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**BUILDING UP  
CHRIST'S BODY**



**THE FORGE  
OF THE SPIRIT**



**YOUR PLACE  
IN MISSION**



**THAT YOU  
MAY HAVE LIFE**

# 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

## For Building Up the Body of Christ

*This year, we celebrate 30 years of ministry at our Methodist Seminary. Among the rich diversity of works that God has accomplished through the seminary during this time, I would like to draw your attention to three seminarians whose articles are included in this issue of Seminary Notes.*



Friends of the Seminary together again

Vlada Novikova, a church leader, pastor's wife, and mother of three, enrolled in the seminary in search of knowledge and answers to theological questions. Ultimately, she came to a much clearer understanding of her calling.

Andrey Kuznetsov, a pastor and District Superintendent, came to the seminary in search of something greater in life and gained knowledge, experience, and inspiration for ministry, finding his place in the mission of Christ.

Natalia Chernova, one of the first graduates of the seminary, has traveled an extensive journey as a pastor and District Superintendent in various cities and has recognized her calling to teach the New Testament.

Each of these seminarians represents a distinct category of students who come to the seminary: Vlada is an example of a dedicated church leader, Andrey is an example of a church pastor, and Natalia is an example of a minister serving beyond the local church. God has given each of them special gifts, and each has come to see them more clear-



Graduates and the faculty

ly, broadly, and deeply through their studies at the seminary.

My own life changed and found purpose and direction when I entered the seminary in 1995. This year I am also celebrating a personal anniversary—30 years of ministry in the Methodist Church. I am eternally grateful to God for His guidance on this path. My greatest blessing is seeing how the lives of seminarians change over the years of their studies.

So many talented people have studied at the seminary over these 30 years! I don't know a single person whom God hasn't helped to more fully un-

cover their talents and gifts through the seminary. In this anniversary, we celebrate that the gifts each person has received are not just for themselves, but for the building up the Body of Christ.

May the Lord bless each one, whether they celebrate this anniversary in Moscow, Vladivostok, or Bishkek, and may they glorify Christ, building up His Body through the service of the seminary!

*Sergei Nikolaev, PhD  
Seminary graduate, President  
and E. Stanley Jones Professor of Evangelism*

## Forge for the Mind, Heart, and Spirit

**B**efore becoming a student, I was in desperate need of knowledge and answers to theological questions. But how surprised I was to find that, despite gaining knowledge and answers, my spiritual search only deepened and expanded. I discovered a true “forge” for the mind, heart, and spirit with inexhaustible potential.

As a mother of three children, it is not always easy to find free time for study. I am very happy that there is a distance learning format, which gives the opportunity to dive into the depths of theological thought, ancient doctrines, Church history, and the Word of God, which opens up in entirely new ways. In the seminary, every subject sharpens the mind, teach-

es critical thinking, and breaks down my incorrect ideas, opening up the wealth of Christian thought. For me, studying at the seminary is not just memorizing facts, but an incredibly fascinating live dialogue with the greatest minds of the past and present, whose discoveries guide me toward a deeper understanding of God, the world around me, and my place and role in it. It's not just acquiring knowledge; it's a new skill that allows me to think theologically.

Seminary students are not just friends; they are brothers and sisters who will always come to help if needed. Sharing a lecture summary or understanding and passionate discussions with classmates on theological topics will remain in my memory forever.



I often see how people lack knowledge. The Bible says (Proverbs 18:15) “The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge, for the ear of the wise seeks it.” I find it hard to imagine the life of a Christian without striving for wisdom and the acquisition of knowledge. I am so glad the seminary provides the opportunity to fulfill this need.

If I were asked what associations arise when I hear the word “seminary,” the first thing I would

say is warmth, joy, love, depth, and a feast of knowledge.

In conclusion, I would like to say that I am very glad that in the seminary my questions are encouraged, my faith is strengthened, my doubts dissolve, and I now have a much clearer understanding of my calling.

*Vlada Novikova,  
Seminary student*

## Your Own Place in Christ's Mission

How did I become a student? At that time, my wife, child, and I were living near Kaluga, where I worked at a factory and simultaneously assisted the local pastor of a small Pentecostal church. Despite the outward busyness, internally I felt dissatisfaction and a longing for something greater — a complete dedication to ministry to God. One day, a friend unexpectedly suggested that I apply to the Methodist Theological Seminary. I was filled with doubts: do I really need to study again? However, this thought firmly lodged itself in my mind, like a persistent inner voice urging me to listen. After several days of prayer and reflection, I realized this was divine guidance. We moved back to Moscow, where I enrolled in the seminary and successfully graduated in 2007, opening a new chapter in my life. Since then, I have been a pastor in the town of Pushkin, near St. Petersburg, and in 2025 I was appointed District Superintendent of the St. Petersburg and Western Districts. As you can see, this decision radically transformed my life and defined its future direction.

What else did the seminary education give me? It helped me better understand the Scriptures and improve my sermon preparation and teaching. Through

it, I was strengthened in my calling and began to view the mission of Christ and His Church more broadly. The stories and testimonies of other ministers were of great importance. They enriched my personal experience and inspired me to keep moving forward. An important part of the learning process was trustful conversations with professors over tea or during breaks between lectures. The opportunity to discuss interesting topics openly was especially valuable. These years gave me not only knowledge but also friendship, support, and faith in myself as a minister. This foundation continues to help me and guide me in serving others.

What would I like to say today? It's joyful to see that the seminary continues to develop, offering new learning opportunities and creating new resources. It helps not only students but also active ministers. However, if you haven't yet studied and are eager to deepen your knowledge of God, study theology and find your place in Christ's mission. Don't hesitate — apply! Here you will gain knowledge, experience, and inspiration for service.

*Andrey Kuznetsov, Seminary graduate,  
pastor and District Superintendent*

## The New Testament and the Mission of Christ

*“Search the Scriptures... that you may have Life.” (John 5:39–40)*

The New Testament is not only a collection of sacred texts, but also a living testimony of how God, through Christ, reconciled the world to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:19), so that every person might meet not a particular religious system, but the Person of the Savior, Jesus Christ. Therefore, playing a central role in understanding the mission of Jesus Christ and revealing the essence of His coming into the world, the New Testament interprets the life and teachings of Jesus Christ in the context of both the

early and modern Church. The overall theological task of studying the books of the New Testament — the Christian part of the Bible — is to show the essence of the mission of human salvation in Christ.

Revealing the relevance and significance of the New Testament for listeners and presenting it in a scholarly grounded way so that “what is sought is found and kept,” is facilitated by a balanced choice of methodology for studying New Testament texts. The example and model of spiritual education



Professor Natalya Chernova teaching a New Testament class in a hybrid format

aimed at awakening in students a deep understanding of the gospel truths (Matthew 13:10–13) is the approach of Jesus Christ to teaching His disciples.

Written under the special influence of the Holy Spirit, the texts of the New Testament originally became part of the liturgical (worship) order in the early Christian communities, served as the foundation for catechesis, the formation of the creed, and defined the rules of faith, life, and behavior of Christians.

Studying the New Testament includes research related to the history of the early Church, early Christian literature, Palestinian Judaism, and the Greco-Roman period. Important discoveries and studies in the field of biblical archaeology and New

Testament biblical studies play a significant role in understanding the historical and cultural context of the New Testament and in its interpretation.

Studying the texts of the New Testament offers an opportunity to discover the meaning of the biblical books and the significance of the words left by the Lord as His revelation, to deepen understanding of the New Testament texts, find answers to questions, learn to read, accept, and apply God's word in daily walking with Christ, continuing the traditions of the early Church and the traditions of discipleship and ministry.

*Natalia Chernova, Seminary graduate  
and professor of New Testament*

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