



Newsletter of the ELC Theological Seminary

**NOVOSARATOVKA**

**NEWS**

**НОВОСТИ**

**НОВОСАРАТОВКИ**

Бюллетень Теологической Семинарии ЕЛЦ



## New Students

This fall the Seminary welcomed three new students from three different regional churches of ELCROS. Albina Zotova came to us from Tblisi, Georgia; Victor Veber is from Abakan in Siberia, and Daria Seleznova is the closest we have to a local, coming from Samara in the Volga region of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in European Russian. Albina and Daria have each just finished their higher education (Albina in the Philology Department at the State University in Tblisi; Daria received her degree from a technical school in Samara in the area of theatrical arts), whereas Viktor has both education and work experience behind him. He has the advantage, too, of having been sent by his probst to various congregations in his region so that he might become acquainted with the varieties of Lutheran church life that are to be found in the ELC-USFE (Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Urals, Siberia and Far East).



Victor

Albina

Daria

Daria and Victor were able to stay with us and finish the semester; however, because of tension between Georgia and Russia, Albina was allowed to stay only three months (until the second week of December.) Even her way home was complicated – there are now no direct flights between Russia and Georgia, and she was forced to fly to Armenia and travel home from there. We expect Albina to return next semester, though it is quite possible that receiving an appropriate visa will continue to present a challenge.

## Anniversary Celebrations

In 1998 young men and women from all over the former Soviet Union gathered together just outside Petersburg to embark on a new path in the journey of Lutheranism in this part of the world – for the first time, Lutherans would be studying to become pastors in Russia. Yes, at first the teachers would be (mostly) from abroad – Germany and America in particular – but that would change over time. The first days and months were filled with almost as much physical (cleaning, repairing, preparing) as mental and spiritual labor, but with time the study program would become longer and more in-depth. With time the church became less capable to handle the graduates...and the graduates themselves became fewer. Yet throughout the years Novosaratovka has remained a sign of hope for the Lutheran church in E.Europe and Central Asia.



*The Seminary under Construction – 1997*

All this – the successes of the Seminary and those times when it has failed to live up to the church's expectations – was remembered by those former and current faculty and staff members, students and graduates, neighbors and sponsors who were able to attend the Seminary's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in September. Having this opportunity to recollect the past and to consider the future was a great blessing to Seminary students and leadership, and will give us much to think about in the months ahead.

During these autumn days it was particularly delightful to see those people who are closely tied with the Seminary's ministry, but whom we see less often than we'd like, such as the Seminary's graduates and representatives from the LENS (Lutheran Endowment for Novosaratovka Seminary) fund. Pastor George Evans (former LENS chairman) and Joan Krodel (widow of Dr. Gerhard Krodel, the main motivator and fund-raiser for the Seminary as it was beginning) represented the latter. They, together with long-time Seminary friend, Rev. Milt Ost, are seen at the sponsor's meeting in the picture below.



To those of you who have been faithfully supportive to the Seminary throughout the years in prayer and in your giving, we would like to say – this was your celebration, too! For a decade now your assistance has done so much to help the church in the former Soviet Union raise up leadership for itself. For this, we are deeply thankful.



*Gathering for Worship at the End of the Anniversary Celebrations*

### **Theology of Minority Conference**

For more than 10 years now the Theological Seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Novosaratovka has been striving to provide quality education for this region of the world; in particular, it has attempted to act as a sort of bridge, a place where various outlooks (Western and Eastern, "liberal" and

"conservative," pietist and high church, etc.) can have a voice and can work together for mutual enrichment. For that reason it was particularly appropriate to recognize the Seminary's anniversary with a theological conference that incarnated these values. In November representatives from seven countries (Russia, Belarusia, Estonia, Hungary, Slovakia, Germany and the U.S.A.) and five denominations (Lutheran, Orthodox, Presbyterian, Baptist and Methodist) presented papers to one another, to students and guests at our "Theology of Minority" conference.



These papers, discussion and time of fellowship led to interesting discoveries concerning both what the theologies and everyday church life of minority churches have in common and how the particularities of each context shape congregational life and ecclesial structures. Besides the knowledge gained from others' thoughts and experiences and the strengthening of ecumenical ties, another positive outcome of the conference is the contact that has been established between the Lutheran church here and in other nations of the former Eastern Block.



*Conference Participants on a Trip to a Local Orthodox Parish Center*

We don't have room to go into further details here – check our website for more information about each of the presentations, and watch your mail early next year for a copy of all the conference papers.

# Christmas Greetings to You from the Novosaratovka Theological Seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia and Other States!

*"...they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy." Mt 2.9b-10*

While in any year it is more true than we would like to think, especially this year (in the midst of the worldwide economic crisis) we are able to acknowledge the mixed feelings that these seasons (Advent, Christmas, Epiphany) bring. While we celebrate - God's "becoming small" for us in the Incarnation, the revelation of the Father in and through Jesus the Christ, the eschatological fulfillment of God's promises to all people - we understand our celebration in the light of where the star leads us - to the cross.

This is the call and challenge of Christian discipleship - to see and live all of life in the light of God's self-sacrificing love, embodied by the death of our Lord for us on the cross.

At the same time, this truly overwhelms us with joy; when we see the cross in the glow of the star's light, we know that separation from God and the death that comes with that separation will not have the final word.

In these days we wish that you might once again experience the overwhelming joy that comes with faith in the One who came as one of us so that He might share with us that which is His.



Seminary President, Dr. Anton Tikhomirov  
and all the faculty, staff and students of the Seminary