

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 fledging 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.



NEW PRESIDENT INSTALLED AT SEMINARY

The following is an excerpt from the sermon given by Anton Tikhomirov during his installation as President of the Novosaratovka Theological Seminary:

"It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work." I believe that our Seminary is one of those places (whether they be large or small) where the Lord has left us – workers and students here – in charge. Today I am officially installed as President. But if you look at our text for the day more concretely, then you'll see that it talks about a doorkeeper, whom, as it says, was told to "keep awake." The word "doorkeeper" in modern Russian really means "janitor" or "porter." Therefore I would like to say that today I am officially installed as janitor. Honestly, I'd really like to be not just a bureaucrat who looks for

money, leads negotiations or gives exams to students; most of all I would like to be a porter. A porter of eternity, a porter for the future, of the future which will never become the past. I would like to be one of those – one of you – who in the midst of work and intense bustling (with a certain anxiety, but also with a joyful foretasting) looks into the distance, to our meeting the Lord; I'd like to be one of those who in his works and his legitimate and necessary rest would be filled with this anticipation. Otherwise, why would anything else matter?"

(based on Mk 13.31-37)

However, of course, I have to give a lot of attention to everyday work. Sometimes even much more than I'd like. And, first and foremost, fundraising, financial reports and account management. Generally speaking, numbers, sums of money, interest – it all could seem to be empty and boring bureaucracy. It could seem that way *if* one didn't know that behind these numbers in accounts there stand real people who voluntarily, out of Christian love, give offerings to our seminary. These "boring" and "dry" numbers at times speak louder than the loudest words. They speak to the fact that we are surrounded by friends, they witness to the love and care of our Lord. Of course it is unfortunate that I have less time for my own theological work than I had before. But even everyday work with finances and administrative work (as I've just discovered now!) are also a certain form of theology.

I dreamt for a long time about being a theologian. It was never my dream to become Seminary President. And to agree to this step was not easy for me. Especially because there was some resistance – some thought that it wasn't yet time for a local to take on this role, others thought that my theology was too "liberal," still others simply wanted to see someone else as head of the Seminary... But stronger and more convincing than this opposition was the support of those surrounding me – friends, colleagues at work and in ministry, the staff of the Seminary. These are the people whom I could count on in those difficulty days and months when the decision to appoint me as seminary President matured and finally came to fruit. It is these people on whom (I hope) I can count on in the future in my work. An especially big encouragement was meeting with Joan Krodel and George Jaquay this November. It is comforting to see that you are surrounded by friends and kind companions.

There is a lot of work to be done. Besides the "everyday" work there are a lot of other tasks in front of us – getting our curriculum in order and adapting it to Russian standards, the establishment of better contacts with the Church and answering its needs, intensifying contacts with other theological educational intuitions in Russia and abroad, and simply seeking out new students. And all the while we must not leave behind what's already been done; we must preserve that good which has formed in the Seminary in its more than 10 years of operation.

L E N S W I N T E R N E W S L E T T E R 2 0 0 7

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NOVOSARATOVKA SEMINARY

SUPPORTERS' MEETING

On November 8 and 9, 2007 a meeting of supporters of the Novosaratovka Seminary was held at the headquarters of the German Evangelical Church (EKD) in Hanover, Germany. In attendance were Dr. Edmund Ratz, Archbishop, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Central Asia (ELCROS); Dr. Anton Tikhomirov, Rector, Novosaratovka Seminary; Dr. Michael Huebner, Secretary for Central and Eastern Europe, EKD; Mrs. Joan Krodel, representing LENS and the Lutheran Board for Mission Support; and Mr. George Jaquay, representing LENS. The presence of Archbishop Ratz demonstrated the importance the ELCROS leadership places in the Novosaratovka Seminary and its supporters.

A couple of weeks prior to the above Hanover meeting the ELCROS Bishops Council met. Among the actions taken by the Council was to contract Dr. Tikhomirov as rector of the Novosaratovka Seminary for a three-year period. Following his graduation from the seminary, Dr. Tikhomirov earned a Doctor of Theology degree in Germany before returning to the seminary as a teacher. Dr. Tikhomirov is the first Russian rector of the seminary. The seminary is the central educational institution of the ELCROS.

The seminary has granted diplomas to 24 people since its dedication nine years ago. Currently there are 13 students at the seminary: one first year student, two second year students, and 10 third year students. The seminary will hold testing for a new class to enter in February 2008.

In addition to the full-time students, the seminary offers extended education in the form of eight seminars of two weeks duration each, for those who want a formal seminary education but cannot attend full-time.

The Hanover meeting and the analysis provided by Dr. Tikhomirov provided the LENS board with an excellent understanding of where the seminary fits in with the ELCROS and where it is going under the new rector. In his own words, the new rector offered the following regarding his vision of the training of future seminarians:

- I. "First of all we have to care about the upbringing of students in the spirit of a vital desire to serve for the gospel proclamation and love of own church, development of human qualities in them, which are important for their future pastoral ministry. Here the personal example of teachers is utterly important, also an appropriate atmosphere in the seminary's team, involvement of students into congregational work, both in St. Petersburg and in local churches.
- II. "It is important that during their studies students not only get intensive training, but also strengthened their Lutheran identity, perceived the basic principles of Lutheran teaching. These principles should not be merely "learnt by heart", but also experienced in own life.
- III. "Students should have a good training in the field of practical ministry. We have to increase and make more intensive such subjects as homiletics, liturgics, pastoral care, catechetics, and ecclesiology. We have to consider the fact that right in this sphere there were a lot of gaps. That is why the practical orientation of Novosaratovka education should not only be preserved, but also better expressed. The seminary should graduate students with a better practical ministry training than before.
- VI. "The seminary graduate should be a highly educated and cultural person. He should be able to participate in discussions in ethical, scientific questions and questions of the world view, also to orient in the world culture. It will raise the authority of our church in society. That is why the seminary will have to make lessons on general subjects more intensive and profound in the future, especially because many students have very low, sometimes disastrous level of knowledge. Besides, introduction of general subjects is required by the state institutions."

In closing, the LENS representatives came away from the Hanover meeting with a very positive belief in the future of the seminary and that LENS support should be continued and perhaps increased.

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