

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

God's Peace to you from the Ural Deanery of the Ingrian Church.

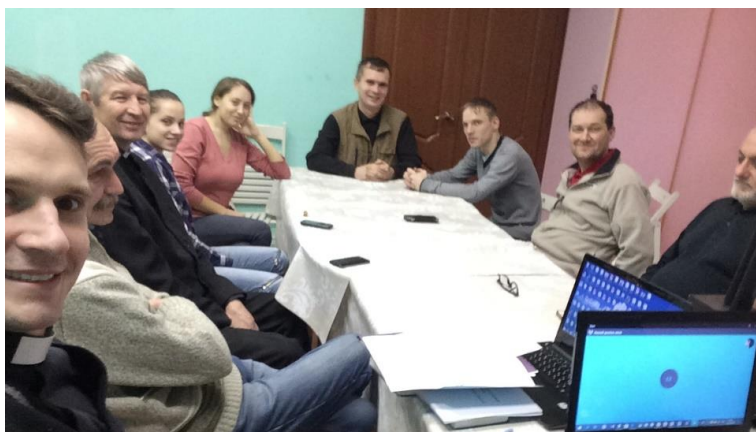
The first three months of 2019 were full of events. Apart from visiting most of congregations of our vast Deanery I managed to attend another session of my theological studies in Gothenburg (February) and to take part in a theological conference in Riga, Latvia (March).

The beginning of the year in the Ural Deanery was marked by a positive change. It has been one year since we started to implement our new missionary strategy in the region, and it becomes more and more evident that it bears its fruit in some of the churches.

The strategy of the Ingrian church can basically be described as a three-step model: information – confirmation – “ordination”. Firstly, we address as many people of the local communities as possible with social-media, posters, media, etc. in order to invite people to different (not necessarily strictly religious) events at church (“information”). Secondly, we provide people with solid Biblical teaching and confirmation school so that congregation's “guests” become their members (“confirmation”). But thirdly it is important to make sure everyone has his/her own role in the congregation's life, so we help our members to find their ministry as volunteers: doing musical, missionary work, diakonia etc. (“ordination”).

Now the “Velmema” (“Resurrection” in the local Mordva language) congregation in Saransk is organizing regular concerts that gather between 90 and 200 (!) people at church. People get information from the ads on the Internet and local media and come to listen to professional musicians, but they also hear good preaching and are invited to attend the course of “Christian faith basics”. The same happens in the congregation of St. Andrew in Kazan where the concerts are attracting much attention as they are organized together with the prestigious city's conservatory of music. We have agreed that each congregation is doing at least one event per month addressing non-church-goers of the community. But most of congregations over-fulfill the plan organizing different concerts, workshops and lectures.

We can see that in most of the congregations we managed to organize multitude of events aimed at people of the communities. The strategic step of this year is to organize strong confirmation courses in each of the congregation. That was the main topic of our pastors' meeting in Kazan on the 22d of January. Most of the pastors and deacons of the Deanery were present discussing our plans for 2019 and the way we are going to organize confirmation education.



One of the challenges we have is the “youth-drain” as I call it (like “brain-drain”): this is part of the general tendency of Russia that most of the young people leave smaller towns and cities and move to Moscow and Saint-Petersburg for better jobs. It results in our congregations having less and less young people. This year we have planned some measures to improve our youth ministry. 31 January – 2 February we had a youth camp of the Deanery in Yoshkar-Ola. We had less people than usual (about 40) but this time all the young people were responsible for their transportation expenses (it used to be subsidized by the Deanery before) and the donations of the participants covered all the expenses and there was even something left for future camps.

One of the positive changes is that now we have one more minister – a young deacon in Kazan – Arthur Semenov. He has recently graduated from our seminary in S-Petersburg (Keltto) and will be ordained as a pastor soon. Arthur is a gifted young man with many talents including music (guitar) and shooting and producing videos. I took Arthur on one of my trips to Kirov and Syktyvkar (North of the Deanery) where we had seminars. Arthur will help to conduct regular Bible studies via Skype to remote groups where we don't have pastors yet. And in March two more people from our Deanery (from Cheboksary and Ufa) graduated from the Initial Theological Course in our seminary and plan to continue with their theological studies.



Now we are getting ready for Easter, a very busy month in May and three extra-super-busy summer months: lots of children camps, a family and a missionary camp, a lot of different events, anniversaries, lectures and so on!

Please keep us in your constant prayers: churches in Cheboksary, Yoshkar-Ola, Birsik, Lupersola, Udmurtiya, Kazan, Syktyvkar, two congregations in Saransk and our groups in Troitsko-Pechorsk, Kirov and Ufa.

I ask for special prayers for one of our deacon's family.

And finally I would like to encourage you – look at how miserable and unworthy our ministry is, how difficult the context is but how great and abundant is God's love and mercy to His people that He lets all these great things happen – and be bold in proclaiming His Kingdom – preaching about His Grace and forgiveness of sins in the precious Blood of His Son Jesus Christ. To Him all the glory now and forever, amen!

Pictures attached: Youth camp in Yoshkar-Ola, Arthur Semenov in Syktyvkar, pastors' meeting and youth workers in Kazan.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Konstantin Subbotin

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