



Newsletter of the ELC Theological Seminary

**NOVOSARATOVKA**

**NEWS**

**НОВОСТИ**

**НОВОСАРАТОВКИ**

Бюллетень Теологической Семинарии ЕЛЦ



### New Academic Year

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of September, a new academic year began for full-time, on-site students. For a number of reasons, this was not an ordinary beginning of the school year.

First, we began the year without our Seminary President, Godeke von Bremen. Pastor von Bremen was continuing his recovery in Germany after a mild stroke, and he was in our thoughts and prayers as we gathered to start a new year.

Another reason why the beginning of this school year was unique is that in 2006-2007, the Seminary is moving to a new academic calendar and, therefore, a new program of studies. The school year now will be made up of two (longer) semesters instead of three (shorter) trimesters. This move will serve us well for a number of reasons: we will now have a more standardized program that better meets local expectations, costs will be cut for travel expenses for the students, and, finally, our facilities will be available for a more significant period of time in the summer, giving us the opportunity to host various courses and seminars.

In addition we had a guest teacher from the Education Center in Koltushi (Church of Ingria) this term – Pastor Marcus Prince who taught courses in Christian Education.

More typical than any of these things for the beginning of the school year was the arrival of new students. This year we were glad to welcome two young men - Aleksey Burkhanov from St. Petersburg and Gleb Pivovarov from Uljanovsk.

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 school and currently is a 5<sup>th</sup> year law student at the St. Petersburg Academy of Management and Economics.

Aleksei was drawn to the church early, and he took the initiative as a 5-year-old to be baptized into the Russian Orthodox Church. 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.

Gleb was born in Uljanovsk (Russia) in 1986. He started school in 1993 and in 2003 finished the "Physics, Math and Information Technology Lyceum," run by the local state 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 and became an assistant to the pastor in his congregation. In 2003 he began his university studies in Uljanovsk in the Applied Physics Department at the local university, but then switched to the Department of Culture and the Arts 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.

At this point Aleksei and Gleb are, for the most part, taking classes with the second year students; later, there will be courses taught individually for them, or they will be taught together with the students we expect to receive in the fall of 2007.

As this *Novosaratovka News* is beginning published, we've seen that the school year has been full of intense studying, and of working difficult internal and external conflicts. All of this helps us grow and mature as individuals and as a community; for this, we are truly grateful.

### Internships begin

New life in the church appears when young people begin their service as church leaders. In five congregations, then, there were signs of new life as our seminarians began their internships in September in October.



On-site Students. Fall 2006.

Three of these students recently completed the Seminary's on-site program. They are Andrey Filiptsov, Dmitri Cherepennikov, and Menzer Ismailova.

Andrey 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. 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 our seminary – Evgeniy Lukinov.

Dmitri is 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 Izmailova is far from her home in Azerbaijan, serving in the westernmost region of Russia, Kaliningrad. 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 more complicated 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 preacher 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 already back in 2000, 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, to Germany, where Anton pursued and received his doctorate. Now that the Tikhomirows have returned to Russia, Sofia is free to bring her theological education to completion, which she is doing by going through her internship at St. Peter and Paul's Lutheran in St. Petersburg. Both Sofia and Igor are being supervised in their internships by Probst (Dean) Hans-Herman Achenbach.

A sixth student, Vasily Ksendozov, to our great regret elected not to go on his internship for personal reasons. Because of this, Vasily has had to give up his long and difficult attempt to finish the Seminary's educational program.

Despite some setbacks along the way, our internship program is a sign of hope and life: for the first time a large portion of our 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 youth groups, from creating Taize prayer services to traveling to as many as four or

five village congregations per week), while the experience and capabilities of our congregations are still limited. It is pleasing to see that these five students have had a successful beginning to their internships, and we are confident that with hard work and prayer, they will have the ability to bring them to a successful completion.

### First Internship Seminar

By the morning of October 23<sup>rd</sup> the Seminary's interns had arrived in Novosaratovka from their internship sites for almost two weeks of reflection upon the beginning of their internships and preparation for the next 10 months. The interns were gathered under the leadership of Pastor Stephan Lorenz (from the Evangelical Church in Germany), Pastor (and 2005 Seminary graduate) Tatyana Petrenko, and Seminary President Godeke von Bremen.

The first week spent together focused on two areas – analysis of the situations in the congregations where the students are serving and growth in the area of pastoral care and counseling. Pastor Lorenz, who has worked for many years as a chaplain in Germany, is experienced in this area and regularly teaches at our seminars for interns. This year for the first time he was assisted in this task by Pastor Petrenko, whose task consisted in both cultural interpretation and in sharing her experience as a pastoral care provider in the congregational context and as director of a newly-founded home for the elderly in the Kaliningrad region.



During the second week, a new aspect of the seminar was added when the internship mentors arrived. For a day and half, the mentors met (together with the interns and separately) both to talk about their role in supporting theological education in our church and about the situation in the church in general; the visit of Archbishop Ratz encouraged thinking in this latter direction, and in conversation it became clear just how much the future of the Lutheran Church in the former Soviet Union depends on the ministry of the Seminary's students and graduates.

### Meeting of the Seminary Board

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of November a regular meeting of the Seminary Board was held, with ELCROS Archbishop Dr. E. Ratz chairing. In attendance were representatives from ELCROS regional churches, faculty, staff and students.

The board meeting dealt with a number of items of business, from the discussion of the President's report on the state of the Seminary and results of its 10-year history, to questions of the purpose of the Seminary for this church in the future. Two projects were discussed that should strengthen the three-way relationship between the Seminary, the students, and their regional churches – a contract is being worked on that should be signed by all three sides in the case of every student, and a program for scanning and supporting candidates for ministry in the ELC. Both of these items are to be discussed further by the ELCROS Council of Bishops, with decisions being taken by next spring. The Board also accepted the proposed budget for 2007.

### Another Seminary Graduate Becomes Probst

On the 17th of September in Staraja Sarepta (Volgograd) Pastor Oleg Stulberg was commissioned by Bishop Springer (Evangelical Lutheran Church of European Russia) to be the Probst (Dean) of the Middle and Lower Volga Deanery of the ELCER.

Oleg is originally from Tajikistan. He finished the theoretical portion of his theological education as a member of the Seminary's 1<sup>st</sup> graduating class in 2000, after which he successfully completed his internship in Perm. For a number of years he worked in Volgograd under the leadership of Probst Dietrich Halman, who has now returned to Germany.

Oleg is already the second graduate of the Seminary to become a dean. The first was Vladimir Provorov from Uljanovsk. Many other graduates of the Seminary's full-time and extension programs are working in the church in positions of serious importance and responsibility.

We heartily congratulate Oleg and hope that the knowledge he gained while studying will help him in his new ministry!

### Seminar – “Word of God”

In the past year, the faculty and students at the seminary have found it useful to dedicate an entire day to a theological question that seems particularly pertinent to the study process and to life

in our church. For that reason in the spring we looked at the question of the ordination of women from biblical, historical and theological perspectives, and on the 4<sup>th</sup> of December we did the same with the theme “The Word of God.”

The day-long seminar was organized by Dr. Anton Tikhomirov, who opened the day by leading us in our regular, Monday morning worship service. This being the first week of Advent, the theme of the service fit very well with the discussion that followed about how our Lord reveals himself to us.

Dr. Joseph Kang read the first paper of the day - “The Word of God in Human Language and History.” Dr. Kang first traced the multiple meanings of the phrase “Word of God” in the biblical texts themselves, and then presented students with three models for how we might hear the Word of God in and through the Biblical texts.

After discussion on Dr. Kang's paper, Pastor Bradn Buerkle gave a lecture entitled “Luther and Lutherans on the Word of

God.” He focused his attention on how the primary understanding of the Word of God in Luther's thought (Word as the Gospel of Jesus Christ) determines the derivative uses (Word as the 2<sup>nd</sup> person of the Trinity, Word as all of God's acts, Word as proclamation, Word as the Bible).

This paper, too, was followed by discussion. The final presentation of the day belong to Seminary President Pastor Godeke von Bremen, who spoke about how the Scriptures can and should be used both in a pastor's personal life and in his or her role as a congregational leader.

The results of the day's discussion showed that, while there may not be one, single understanding of the Word of God among us, it is clear that as students and teachers of theology, one of our central tasks is to determine how to remain faithful to Scripture as the rich witness to the saving Word of God while at the same time remaining clear that nothing (not even the Bible) is to occupy the place occupied rightly only by God.

### Work on the Seminary Campus

In the summer of 2006, a new septic system was installed at the Theological Seminary. We would like to say a big “thank you” to our sponsors for financing this important project. Below you'll see a few pictures of the work in progress:



### Christmas Greetings from Our Students

Greetings to you in the name of the Living God!

Sisters and brothers, the season of Advent is upon us. The anticipation of the birth of our Lord God Jesus Christ is a wonderful time for Christians throughout the world. It seems to me that many of us have pleasant memories of this time of year. I always was happy that Christmas was coming and, as a child (and even now), this time brought me special joy. In my memory I see a picture of my first Christmas. I was 9 years old, and in our church the children's group put on a Christmas pageant based on the Gospel of Luke. It was very interesting for us to participate in such a service in our church. How nervous we were then! And how much joy we experienced!

This memory stays fresh with me even now, and every time that Advent comes, it is as if I re-live it all again. And with every new Advent season new experiences are accumulated that help me understand it all in new ways. And the joy from our Lord's birth will soon fill me again. This Christmas many of the students of our seminary will be in congregations on internship; I will be, too. And this year, Christmas will undoubtedly bring something new for us.

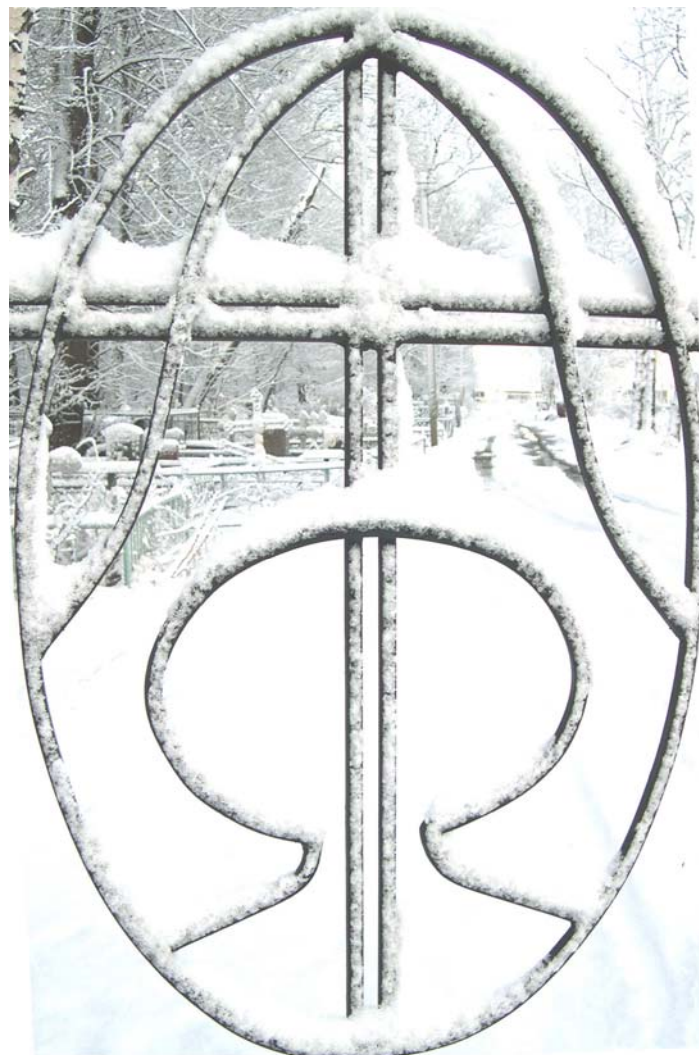
I wish you all a pleasant Advent and preparation for a blessed Christmas.

*Roman Pavlov  
Second Year Student*

### Christmas Greetings from Our President

This latest issue of "Novosaratovka News" is being published at the end of the year. We wish all the friends and sponsors of our Seminary a Merry Christmas. God is among us – this happy news makes our world bright, even if it is grey that dominates all around us during the dark St. Petersburg winter. During Advent a Herrnhuter star hangs above our altar in our chapel; it burns day and night, bringing us light to the path to the manger of Christ. The path to the manger may be that of those many students who are going to a month-long internships in congregations of our church. They will take with them in their hearts the Christmas star, and they will also be able to see how this Christmas message spreads throughout the world, uniting believers into one large congregation of Christ. We wish all our readers that they experience their belonging to this congregation.

*Godeke von Bremen  
Seminary President*



**We are always happy to hear from you!**

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