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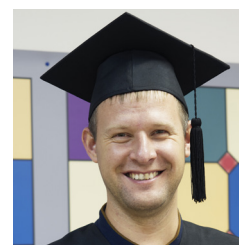
**YOU'RE ON THE  
RIGHT PATH**



**THE UNSEEN  
PEOPLE**



**THESIS  
WITH PLEASURE**



**GO FORWARD  
BOLDLY**

# 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

## You're on the right path

*We have dedicated this entire academic year to thanking God for His 30 years of work through the Seminary. In each issue of the Seminary Notes, we invite you to look at the Seminary's ministry with fresh eyes. In this pre-Christmas issue, we present the perspectives of a trustee, a recent graduate, and a long-term graduate.*



President Sergei Nikolaev lectures on Early Methodism in Russia

Paradoxically, for various reasons, the Seminary's trustees can be called the unseen people. On the one hand, for the Seminary they are very important people, on whose hearts God has placed a call to care for the Seminary's strategic development; on the other, their work takes place in the background of the Seminary's ministry. What drives a successful seminary trustee? You'll learn about this in Elena Shegay's article.

A thesis, like any coursework at the Seminary, can be perceived as a mandatory course assignment that simply needs to be completed. But with such an approach to creative work, seminarians risk impoverishing themselves. Our recent graduate, Evgeniya Kravchinya, shares how to approach writing a thesis so that it brings you joy, becomes a major milestone in your personal development, strengthens your practical ministry, and brings blessing to both you and those who will read your thesis.

A poet once said, "Great things can be seen only from a distance." Some moments of seminary life and study only become truly appreciated with time. They are even more valuable when, many years later, our successful graduates, with the benefit of their own life experience, regard their time at seminary as priceless. Ivan Kochkin shares in his



Celebrating 30 years of God's work through the Seminary

interview how the Seminary taught him to sift the wheat from the chaff.

Dear brothers and sisters, in this season of Advent, in anticipation of the coming of the baby Jesus into this world at Christmas, I thank God for each of you. I pray that our relationship with Christ will be renewed this year, no matter where we are

on our spiritual journey. I also pray that each of us will find a new form of relationship with what God does and offers us through the Seminary.

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

## The Unseen People

For me, studying at the seminary was a special time of recharging my mind and heart. It wasn't just a process of acquiring knowledge, but a process of shaping me as a person, as a minister, and as a disciple of Christ.

At the seminary, professors, teachers, pastors, and theologians become our spiritual mentors. Here, we feel part of the extended family of Christ, where humility, love, patience, and responsibility are cultivated. Here, difficult questions are freely discussed among people who can help us find answers. Here, we learn to take our first steps as preachers and leaders. Here, we can make mistakes, receive feedback, and grow. Seminary prepares professional ministers for the Christian church. Here, we receive all the resources for ministry in a world that desperately needs Christ.

For me, the opportunity to study at the seminary is a precious time, a gift from God. During my studies, I observed many challenges associated with the educational process: the challenge of the

hybrid format, the logistical challenges of professors from abroad, the challenges of today... These challenges did not leave me indifferent. I decided to support my seminary financially whenever possible by becoming a member of the board of trustees. Trustees are unseen people. Many people don't know about them, but they do everything possible to keep the seminary running. I confirmed my commitment to supporting the seminary financially. I am honored to be part of this team!

It is important that the seminary prepare and graduate generations of pastors, educators, and leaders who will build healthy churches. It is important that people passionate about Christ could receive a quality theological education. The seminary exists not for itself, but for the church and the world. Its purpose is to prepare ministers to fulfill the mission Jesus entrusted to His followers.

*Elena Shegay,  
member of the Board of Trustees, pastor*



## Write Your Thesis With Pleasure

Every seminarian sooner or later thinks about the final thesis project. And many get stuck on choosing a topic simply because they don't know what to write about for such a long paper. I'll share how I found "my" topic.

When I first entered seminary and learned that a three-volume edition of John Wesley's sermons was being prepared, I decided I'd write something like "A Russian Perspective on Wesley's Sermons (or Theology)." But I had to abandon that idea. And now it's my penultimate semester, and I still don't know what to write about.

But fortunately, this semester included a course called "Christian Heritage." We studied medieval and modern Christianity, and for our final assignment, we had to write a term paper on a chosen topic. I glanced at my bookshelves and spotted a copy of Thomas à Kempis's "On the Imitation of Christ," which I'd bought about five years ago but hadn't gotten around to reading. It was such a wonderful coincidence. Kempis wrote in the 15th century, so it's perfect, and I'll finally get around to reading it.

I open it, start reading, gradually getting used to the author's rather unique language and style, and suddenly I catch myself thinking I'm reading a medieval Wesley. Wait, wait! How can this be? This is the 15th century! A Catholic monk! Where did he get such ideas?!

In a world where everyone is baptized as an infant, he calls for "conversion to God" and consid-

ers this essential for "following Christ." Amidst the near-slave existence of the majority in his society, he writes of "close friendship with Jesus." Almost at the peak of indulgence sales, he speaks of how only God, by His grace, grants repentance to the heart and forgiveness of sins. And how he writes about grace! It's almost poetry.

Of course, there are plenty of differences, too. After all, these are the 15th and 18th centuries, a Catholic monk and a Protestant pastor. But this topic captivated me. So, both researching materials and writing the thesis were interesting and not difficult.

I think that when choosing a topic, it's best to start with what truly interests you. After all, the Lord gives "the will and the action of His good pleasure." So, if you have a genuine interest, then perhaps this is exactly what the Lord wants from you. A thesis can become not just an additional course assignment, but rather a major milestone in which you can refine your views on a particular issue, organize and develop a practical ministry, and create the basis for a large series of sermons on a topical issue. For now, my advice to future graduate students is the following: decide on a topic early, start gathering material (read, read, and read some more!), and write your thesis with pleasure! Your work will bring blessings to you, to those who read and listen to it, and to many others who will benefit from this blessing!

*Evgeniya Kravchinya, Seminary graduate 2025*



Students in praise and prayer

# Go Forward Boldly

*Excerpt from an Interview by Pastor Kira Yufereva with Seminary students and graduates at the Seminary's 30th anniversary celebration*

**QUESTION:** Ivan, if you could meet yourself back when you were just applying to study at the Seminary, when you were preparing for admission, what question would you ask yourself? What would you say to yourself back then, before you started studying at the Seminary?

**IVAN KOCHKIN:** Think carefully, I would say. Do you really need it? To answer this seriously, I was asked this question after I had already entered the Seminary and was studying. But I don't regret my studies at the Seminary for a minute, for a second. Of course, there were difficulties and challenges, but the experience you gain from it is priceless. When I entered the Seminary, I also simultaneously enrolled in a bachelor's degree program here in Moscow. When I entered the university in Moscow, I didn't do it for the sake of gaining any specific knowledge, although I was offered jobs in the secular world, potentially reaching a leadership position, and higher education was required, which I didn't have. But my main motivation for entering the university was that our Seminary has a state educational license, and to receive a full Seminary diploma, I was willing to devote the energy, resources, and time to graduating from a secular

university. And I did, and the Lord gave me both the strength and the resources. For me, a Seminary education was a priority over a secular education.

And what would I say to myself? I would tell the words of my pastor, which I remembered when I entered the Seminary. I've heard many different stories about the Seminary, about those who studied there full-time, who were there from morning until night. And there were those who came to study from our church, who didn't finish their studies, they left, all sorts of life situations. And my initial concern was still this: what if they turn you into a heretic here, what if you become a legalist and a Pharisee? And Alexander Petrovich told me, "Seminary is a good tool for learning to sift the good from the bad. Seminary doesn't guarantee that everything will be right or that you'll always have only the information you need. But it's your responsibility to learn to sift the wheat from the chaff." And it truly is such a school. We went through such training. And that's how we learned to sift. So, I would say to myself, "You're on the right path. Forward. Go boldly. Fear not, the Lord is with you, O mighty man!"

## SUPPORT THE MOSCOW SEMINARY

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## QUESTIONS? PLEASE WRITE:

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