

LUTHERAN ENDOWMENT FOR NOVOSARATOVKA SEMINARY (LENS)



LENS Foundation is a non-profit corporation organized exclusively for charitable, religious and educational tax-exempt purposes.

LENS, the *Lutheran Endowment for Novosaratovka Seminary*, was formed in April 2002 to provide financial support to the fledgling Theological Seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Russian village of Novosaratovka. The Theological Seminary is the official educational institution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Central Asia (ELCROS).

The formation of the non-profit LENS Foundation was inspired by the dedicated work of the late Gerhard Krodel, former Dean and Professor of the Gettysburg Lutheran Seminary, and his wife, Joan, whose many years of fundraising have made the seminary possible. The Krodels raised \$1,432,330 to support the early work of the Holy Spirit throughout Russia and the Newly Independent States.

The Lutheran Church across the vast ELCROS geographic area must have seminary-educated people if it is to survive. Donations through LENS support the inspired work and preparation of local Lutheran pastors, seminarians and congregations, and also support invaluable extension training provided by the Novosaratovka Seminary to lay preachers who participate in theological education through a program of two-week seminars.

Our goals are to provide annual student aid to seminarians and operational support, stipends to graduate pastors, and to establish a long-term endowment fund. This is an opportunity to make a real difference in people's lives and in the life of the Lutheran Church.



Current Seminarians

2006: NEW SEMINARIANS

Aleksei Burkhanov: Aleksei was born into a family of engineers in 1985 in Leningrad. His family has German roots – on his mother's side were Germans from the Baltic states that moved to Russia after the revolution, and his father's family was from a German village in the Volga region.

Aleksei finished a high school that specialized in art in 2002. He began his higher education parallel to his being in his final year of high school; currently he is a 5th year student at the St. Petersburg Academy of Management and Economics, where he is in training to become a lawyer.

Aleksei was drawn to the church early, and he took the initiative as a 5-year-old to be baptized in Prince Vladimir Orthodox Church in Leningrad. In November of 2002 he made the conscious decision to join the Lutheran church, St. Catherine's on Vasiliev Island. He was confirmed there in June of 2003. Since 2004 he has been a lector in the congregation and has taken part in many aspects of church life, especially those tied with the leading of worship and care for the altar. He considers his practical knowledge to be significantly greater than his theoretical knowledge and therefore desires to receive theological training.

His hobbies are Batik art, philosophy, the study of ancient German languages and the history of Europe and the Mediterranean region.

Gleb Pivovarov: Gleb was born in Uljanovsk (Russia) in 1986. He started school in 1993 and in 2003 finished the "Physics, Math and Information Technology Lyceum," which was run by the local university. During his studies in the lyceum, he participated in various physics, math, astronomy and astrophysics contests and won a number of awards.

He began attending the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Uljanovsk in 2002. He was confirmed by pastor (and Seminary graduate) Vladimir Provorov in 2003; Gleb led youth group and was an assistant to the pastor in his congregation. In 2003 he began his university studies in the Applied Physics department, but then switched to the department of Culture and Art in 2004. He is currently on academic leave from his studies in the university, but hopes to renew them next year and finish his course work by extension while continuing his seminary studies.



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Seminary Internships: New life in the church appears when young people begin their service as church leaders. In five ELCROS congregations, there are signs of new life as seminarians began their internships in September/October 2006. Three of these students recently completed the Seminary's on-site program. They are Andrey Filiptsov, Dmitri Cherepennikov, and Menzer Ismailova.

Andrey Filiptsov had a very interesting summer, having spent June-August in Lutheran camps in Minnesota as a participant in the ELCA's International Camp Counselor program. After returning home to Krasnoyarsk briefly, he set off for Omsk, a city in southwest Siberia. The congregation there (which is also the bishop's residence in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Urals, Siberia and the Far East) is a second home for Andrey, since he worked there for a time before beginning his studies in Novosaratovka. Andrey's mentor is a 2000 graduate of the seminary – Evgeniy Lukinov.

Dmitri Cherepennikov is located in the capital of Volga-German Lutheranism, the city of Volgograd, where there is a new Probst (Dean), a 2002 graduate of the Seminary, Oleg Stulburg. His internship supervisor is a German pastor with years of experience in Russia, Angelika Depmann.

Menzer Ismailova is far from her home, serving in the Kaliningrad region. Her internship is based in the city of Chernyakhovsk, where her supervisor is Maria Goluboshchopova, a 2002 graduate of the seminary.

Two others have had a less direct path to their internship – **Sofia Tikhomirova** and **Igor Zhuravlev**. Igor, an extension student at the Seminary, took the Seminary's final theoretical exams in the summer of 2006 together with the on-site students. Igor did this while serving as the lay pastor of St. Nikolai Lutheran in Novgorod, and it is hoped that upon completion of his internship, he will be ordained as pastor of that congregation.

Sofia Tikhomirova finished the theoretical part of her theological education in 2001, when the Seminary had its first graduating class. At that time, however, she did not have the opportunity to go through an internship insofar as she accompanied her husband, Anton (seminary teacher of Systematic Theology,) to Germany, where Anton pursued and received his doctorate. Now that the Tikhomirows have returned to Russia, Sonia was free to bring her theological education to completion, which she is doing by going through her internship now at St. Peter and Paul's Lutheran in St. Petersburg.

The internship program is a sign of hope and life: for the first time a large portion of the seminary students are supervised by seminary graduates, and it is clear that our stated goal of training a new generation of leaders for the Lutheran church in the Soviet Union is slowly but surely coming to pass. Our interns, too, will both learn from their congregations and mentors and contribute to ministry in their congregations, since the work to be done there is enormous (everything from social service programs to organizing the youth, from creating Taize prayer services to traveling to as many as four or five village congregations during a week), while the experience and capabilities of the institutions of the local congregations are still limited. It is pleasing to see that these five students have had a successful beginning to their internships, and with hard work and prayer, we are confident in their successful completion.

LENS FUNDRAISING NEEDS

Over the past year, your contributions to LENS have provided funding for much good work at the Novosaratovka Seminary. Contributors to LENS includes: congregations, endowment funds and individuals literally from across the country.

Some congregations and individuals continue to contribute year after year. For example, one congregation in Iowa, Immanuel Lutheran Church in Forest City, is tithing their capital campaign, and has designated LENS as one of the recipient ministries.

In addition, in 2006 we have received numerous contributions in memory of Gerhard Krodel, the inspiration for the seminary at Novosaratovka. We have also received many contributions in honor of the retirement of Pastor George Evans of Redeemer Lutheran Church of McLean, Virginia.

As we thank God for your faithfulness as donors, we are mindful of how great are the needs in Russia. At present, a number of very substantial capital plant investments must be made if the Seminary is to continue to operate. A sewage treatment plant, required by regional authorities in Russia, is under construction and must be finished soon. In addition, the Seminary will need to replace its aging heating plant, which is certainly not optional in northern Russia!

The Seminary's successes create new imperatives. Continued enrollment of new seminarians and extension training creates need for ongoing operational funding of the Seminary. Moreover, as seminarians begin to graduate and return to their home regions, there is a critical need to provide ministry support to these new pastors. Economic conditions remain difficult in the former Soviet Union, and most pastors struggle to support their families with secular jobs while ministering to congregations that cannot afford to hire full-time pastors at present.

While the challenges are substantial, we find confidence in the fact that this work responds to our Lord's Great Commission to make disciples of all nations. The work of the Novosaratovka Seminary, and of its teachers, students and graduates, is truly front-line evangelism, helping to bring the Gospel to a part of the world that hardly heard it for more than 70 years.

We thank you for your past support, and ask for your continued prayers, and contributions to the mission and ministry of LENS.

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A DREAM THAT BECAME MY HOME: ANTON TIKHOMIROV

They were strange evenings. In the dim light of a pock flashlight, stumbling, trying to force one's way through pot-holes and snowdrifts. Then waiting in the 30 degrees below Celsius cold at the bus stop, watching helplessly as one bus after another slipped by without even applying the breaks. Really, who could possibly be at the cemetery at such a late hour (except a ghost!). No bus driver could imagine that there might be a seminarian waiting there, trying to get home after his lessons. They were strange evenings. Strange, but happy. This was the realization of my dream – to study theology. Going home after a

difficult day, again and again thinking over what was said in class, and already in my mind running over the text for the sermon at tomorrow's morning prayer service - it is difficult to imagine anything more divine!

Yes, to study theology was my dream. But, of course, it hadn't always been. I was born into a typical Soviet family and received a typical atheistic (even if very good) upbringing. Studies in school, avidly reading literature that, while already not officially forbidden, still had a certain touch of prohibition to it, the unsuccessful attempt to get into the philosophy department at the university. Serving in the army, the first acquaintance with the Bible - when the opportunity came up to purchase a brochure with the Gospel of John. Surprise – how everything there is at the same time the same and differs from what is described by Bulgakov (in *Master and Margarita*).

And from this surprise an interest was born. Already after the army an intensive spiritual search began, which took me to one of the Lutheran congregations of St. Petersburg. The Church Council President somehow came up to the recently-confirmed, shy young man from the back row and simply asked – “do you want to be a pastor?” The answer I gave then surprised even myself - “Yes!”

This is how my ministry began to grow, step-by-step. At first I simply helped at services, then was blessed to be a preacher, after which, in 1996, I was ordained. At the same time I studied in the journalism department at the university. Its not that I was very interested in journalism as a profession, but simply in this department students were given a well-rounded liberal arts education. One after another swallowed up the Russian translations of books that had any sort of relationship to western theology. What a strange and eclectic selection publishers offered at the time – Tillich, Bultmann, Harvey Cox, Martin Buber, Kierkegaard, John Robinson! How I wanted to finally study theology seriously!

From this interest a dream was born. It so happened that my finishing of studies at the university happened at the same time as the opening of the Seminary in Novosaratovka. And how could I not take the opportunity!

God gives in full measure. With the fulfilling of my dream he gave me my wife as well – Sofia (she was a student in my class) and children – Arina, Nikita, and Arsenii, who were born in Germany where I continued my theological studies. The result of 5 years spent in Erlangen was a dissertation on the Russian translations of German hymns (how much I gained by the work I did under the leadership of Prof. Hermann Brandt and Prof. Karl Christian Felmy), a doctoral degree in theology, and a priceless store of knowledge.

And here I am again in the Seminary. Now as a teacher. I work and live with my family in Novosaratokva. Dogmatics, Homiletics, the life and theology of Luther – isn't this a blessing, to teach one's favorite subjects! (Though, honestly, I had only satisfactory grades at the seminary for the course on Luther – I had to take the exam not long after the death of my father, but for all that I with great enthusiasm caught up on what I had missed thanks to the lessons of Prof. Berndt Hamm.)

So my dream has become my everyday work – but for all it that has not stopped being a dream!

My work in the congregation also is continuing. On Wednesdays I participate in “evening organ services,” where sharpen my skills of preaching in the style of “dramatic homiletics (in America it is known as the “new homiletic.” I became acquainted with it through Prof. Martin Nicol), in order to then pass it on to my students.

Even now there are strange evenings. Sometimes on Wednesdays evening you stand at the bus stop, shivering from the cold, guessing – will the last bus come or not? But this time it's not the bus to the city, but from the city. To **Novosaratovka**. To the **Seminary**. **Home**.

Written by Anton Tikhomirov, graduate of Novosaratovka Seminary, Russia

CONTRIBUTORS

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JULIA WOLFE (CLASS OF 2002)

On June 4, 2005 Julia Wolfe, a graduate of the seminary in 2002, completed yet another step in her education; together with 50 other students, on that day she graduated from Trinity Lutheran Theological Seminary in Columbus, Ohio (USA), receiving the Master of Sacred Theology degree, a degree frequently sought by those who are in the process of preparation for a Ph.D. program.

While in Columbus, Julia specialized in the field of pastoral care; as a part of her education she served at a women's shelter, and in her master's thesis she grappled theologically with the problems she met in this work. During the summer, Julia was involved in a course of Clinical Pastoral Education.

Julia's hopes are being fulfilled insofar as she has received the opportunity to bring her education to completion through the pursuit of a Ph.D. She is currently a doctoral student at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. Julia's studies in the United States have been made possible through a grant from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's International Scholarship program.

While it will take a number of years to finish her degree, it is planned that Julia will return to teach in Novosaratovka after she completes her studies at Luther.

2005 SEMINARY GRADUATION

On July 8, 2005, four young men and women were added to the short but growing list of proud graduates of the Novosaratovka Theological Seminary. Dmitri Chiz, Natalia Saripova, and the husband and wife pair of Tatyana Petrenko and Dietrich Brauer all successfully completed their internships and passed the colloquium and was awarded the Bachelor of Theology degree.

These students have unique backgrounds, and it is clear that each will bring his or her own gifts to ELCROS as a whole. Tatyana is originally from the Kyrgyz Republic, and completed a degree in religious studies there before entering the seminary. Along with Natalia, she is particularly interested in questions of biblical interpretation and exegesis. Natalia spent a number of semesters studying in the United States and Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary before entering Novosaratovka. She is originally from the Ural mountain region, but spent many years as translator and administrative assistant at St. Peter and Anna's Lutheran in St. Petersburg after finishing her Ancient Studies degree from St. Petersburg State University. Dmitri, too, had years of practical work in the congregation behind him before entering the seminary – he was a deacon in his home congregation. He is focused on questions of dogmatics and liturgics, and intends on serving in his native Ukraine. Dietrich is the only graduate who is a native of the European part of Russia, and his gifts are especially visible in church history, dogmatic theology and liturgical practice. Dietrich and Tatyana are planning to continue their service in Kaliningrad.

It is clear that each of these young men and women has the potential to make a large impact on ELCROS in the future, and we are all proud of them. Congratulations!

TWO SEMINARY GRADUATES INSTALLED AS BISHOPS

Recent graduates of the Seminary's extension program have completed a great achievement - they have recently been installed as bishops of ELCROS regional churches – Alfred Eicholtz in the Kyrgyz Republic and Yuri Novgorodov of Kazakhstan.

Albert Eicholtz, 44, took his final theological exams at the seminary in 2004 and was granted a Bachelor's degree from the seminary in 2005 after having passed his colloquium on practical pastoral work. Eicholtz was born in Kyrgyzia when it was still part of the Soviet Union. After emigration to Germany, he returned to his homeland to serve through the church there. He has been especially active in theological education, organizing much of the activity at the study center in Bishkek, and has also been involved in congregational work, including work at helping congregations become financial self-sufficient through agricultural projects.

Yuri Novgorodov, 49, was installed as Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kazakhstan on June 14, 2005. He has been the head of church administration there since 1997, and graduated from Novosaratovka in 2002. Novgorodov continues to be involved in educational questions related both to the seminary/trade school in Astana and to our seminary, where he took a very active part in the Educational Conference that was held here in the spring.

After nearly eight years of labor, the seminary and all those who have served here throughout the years are now finally beginning to see the fullness of the fruits of their labor; the seminary was envisioned as the place where future leaders of ELCROS would be trained, and now we see that a number of our graduates are fulfilling our hopes and dreams for them and for this church. Praise be to God!

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