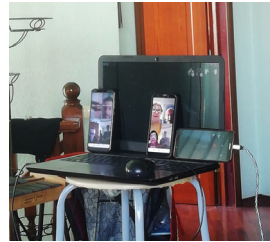




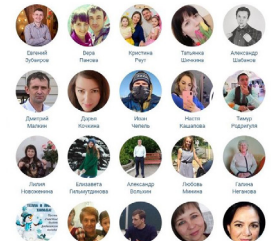
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A “NEW NORMAL”
IS AHEAD



NEW EASTER
TRADITION



FOOD PACKAGES
FOR HOMELESS

MOSCOW SEMINARY NOTES

THE MOSCOW THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH PREPARES PASTORS AND LEADERS WHO ARE CALLED BY GOD, BY PROVIDING GUIDANCE IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND BY TEACHING THEOLOGICAL DISCIPLINES AND PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN MINISTRY ON THE BASIS OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURE IN THE WESLEYAN TRADITION

Quarantine Will Soon Be Over, A “New Normal” is Ahead

When I returned to Moscow in March 2020 after a trip to the United States, it felt as if I had left from one planet and returned to another less than a month later. I am thankful to all the students, trustees, advisors, friends, faculty and staff of the Moscow Seminary for making this “interplanetary” coronavirus quarantine jump with us.



Exploration Weekend 2020

During the COVID-19 quarantine, some challenging and exciting events happened (but not all exciting events were challenging and not all challenging events were exciting).

We had to cancel our Spring session because of the emerging quarantine in Moscow. The last in-person event we had was the Exploration Weekend in mid-March. I already had to lecture online, having just returned from the US two days prior to the event, and thus being under quarantine. We are excited about the strong group of incoming students this year.

Our staff has been working remotely for over a month now. We meet daily for Zoom conference calls and continue working as before. I miss our in-person tea breaks, but on the plus side, the remote mode saves me a daily commute of two hours.

In April the Seminary was featured in the United Methodist News Service (Google “Covenant Groups Unite Isolated Moscow Seminary Students”). Several news networks carried the article with dozens of repost-



ings. The very positive feedback indicated the recognition of innovative approaches in theological education developing at the Moscow Seminary.

Another exciting story is that our students continued ministry across Russia and Eurasia, including online worship and special ministry to the elderly and homeless. The fact that students collected a special Easter offering for the Seminary warmed my heart. I am grateful to the President of the student body Anna Klimina and the Vice-President for Development and Administration Elena Melnikova for this initiative.

As we prepare to move out of the quarantine period, we recognize that we will have to face long-term changes. Here is how the “new normal” has started to take shape at the Seminary.

We started working full speed ahead on organizing our first fully online session for the summer. It is exciting and challenging work. We were planning to move in that direction in the future, but these few weeks moved our plans several years ahead.

Because we will not have students come to Moscow in the summer, we have moved our graduation and entrance exams to the fall. We hope that next year we will return to enrolling new students and graduating our students in the summer.

The biggest challenge we are facing now is that some of our students have lost their income due to the quarantine. Your scholarship support will be even more critical this year and in the next few years.

I am grateful and excited to be in partnership with you,

Sergei Nikolaev, PhD

E. Stanley Jones Professor of Evangelism

President of the Moscow Theological Seminary of the UMC

Support the Moscow Seminary

1. Make a check payable to

General Board of Global Ministries, ADVANCE GCFA write on check: #12174A Moscow Seminary – Scholarship and Academic Support (for professorship endowment support please contact Dr. Dan Johnson or Dr. Sergei Nikolaev)

2. Mail to

General Board of Global Ministries, ADVANCE GCFA, PO Box 9068, New York, NY 10087–9068

3. Then email a note to

Dr. Sergei Nikolaev at president.msumc@gmail.com

Dr. Dan Johnson at danjohnson5107@gmail.com

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New Easter Tradition

The phrase “times such as these” comes up frequently in the media nowadays. It implies that we need to do something extra special today because everything is so different from what we are used to. Yes and no. Yes, today is a good day to give a start to a new ministry, new tradition, or a new way of thinking. No, these times are not very different from what humankind has already experienced. And Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever (Heb. 13:8).



Moscow Seminary Building in Spring

So, today on behalf of the Seminary, I would like to thank our student Anna Klimina for coming up with a new Easter tradition—to celebrate the Day of Resurrection by calling people to express their gratitude to the Risen Christ through giving to His cause.

It is also my great pleasure to express gratitude to all our students, who have as always responded to this call with their donations to our mission. In times such as these the simple act of generosity is indeed a deep theological statement: it shows of our hope for the future and of our confidence and trust in the Lord. God is able to bless us abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that we need, we will abound in every good work (2 Cor. 9:8).

*Elena Melnikova, DMin,
Vice-President for Development and Administration*

Movie Club on the Couch

As in all the churches of our region, Sunday worship in our church went online. We are learning how to use Zoom to get the entire parish together on Sundays. In addition, I have started a new ministry, which I called “Movie Club on the Couch.”

We used to meet in the church together once in a while to watch and discuss movies on various topics relevant to the Christian life. We do not have this opportunity now, but each week I send out the recommended name of a movie for people to watch online, and on Wednesday we gather together on Skype or WhatsApp and engage in a meaningful discussion.

We have rearranged our traditional “God’s Grace Evening” ministry as well. We used to gather once a month in the church, share an agape meal, and pray. Now we prepare family meals at home, gather together through the Internet, sing Psalms, and pray over the needs we have posted on our church group beforehand.

During this time of isolation, we have experienced that our community has drawn closer together and our fellowship is becoming stronger.

Elena Urupina, 6th year student:



Food Packages for Homeless

I am spending this quarantine time at home with my family. There is no doubt that it is a great challenge for us. We miss our offline fellowship and sharing meals in our community a lot, but thanks to God we still have our meetings online.

My home group was not affected by the isolation, so I keep leading this ministry. I can't conduct my missionary trips to a nearby village any longer, but I use this time to gather and think through some discussion topics I am going to use with the people there once the isolation is over.

Though we don't have the opportunity to share the word with the homeless during our feeding ministry now, we still are able to hand them some individually packed food, which is no doubt a major blessing for them these days.

Regardless of all the challenges of losing offline connections with people and all the worries and uncertainty concerning the future, I see many blessings in this situation. I can spend more quality time with my family, which is also my ministry field and spend more quiet time with God, praying and searching the Scripture. I am learning to rely more fully on God's divine providence.

Though sometimes I feel like a dog that was put on a chain, I know that once I get loose, I'll keep on running doing my ministry even more actively, because now I know that we need to use every minute we have for outreach, because everything can stop so unexpectedly.

Ilya Kashapov, 1st year student

New People Join Online Worship

In our church in Kaliningrad we never stopped doing ministry, although our way online was quite thorny. In the beginning we tried various programs like Skype, Zoom, and others to arrange our worship service in the conference mode. However, some people in the church were unable to join us this way. Others just simply could not handle the technology.

But we were determined to engage as many people as we could during these uneasy times, so we figured out a new way of conducting the service. Before the service we send out recorded praise songs, Scripture passages, and prayers for the day through the Viber and WhatsApp messengers.

The worship service is conducted by the leader alone without anyone else present in the room. We record our sermons and send them out, so everyone can download them to listen to any time offline. We conduct our prayer meetings in a similar way. It was a great blessing to learn that many people who had stopped attending church some time ago have rejoined us again through this extended service.

Tatyana Goncharova, 2nd year student



FOR ANY QUESTIONS PLEASE WRITE:

danjohnson5107@gmail.com (Dan Johnson)
 president.msumc@gmail.com (Sergei Nikolaev)