

SLMS Siberian Seminary Fund Raising Q & A

1. What is the history of support for the Seminary? Has it always struggled? Has it recently lost a large donor?

The “Russian Project” began as a “dream” of the Schwan Charitable Foundation and by the grace of God became a reality through the generous on-going financial support of the Foundation over the past two decades, and the dedication, sacrifice, and theological strength of the President and faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. The support of LCMS President Alvin Barry was also indispensable.

With the election of Pres. Harrison in 2010, the long overdue fellowship status with the SELC was quickly and rightly approved. The Seminary is now a strong independent institution fully capable of self-governance. It is no longer necessary for CTS to send professors, oversee the administration of the seminary or serve as the channel for the transference of financial support from the Schwan Foundation. Under the Harrison administration, fiscal responsibility was transferred to the LCMS Office of Church Relations.

In 2017, the LCMS experienced a serious shortfall in its fund-raising for theological education (i.e. Global Seminary Initiative). For the most part, the Schwan Foundation has been the sole source of funding for the Novosibirsk Seminary. This cannot continue indefinitely. The Schwan Foundation has requested that the primary stakeholders (CTS, LCMS Church Relations) explore alternate avenues of support. It has become clear to all those involved that the financial strategy must include raising funds to cover the cost of the annual operations of the Seminary and building an endowment for future operations.

At the request of Dr. Collver and LCMS Church Relations the SLMS was asked to assist with fund raising and to put together a strategy leading to the point where the Seminary no longer requires financial support from the Schwan Charitable Foundation.

2. What is the annual budget for the Seminary? Basic survival budget \$250,000

3. What has brought on this current financial crisis and impending shut down?

See question #1 above.

4. Does the Seminary leadership have a strategic plan beyond donation requests? The Seminary leadership has been fully involved with LCMS Church Relations and the Siberian Lutheran Mission Society in the development of plans to establish an endowment over the next 5 to 7 years.

5. What is the real need for 2018 and beyond? As stated in question #2, the basic annual survival need is \$250,000. This does not include additional valuable projects and programs of the Seminary such as hosting theological conferences and symposia that bring together Lutherans from Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia; writing and translating confessional Lutheran theological books and articles into Russian; and sending Novosibirsk professors to teach intensive courses at other seminaries and Bible schools in countries of the former Soviet Union. Such requests are common, e.g. Novosibirsk faculty have taught and lectured in Koltushe, Ukraine, Kazakstan, Georgia, and also in Ethiopia.

6. Are the Siberian Lutherans in fellowship with other Lutherans in Russia? Are they helping?

Over the past 20 years, nine Lutheran seminaries were established in Russia, Central Asia, Ukraine and the Baltics. As of today, five have been closed, and the remaining four are struggling to survive. Of these four, Novosibirsk has, without question, the strongest faculty and commitment to confessional Lutheran doctrine and practice. Its academic qualifications are stellar and more importantly the seminary understands that its purpose is to serve the church, to prepare the best pastors possible to faithfully preach, teach, conduct the liturgy, and travel across the vast land to give pastoral care to the faithful and reach out to the lost. It is painful to imagine what will happen to Lutheranism in Russia if the Seminary were to be closed.

Two Lutheran seminaries remain in Russia: Novosibirsk which is the seminary of the Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church and Koltushe (near St. Petersburg) which is a seminary of the Ingrian Lutheran Church (Ethnic Finnish roots). Both are in fellowship with the LCMS and each other. The Ingrian Lutheran Church is struggling to maintain its seminary and is in no position to assist Novosibirsk.