

Tartu Academy of Theology

Tartu, Estonia

Newsletter, December 2017



Partnering
with
**East
European
Missions
Network**



Recently admitted students in the Seminary Chapel, September of 2017.

*Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,
I will be joyful in God my
Savior.*

Habakkuk 3:18

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www.tat.news

Are We Confessing Our Membership in God's Kingdom?

I forgot to report on our fall admissions in the September newsletter. We are again thankful to God. This year, 28 new students started their studies: 18 Bachelor, 7 Master and 3 Church Musician students.

In the beginning of October I again had a chance to visit the US for two special reasons: on the evening of October 9th we had the first Friends of Estonia Summit at Mount Calvary Lutheran Church in Excelsior MN, and the next day I was one of the keynote panel speakers at the Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC) Annual Gathering in Minneapolis.

Since the Gathering was celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, pre-

sentation topics concerned Lutheran theology. My panel discussion was on Two Kingdoms. It was a great privilege to share with the audience my thoughts and personal experience about the topic based on the Estonian context. During the 2nd half of the 20th century we had Soviet occupation. The authorities tried to do everything to wipe out Christianity from Estonia, but Christians just couldn't be loyal to their civil leaders. To keep our faith and to be loyal to God's Kingdom we were forced to be in opposition. Pastors were permitted to preach only inside of church buildings. Public media and all other channels were blocked for them. Because of the persecution people were afraid to go to the churches. Basically, this means two generations have been without the Word of God. Today we experience the results of that. The Estonian Lutheran Church membership, which was around 90% of our population in 1937, is only 2,2% today. I hope that churches in the US and other Western countries value their privi-

lege of sharing freely the Word of God and representing Christian values in public. Sometimes it may seem easier not to be dealing with all the hassle that public communication brings, and we need to consider if we aren't voluntarily doing the same thing Estonian Christians were forced to accept and do during Soviet occupation.

The Friends of Estonia Summit was a success. We had about 60 participants and hopefully it was some kind of energizer for all of us. We are most thankful for our hosts from Mount Calvary Lutheran Church and their great gift of hospitality in preparing a room and meal for everyone. The Summit was recorded and this video is available on Youtube at the following link <https://youtu.be/FA331GbHkP8>. This is an excellent resource for getting to know us better.

Our plan is to organize a second Friends of Estonia Summit in Des Moines (US, Iowa) on October 8th or 9th, 2018. The date will be finalised after the program of the LCMC Gathering in 2018 is made available.

God is good all the time!
Siimon Haamer
Dean

FINANCIAL UPDATE ON NOVEMBER 30th

2017 annual budget \$ 219,294 USD

\$ 163,225 USD
pledged

\$ 56,069 USD
to go

This Autumn we have a great deficit again. **We need \$56,039 USD** to meet our annual budget needs for 2017. At the same time, we are of course very happy and grateful for God's blessing. We have so many good friends who share in the importance of our mission.

If you are able, please consider sending an extra gift of support to Tartu Academy of Theology before December 31, 2017. There are several options for making a donation. To find them go to www.tat.news and click on the "to donate" icon or look to the bottom of that page.

Thank you for your continued kind support, encouragement, and faithful prayers. May all of you be rewarded by God according to His mercy.



Panel speakers at the LCMC Annual Gathering, October 10th of 2017. From left: Ken Jones, Siimon Haamer, John Kline, Peri Rasolondraibe.

East European Missions Network

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To Donate

Mail a check to EEMN office, specifying in the memo portion or on an attached sheet of paper the designation of your donation to Tartu Academy of Theology. **All contributions are tax deductible.**

STUDENT VOICES: VOLLI

I have been involved with church since 1992 when I was baptized after catechesis and I became a member of the church. For a long time, I was the coordinator of the ALPHA course and a board member in my church. Due to changes in my life I became a member of Nõmme Rahu Congregation of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tallinn, the capital city. It was there that I decided to study theology as I saw my calling to serve the Lutheran church in becoming a clergyman.

Today I have acquired a Bachelor degree from the Lutheran Church Seminary and I continue my studies in the Master's program as it is a precondition to becoming a pastor. During my studies I intend to focus on exploring faith as a concept and passing this knowledge on to the members of my congregation as well as fellow students and, if possible, even beyond. In my opinion Christian faith cannot be a theoretical affirmation of uncertainty, it has to be the appreciation of something that exceeds the ordinary. I have touched upon this topic in my Bachelor's thesis: "Faith above faith. The concept of faith in the texts of Søren Kierkegaard and Paul Tillich", and I am deeply interested in continuing my work on this matter. Relationship between a man and a God is dependent on faith, the importance which is impossible to overestimate.

I believe that in our society, which is constantly drifting away from its roots, it is extremely important to study, understand and explain the essence of Christianity. Faith is, after all, one of the main foundations of being Christian and therefore I intend to study, understand and pass on the basic knowledge of theology.

My dream is to be a pastor in some small church in South-Estonia or if things go differently – part-time vicar in a bigger church in the city. More than a few of my friends have assured me that one day I will make a very good clergyman and even my lecturer stated that my spiritual talent should be used for the benefit of ecclesiastical work because: "the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few" Lk 10:2.



Volli Nugis with his family.

The
Friends
of Estonia
Summit in
Excelsior,
MN.
October
9th of
2017.



Summit–Result of a Good Partnership

Over the past several years Mount Calvary Lutheran Church Foundation from Excelsior, Minnesota, has presented grants to the Tartu Academy of Theology in Estonia. We are excited about the work the Academy is doing and the progress it has made since our first hearing of it.

Siimon Haamer visited Minneapolis last May and stopped by for a brief visit to update us on what is happening. Financial struggles continue to plague the mission and after a conversation we discussed having a first ever Summit of churches in the United States who lend support to Estonia. We agreed to provide the space in Minneapolis at our church and to arrange for a meal for participants. About 60 people attended and a second summit is planned for next year.

Mount Calvary is a church community devoted to proclaiming the power of the Spirit and reveling in the love of Christ. Our mission is to make, build up and send faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. We welcome with open arms all those who seek to realize the eternal truths of God's story. As a foundation board we know how important the work is in Estonia and we're happy to support such a worthy project. Participants from several states were present to hear about the work being done. In the past we have provided monies for scholarships and a special children's book project. Both were very successful.

Our church was delighted to host this summit. Expanding the network of people who want to support and help TAT is important work. We look forward to next year.

Linda Saveraid
Member of Mount Calvary Lutheran Church Foundation board

Christmas Greetings

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. Habakkuk 3:18

My heart rejoices about all good things that God has done and will do for us every day. Especially before Christmas we want to notice and recognize all the good that He has done.

Our treasure is Jesus Christ. Without Him we can't understand all of God's mercies. Jesus is teaching us to see other people around us. He is opening our eyes to see outwards beyond of our home and loved ones. Today I'm reminding you of what you have done. You are looking beyond the border of your country and are noticing one small country and nation, Estonia.

I pray that God's rich blessing would fill your hearts every day in your life and especially during the coming Christmas time.

With thankfulness,
Eenok Haamer, president



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