

## LENS BOARD MEMBERS ATTEND ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

The Seminary celebrated its 10th anniversary from September 25 to 27. Graduates had the opportunity to see one another and to learn from each others' experience in parish life during their 2-day seminar. Many partners of the Seminary had a chance to get personally acquainted with the fruits of their labors when they spoke with current students and graduates. On Saturday the 27th there was a round table for all the anniversary's participants during which we spoke about what theological education has meant for those who received it and what paths might be in front of the Seminary in the future. The celebrations were concluded with a worship service during which many guests shared a word of greeting, followed by a wonderful banquet.

Two LENS Board members, Joan Krodel and Pastor George Evans, traveled to St. Petersburg to participate in the 10th Anniversary celebration. Below please find their reports:

Joan Krodel: Pastor George Evans and I had a most rewarding and pleasant visit at Novosaratovka Seminary from Sept. 26-28. The meetings on Friday were long and serious, and included representatives from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany and the ELCA as well as the rector, Anton Tikhomirov, and the business manager of the seminary and we were made aware of the actual situation of the seminary--both good and not so good. The financial situation remains serious and funds for support continue to be needed. We were encouraged by Anton's example of leadership and by the commitment demonstrated by all those present. The service of anniversary celebration on Saturday was moving and uplifting. Participants included a representative of the Orthodox Church who read one of the lessons. It was remarkable to participate with students past and present and to share & give; their enthusiasm for what they had learned and experienced at the Seminary. Their dedication and that of their teachers is amazing. On Sunday we were able to join in the worship service at the Lutheran Cathedral Church of St. Peter, as they installed their new pastor. An excellent brass choir accompanied the worship, yet another wonderful experience. The two services were conducted in Russian, German and English and required the assistance of several translators. It was inspiring to hear voices raised in the singing of the hymns in all three languages at the same time. For me, it was an exceptional experience--to see the fruition of the work that my husband, Gerhard, had carried on in raising the funds for the purchase of the seminary building and for its renovation and for the building of the Kaethe Luther House, which contains faculty apartments and offices. The complex is beautiful, efficient and a lively center for theological education in the Russian Lutheran Church.

Pastor George Evans: Joan's brief summary is on target. The meeting with all the announced attendees present was an excellent one. Archbishop Ratz is very able. Anton and he were excellent hosts and managers of the meeting. The seminary is not only there it is obviously effective and growing more so. They are energized and active in their work. The faculty is effective and they work diligently to have adjunct instructors such as Milton Ost and Dan Biles. Anton as the leader of the seminary and administrator is responsible. The problems are equally real and serious. The large one is obviously money with only the beginning, a bare beginning, of support from the regional churches across ELCROS. The support of the regional churches must grow and it showed. Part of the good news is the growing acceptance of the seminary made clear by bishops who were once vocal critics sending students into the programs. Anton and the Archbishop have reached out and made a difference. Our time in Russia was well spent. All of us should be assured of the seminary is worth and its future.

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## 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 Krodel's 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.



## SEMINARY CELEBRATES 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

*Report from Anton Tikhomirov, President, Novosaratovka Seminary  
Prepared for the seminary partners meeting in September 2008*

First of all, I would like to express my deep gratitude to all of you: to those who supported and continue to support our Seminary, to those who worked and continue to work in it, to those who were and still are our teachers, colleagues and friends. It would be impossible to imagine this anniversary celebration without you. Now I will tell you about the unique situation of the seminary.

**The Situation with Students** - At present there are 10 students of the 4<sup>th</sup> year, placed in their internships. We have never had so many interns before. It was a hard job to find a worthy and experienced mentor for them. This achievement was thanks to Bradn Buerkle, the organizer of internships. Our extended education program is very popular. Twenty-seven students came to the last August session, nine new students being among them. In general we have about 40 people participating in the extended education course. It has become a good tradition that we invite guest teachers from abroad to the extended education courses. Recently we have found a new and true friend - Pastor Norbert Hintz from the Church of Hanover, who accompanied our students during two sessions, conducting lessons on practical theology. Last semester we had six regular students: two second-year, one first-year and three newcomers. Six new applicants came to us this year of which three qualified and passed the entrance exams.

**The Situation with Teachers** - At present we have only three permanent teachers of theology. The contract of Joseph Kang will come to an end in two years, and we will have to urgently find a teacher in his place. If we take into consideration his specialty (biblical subjects), we will see that it is a hard task. Bradn Buerkle has an opportunity to improve his qualifications and get a PhD degree with the support of the ELCA. It is joyful news. On the other hand, that means, that possibly during his studies he won't be able to pay as much attention to his studies and the work at the Seminary as before. As for me, in spite of my rectorship, I have the full teaching load. However, not only because of the lack of teachers, but also because of the fact that I am the first Russian theological teacher, it would be wrong not to use me as a teacher.

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We very much hope that the EKD would send a permanent teacher to us. Unfortunately they did not manage that last year. However, we are very grateful for two guest teachers, who will come to us this semester in order to deliver lectures on liturgics and pastoral care. One more teacher on pastoral care is expected in the next semester from the USA. However, the Seminary won't be able to develop, if we don't think about our local teaching staff. Here our great hope is Elena Bondarenko, who I many times mentioned in my reports. We hope that she will get a scholarship in Germany in order to become a teacher of theology at the Seminary. Beside English she is teaching now a series of general educational subjects and introductory biblical

subjects. Our main hope is that she will teach with time subjects taught at present by Joseph Kang. We also attract part-time teachers. It is Anastasia Novgorodova, who teaches a part of general subjects and religion, Elvira Zhejds (Church law), Ludmila Shmidrina (church music) and some others.

**Public Relations** - Public relations are that field in which the situation was not very favorable several years ago; however, it started improving considerably. These relations can be subdivided into two groups: outer church relations and inner church relations. As for the first category they remain good and continue developing. We acquired many good friends in the city, and I hope some of them will be present at our anniversary celebrations. These are people from the lay and religious educational institutions, the orthodox institutions being among them. We were invited to take an active part in the creation of a theological faculty at St. Petersburg State University. At present this work is in bureaucratic procedures, that is why it is not very noticeable. However, I hope that very soon it will become active, and our participation will be really required. An important moment will be a scientific conference "Theology of the Minority", which will take place at our Seminary in November this year with the support of the EKD. Renowned representatives of different churches and Christian educational institutions from Russia and Eastern Europe will gather there. Announcements about this conference were put at the leading Internet-sites, which are specialized in religion, and they found an interested feedback. Everything shows that this conference will be one of the most important events in religious life of our country this year.

Our teachers, Elena Bondarenko and me among them, participated in a number of conferences, which took place in our city. In the diocesan journal of the Russian Orthodox Church there appeared my article quite recently, and in the end of this year – the beginning of the next year there should appear my Introduction on Lutheranism in a famous Moscow publishing house, which is Orthodox, but ecumenical. Partially this project is financed by Martin Luther Bund. For our Seminary it means a long cherished way to the "theological publicity". An important breakthrough of this year was a radical improvement of the Seminary image inside our Church. The majority of new students turned out to be open to new knowledge and to respect some other viewpoints. The administration of some regional churches (particularly of Siberia and Kazakhstan) came to understand that the theological education, though there are many theological disagreements, is still very important for future pastors and church ministers. And I am particularly grateful to Archbishop Edmund Ratz for the encouragement of this idea among our bishops. The result of that is the growth of the number of students of both full-time and extended education departments. One pastor, who was not previously supportive of the Seminary, is sending to us an extended education student this year. The church of Urals, Siberia and the Far East, which was sending only extended education students, has two full-time students at the Seminary at present.

The flyer on the introduction into Lutheranism, issued by the Seminary for our congregations, became popular. Many of them have already ordered a big number of its copies. Some Regional Churches are preparing their own edition of this flyer, taking their local background into consideration. In the end of the last year we renewed the edition of the "Novosaratovka News" – this time in a full colored version. We hope that this information bulletin will be issued once a year. We do not have means to issue it more often. A long time absence of the Seminary yearbook was a failure. We simply did not have time for this work. However,



we hope that the publication of materials of the November conference (as an anniversary yearbook) will fill in the gap.

A great step forward was the opening of the children's Internet site, [www.nebesite.ru](http://www.nebesite.ru), for children in our Church, which exists under the auspices of the Seminary. The leader of this project is my wife Sophia Tikhomirova. Even this site, which has not been done completely yet, produces an impression with its technical and informational contents, thus it differs positively from other children's Christian sites in the Russian Internet. We need more work to finish up the preparation of this site, its contents and promotion. However, the result is clear. Thanks a lot to everybody, who financed and continues to finance this expensive, but a very perspective project, especially for GAW, ELCA and MLB! However, our traditional Seminary site, which is rather modest, also continues to develop. We managed to organize a more regular renewal of materials, placement of news and also the German version of the site. This site is an achievement of many Seminary workers, but mostly Ruth Stubenitzki, who fulfills a greater part of works, connected with it. In order to make our public relations work more effective, nevertheless, we have to undertake some more steps connected with some extra expenditures: production of souvenirs and information bulletins (booklets, badges, pens, notebooks, T-shirts), perhaps, we will make a short movie about the Seminary. Without this advertising existence of an organization is very difficult in the modern world. However, the financial question is crucial here.

**Financial Situation** - Here the tone of my report will radically change, since the financial situation of the Seminary is very unsatisfactory. Now I have to say decisively that if we don't undertake any radical structural changes in the field of expenditures and the extra financing, the Seminary existence will be under a very serious threat. Let me describe the actual financial situation. This report is based on the detailed analysis of the Seminary budget in the first half of 2008 including the extended course in August. The situation after the first quarter of 2008 could inspire some modest optimism, however, in the following several months there appeared some basic problems in the financial sphere. *The presence of these problems makes the fulfillment of the budget of 2008 impossible.* Among these problems we may list five main problems: 1. Very low dollar rate. While planning the budget, which took place in October 2007, the budget was based on a higher dollar exchange rate to the Euro. As a result at present we deal with completely different figures. 2. Reduction of financing (\$20.000 less) on behalf of the LWF in comparison with that one which was planned while making the budget. 3. Inflation and the uncontrollable growth of prices in Russia, especially it concerns energy, transport and food products. 4. An unusually big number of interns, the expenditures connected with

their internships grew in comparison with the expenditures planned. 5. Growing administrative and bureaucratic problems, which demand new legal and not particularly legal financial expenditures.

**I want to be honest with you and to openly say: in order to survive, the Seminary needs extra financial support.** We need it already this year; we will need it in the coming years. We will try to solve this problem partially with our own forces: I mean leasing free space to be rented. When it is a success, we will be able to gain some money, which will help us to solve part of the financial problem. There are already certain transactions on that. It is clear, that it is a measure which we are doomed to take, because this territory belonged only to us, and that made life and studies at the Seminary particularly attractive. Renting space in the third floor will lead to certain inconveniences. However, we do not have any other way out.

The next step will be further limitation of the travel expenditures policy. I have to directly say: this will make the Seminary less popular again. However, we do not have any way out here either. There is no guarantee that these measures will be enough. This circumstance makes the quest of new sponsors very important, and we are obliged to ask you, our constant true friends about the increase of financing. In this respect we are very thankful to the LENS, which already during my stay in the USA raised financing to US\$10,000 more. It is a great help! It would be wonderful, if our other friends could follow this example. We understand that you are doing a lot for us, and it is not your fault that the economic situation in Russia deprives those means, which were enough in the past, of its value. However, all of us have to look for some relief from this financial crisis.

