

Anniversary Celebrations in Vladivostok on September 28-30, 2012:

“20 years after the Restoration of St. Paul’s Church”

Where does one begin? The best way would be with this:

38 honored guests from all over the world came and among them were the following: four Bishops (Otto Schaude and his wife, of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Urals, Siberia and the Far East; Gerald Mansholt and wife Anita from the Central States Synod, a companion synod to the Provost of the Far East; President Hyun-Sub Um, from the Lutheran Church in Korea, a companion church to the Provost of the Far East; and Milos Klatik, from the Lutheran Church of Slovakia, which at one time provided us a Vicar; two representatives from German Embassies: Ambassador Wolf Grundies from Moscow and Ambassador Gerhard Thiedemann and his wife from Pyongyang , North Korea; Pastor Olli-Pekka Lassila from Finland, who was the former consultant for the Far East for the Lutheran World Federation and helped us very much; Pastor Karl-Heinz-Schell from Peking, China; Pastor Otto Pfingsten from Germany, who “discovered” St. Paul’s Church even before Provost Brockman did; Professor Dr. Ulrich Plueddemann and his wife from the South African Synod of the Lutheran Church of the Cape; Church Music Director Henner Schwerk from Germany, who has blessed us with magnificent Organ Concerts; Torsten Griess-Nega , a German entrepreneur and sponsor; Andreas Loquai from Germany who is an upright Lutheran and a manufacturer of wooden art, who gifted us with two wood panels with wording from Psalm 127; and Nicolas Dautricort from Paris, France, who played fantastically Bach Solo Sonatas and Partitas for us . There were many others as well and you can find the entire list at www.luthvostok.com . We also received many greetings from all over the world. In the course of 20 years of continuous life and work we have won many friends and partners.

As a result of the international character of the guests we had, we were able to hear the Gospel for the Festival Divine Service in eight different languages: Russian, German, English, Korean, Chinese, Finnish, Slovak, and Afrikaans. (There is a picture of all of our guests behind the Altar.) The President of our Synod, Jewgenij Filipoff brought greetings. Bishop Otto Schaude preached with Psalm 84 as his text and spoke absolutely impressively about “Joy in the Living God”, a joy that is a positive counterforce to the dreary and stupid society of this world. “The joy of the Lord is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10). These words, which were used in days gone by as a greeting by the members of the Brethren in Russia, have helped many people endure this country. It is so fitting that so many of the greetings we received wished us “happiness” and “music”. The first word was often missing in unhappy Russia and the second word is dearly loved in Russia. (Perhaps this is so because the first word was often missing.)

We opened our exhibition “The History of St. Paul’s in Vladivostok from its beginning to Present” on September 28th. This is a masterpiece by our own Ludmilla Pedjasch and Nelly Sedowa. (Photo) At the same time our own Irina Barsegowa compiled a booklet entitled, “The History of the Resurrection and Restoration of the St. Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Church of Vladivostok.” She used local sources and the diaries of Manfred Brockman to compile a continuation of the booklet “A Short Historical Summary of the Origins and Life of the Lutheran Church in the Far East” written by N. von Hauffe in the year 1924.

Lothar Deeg, of St. Petersburg, introduced the English translation of his book, “Kunst and Albers Vladivostok”. That evening we had the first Organ concert given by Church Music Director Henner Schwerk. He had previously played at St. Luke’s Church in Arsenjeff on September 26th.

On the morning of the 29th we had an excursion narrated by Professor Nelly Mis and entitled “German Vladivostok”. That evening we had the big Festival Concert in St. Paul’s with choir and orchestra.

The big reception on September 30th in St. Paul's Church was without a doubt the high point of our Celebration, because it was so lively and communicative. Even now we are hearing an enthusiastic echo: how many encounters between so many people from different nations and cultures. It was especially interesting to observe the encounter between the South Korean consul (whose wife was dressed in traditional costume) and the President of the Lutheran Church in Korea and the German Ambassador to North Korea (Photo). There was a lot of discussion about the situation of Christians in North Korea.

The Celebration continued with the traditional German Cultural Days which continued until October 9th. This included a lot of music. A high point this year was the playing of French violinist Nicolas Dautricourt from Paris. He played the Solo Sonatas and Partitas of Bach for our listening pleasure. This was quite exceptional for all music lovers. We also had an evening of music provided by the Polish Society.

And so this year we had the pleasure of not only introducing Germany, but also of introducing her two neighboring states, with which she has shared a very difficult history. We really are on the path to European Cultural Days in Vladivostok.

One can see from the many pictures, how many people streamed into our church. Even our church service had an increase in attendance. We are the spiritual, cultural and human center located in the middle of the city.

We can't forget the meeting for the youth who are students who met in the Goethe lecture hall on October 5th. They also were at St. Paul's Church on October 6th for our traditional Lectures on Philosophy. This year the topic was "Cultural Expansion in the Russian Far East: 20 Years in the Making: The Lutheran Church as Meeting Place for the Cultures." It was quite impressive how much information Philosophy Professor Jelena Sergejewna Grischina knew about Lutheran theology and how she valued its thinking and ethics. She discussed critical thinking, differentiation, explanation and humbleness, "Where is the healthy middle class?" She said, "We need to start with Ethics, if we want make progress with each other." and there is some value to what she said.