another orphanage for handicapped children called and invited to come and do classes there (It is out of town). So we went to meet her and to see the kids. Luda said after visiting the place that she had never expected to see so many handicapped kids in one place. There were 240 there. We struggled with tears while being there a lot. But God`s Spirit supported! Please pray that regular classes can be started there.

### **From Alexei:**

In the ministry everything goes as usual: many ideas and little time to get all things done. (I wonder why God created only 7 days in a week?=:))) Now when we have the car I manage to do much more things, maybe not all of them but at least much more than we used to. I have covered 15,000 km during two months; I want to thank you one more time for this huge help. Now we are planning the ministry for the second part of 2009. We are preparing for the opening of the new congregation which is to be on the 6th of September. Little by little every person who does ministry can get tired but as it is happening to me the cross of Christ gives strength to accomplish the things in my ministry. It has been 2 years of my ministry but it is hard to see the fruits of it often, but we don`t work for the sake of fruits but we minister in order to be thankful to Christ for his eternal love to us. Now I am leading the confirmation school at the congregation, there are few people coming but they make me joyful, they always give everything to me for checking in time (we decided to have home tasks=). They can be frustrated if they don`t understand something. I am looking at these people in the confirmation school and thinking: They are so caring and serious about knowing more when they just came. Where have the people who have been going to the church for a long time lost their tenderness and their dedication, their faithfulness to God? Why do we cool off in our faith so fast? Only yesterday we cried: "Jesus, my teacher, mercy me!" But today already we forget to thank Him for the healing. How much are we alike those men with leprosy who having been healed forgot to thank Jesus for the healing???

The Easter is coming up and the heart is filling with sadness and joy at the same time, the Good Friday is coming ahead but right after the joy of Easter is coming. Maybe it is how it should be in the life of a Christian: we fall down sometimes which is very hard and painful but only then we can truly realize: what it is to get up, and then see and feel this flight in our faith. I have been thinking about that a lot lately and I have come to conclusion that the person needs sometimes to fall down in order to get rid of

his arrogance or pride. Once there was a preacher who said: “there is always sun behind grey clouds and the understanding of it already gives you the motive for happiness and joy”. I hope each of us in our ministry and in our lives can have this opportunity to see this sunrise and this sun which is the love of Christ in the hearts of people. I can’t understand how people can live without Christ, love and hope.

Once I was on my way back from Segezha church (I didn’t have car yet at that time). The bus was old, it was running slowly and the road seemed to be very long. I was sitting in the bus and looking at people. There was one girl (she is from our youth group) sitting in front of me. She said to me with irritation and complaint after some hours of trip: “I don’t know when it is going to end...” The thing was that we were sitting in the bus, it was almost night, it was cold, the door of the bus was squeaking, it was dark. And at that moment I thought: “I am glad and not annoyed, it is easy for me because I know that I am going home where my dearest are waiting for me, where I can be myself and where I can have some rest after a long and not easy travel.” Can you only imagine that we are going home, the place where we can leave all our burdens, where our loving Father is waiting for us??!

Blessings to you and happy Easter! Let the joy of Christ’s resurrection fill your hearts!

With Love in Jesus

Nadia and Alexei Krongolm