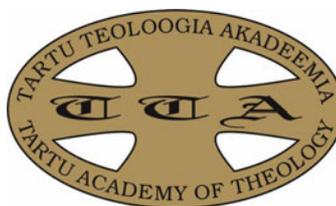


# Tartu Academy of Theology

Tartu, Estonia

Newsletter, September 2015



Partnering  
with  
East  
European  
Missions  
Network



*English  
Friendship  
Language  
Camp 2015  
participants in  
Tartu.*

*I say to myself, "The  
Lord is my portion;  
therefore I will wait for  
him."*

*Lamentations 3:24*

## When God is for us...

...then who can be against us? This sentence from Romans 8:31 and following encourages us to trust ourselves into the hands of God. In this trust, we have carried out our work and prayed blessings on our ventures. And we have experienced the blessings. There has also been some difficulties, especially with the school's financial situation, but we still are thankful for His grace.

We are thankful that due to too many students, we were unable to use our own small rental facility this past school year. Having to rent bigger classrooms to accommodate everyone extended our expenses, creating some financial pressure for TAT.

We are thankful to God for the exciting number of students we admitted together with Lutheran Church Seminary this year – 32. Eighteen of them are in under-grad-

uate program, and 14 in the graduate program.

Thirteen under-graduates are starting their pastoral care and counseling studies, and it is worth noting how the interest in the pastoral care and counseling specialty has constantly grown. Perhaps it is the sign of the times we are living in. Only 2,4% of Estonian population belongs to the Lutheran Church, which is the biggest Christian denomination in Estonia. Altogether about 7-8% of Estonian population is belonging to different denominations and churches. According to very recent poll about 20% are believers (6 years ago it was 16%). Therefore, to take the Word of God to the people, we have to go to where it is needed the most. Different church ministries that operate outside of the walls of the church are becoming

more and more important. One such important ministry is pastoral care and counseling work. If that is the plan of God, then we want to be the ones doing His plan.

We are thankful to God we have, along with the Seminary 136 students altogether!

We are thankful to God for the new opportunities and challenges we get to meet every year and to have faithful supporters and fellow brothers and sisters in Christ like you with whom to face it all together. You are also part of God's plan and can praise and thank the Lord for the grace He has shared with us.

Siimon Haamer  
Dean



## CURRENT FINANCIAL SITUATION

In the end of 3rd quarter of 2015, our deficit is \$56,427 USD. During last quarter the deficit increased by \$23,336 USD and that is very bad news for us. We are really happy we have been able to receive some funds from TAT Matching Program during last months and we hope that this initiative will help to stabilize our financial situation in the future. Your participation in the TAT Matching Program can have positive, lasting benefit to the work we are accomplishing in Estonia. Please consider becoming a part of this program with us! More information on the next page.

Quick financial update of TAT:

Balance in the end of 2014                      \$ -19,624

Total budget of 2015                            \$ 175,880

Income January-Sept of 2015                \$ 92,584

Budget of January-Sept of 2015              \$ 129,387

**Balance on September 30th of 2015            \$ -56,427**

May God reward according to His mercy all those who donate to us! Thank you, as always, for your kind support, encouragement, and faithful prayers.

### East European Missions Network

2111 Golf Course Rd SE, Suite C, Rio Rancho, NM 87124

Phone: 505-990-1639

Web: [www.eemn.org](http://www.eemn.org)    Email: [TAT@eemn.org](mailto:TAT@eemn.org)

### 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.

In the June newsletter, we had an article about our student Kai, who was graduating from pastoral care and counseling specialty. Today she is already working at the hospital as a pastoral caregiver and counselor and continues her studies at the Master's level in our newly opened pastoral care and counseling specialty. You can read more about her in the article below.

This is a story about how education received from TAT will be put into practice right after graduation for the benefit to the people and the community. It also shows how our students are the intermediaries of God's grace where it's needed the most. Even more wonderful is that this is not an extraordinary story of just one alumni — we are thankful to God to have quite a few examples like this!

### ALUMNI STORY: KAI

Three years ago, I decided to make a change in my life and started my studies at Tartu Academy of Theology specializing in pastoral care and counseling. I graduated in June 2015. I was drawn to God and to people and had a dream of working at the hospital. I prayed to God to give me that chance — to be a channel between Him and someone in need.

Today my dream has come true. In August of this year, I began work as a pastoral caregiver and counselor at the biggest hospital in Estonia in their hematology-oncology department. The staff, as well as the patients, embraced me as their own very quickly, and I feel as a valuable hospital staff member.

My work is not easy. I see the pain and struggle of the patients and listen to their troubles. I support and stand by. Walking side by side is always easier and shared burden is not as heavy. At the same time, I feel how they have and impact on me. People who battle every day with a difficult illness, they teach the value of life, how to believe and have faith and hope. The work I'm doing is possible only with God. God is the one giving strength and wisdom to be standing next to the mother of a dying child, or next to the dying mother who will be leaving small children behind. To be a counselor is to be a channel between God and the one who suffers. I am that channel with greatest joy and a thankful heart.

Pastoral care and counseling work requires constant development. That said, continuing my studies in graduate level is a natural progress. I don't want to be just a counselor; I want to be a good one, and with help from God I hope to be on one day — obtaining experience, wisdom, and tightly holding on to God's hand.



## TAT Matching Funds Program

We are blessed by donors who have pledged \$35,000 for each of the next 3 years in a Match Fund base for TAT.

**Will you join with us as a MATCHING PARTNER!** It is our opportunity, with new gift money, to produce \$70,000 annually. (The annual budget for TAT is around \$180,000.)

**No gift is too small!** \$10, 20, 50, 100, \_\_\_\_ All gifts are welcome! Would you consider making it an annual gift?

**Please pray about partnering with TAT as a prayer and financial Matching Partner!**

Gifts can be made out to “Charity Lutheran Church – TAT Match Partner”, and sent to:

Charity Lutheran, 120 Aspen Ave. , Bismarck, ND 58503.

We are thankful for Charity, who since 2006, and as one of the main supporters of TAT, manages the account.

God is blessing this project and bringing increased stability to the ministry of training Kingdom workers in Estonia, the vision first given to its founder, Pastor Eenok Haamer.

Blessings,

Pastor Bob Nordvall

Field Coordinator, EEMN in Partnership with TAT

pastorbob@eemn.org 701-391-0182

## English Friendship Language Camp '15

We are grateful to God to have held the 11th Language Camp in Tartu this year, led by EEMN short term missionaries from USA. This August was quite special for two reasons: 1) for the first time we had two language camps – besides Tartu location, there was also a camp on the biggest island of Estonia, Saaremaa; and 2) the record number of Language camp participants in Tartu – 80. Our numbers continue to grow each year, and we are humble and excited for what God has in store for the years to come.

We have scheduled the dates for the camp next year, and it will be in August 2016 again in the same two locations. We will have two groups of short term missionaries flying in, since handling two camps for one team is too exhausting. Bob Nordvall has been the team leader throughout all these years and will also be the uniting link between the two teams leading the camps next year.

Already for two years, Bob Nordvall and Patti Ivey have led beside the language camp a seminar for the ministers and their spouses about dealing with pressures in ministry and self-care. It has been very faith strengthening and encouraging for the participants. The plan is to have two of these seminars next year.

May God bless all the missionaries who are open to invest their time, efforts, and funds to spread the word of God in Estonia.

*Next two pages you can read Siimon Haamer's article from Connections Magazine May/June 2015 issue.*

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TAT Sept News

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# Confession of God's Love in Estonia: The Story of Tartu Academy of Theology

The article is published in  
Connections Magazine  
May/June 2015 issue.

by Siimon Haamer

## MIRACLE – “SINGING REVOLUTION”

**Estonia is the only country on earth that gained its independence without taking a single life and without sacrificing a drop of blood.** After suffering under the oppression of Soviet Russia for 50 years, the people expressed their aspiration for freedom with singing, not weapons. It became known as the “Singing Revolution,” and a chain of events led to our re-independence in August 1991.

Does that story seem like something out of a fairytale? We, as a nation, know from experience that wonderful events not only happen in beautiful stories, but have been real in our history. How did Estonia’s independence become a reality—because of the strong will of a nation or the strong power of prayer? We read from Deuteronomy 7:9 *“He is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments.”*

In 1939, close to 90% of Estonians belonged to the Lutheran church, and only about 2% did not belong to any church. By 1947, when the Soviet occupation had lasted a few years, there were only 11.6% Lutheran church members left because Christians were persecuted. Although going to church wasn’t accepted by authorities, no one could stop Estonians from praying. My whole life I have heard my parents and grandparents pray for our country and our nation. Was what happened to Estonia in the beginning of the 1990s a miracle or an answer to prayers? We do believe in the power of prayer, and want to testify about it.

## THE TOOL OF GOD

But how do we testify? There are many ways to do so, but every country has to find its own way. One of God’s tools is Tartu Academy of Theology (TAT). That college was established in 1992 with the purpose of gathering Christians from different denominations and training ministers, Christian youth workers, teachers of religion for public schools, counselors, chaplains, deacons in ministry, Christian media professionals and other workers in the Kingdom of God. For 50 years it had been prohibited to train for those professions publicly.

### Siimon Haamer

*is the dean of TAT. He graduated from TAT in 1998, and since then has worked in leading TAT along with his father, Eenok. Siimon and his wife have two children.*



*Estonia, located in Eastern Europe, is bordered by the Gulf of Finland on the north, Russia on the east, Latvia on the south and the Baltic Sea on the west. It covers an area of 17,000 square miles, with a population of 1.3 million (about the same population and half the land area as Maine). Only 16% of the population claim any religious affiliation, and the largest denomination is Lutheran with 31,000*

The founder of the TAT was a Lutheran pastor, Eenok Haamer. Because of persecution in the 1940s, the Lutheran church lost 62% of pastors in the first 10 years of Soviet occupation. Eenok felt the huge need for trained church workers, and he also realized that in this small Estonia, where there are not many Christians, different denominations needed to work together. His prayer and the purpose of his action is that all Estonian people would turn to God.



*Pastors Naatan, Eenok, Siimon and Markus Haamer*

## GOD’S GRACE AND GUIDANCE

In the beginning of the 1990s, the Lutheran Church did not have enough trained pastors. My grandfather, Harri Haamer, died in 1987 after close to 60 years of pastoring. He was a survivor of the concentration camp in Siberia.

He faithfully ministered in the church, hoping day by day for God to grant us our freedom again so we would be able to share God’s word freely. He carried on that hope and faith to his children and grandchildren. Harri’s son Eenok became a minister, and all three of Eenok’s sons became Lutheran pastors as well.

That heritage was the basis leading to the foundation of TAT. There were no finances available in Estonia to fund that work, but God sent out His ambassadors. In March 1992, eight Lutheran pastors from the U.S. came to Estonia, met with Eenok and heard about his vision. As a result, they decided to collect \$10,000 to help start the school

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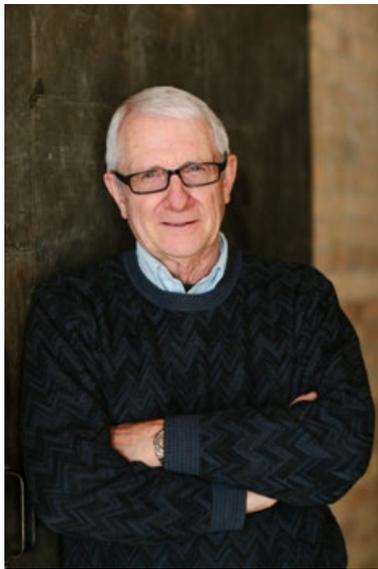
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that so far had existed only in Eenok's vision. Today we can say that it was a very good investment, because 11% of Estonia's Lutheran pastors are the alumnus of TAT. There are 102 alumni altogether, which is the population percentage equivalent to 25,000 alumni in U.S.!

## FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS IN THE U.S.

The bond created in 1992 is the reason why we are still connected with the U.S. today. Unfortunately, Estonian society is not yet ready to carry the responsibility of financing our school. Sadly, one of the reasons for this is that Estonia is one of the most secular nations in the world. Also, tuitions alone cannot finance the school because the pay grade is quite low for the professions we offer, and to expect steep tuition payments from students might prevent them from entering studies altogether.

For 20 years now, we have partnered with the East European Missions Network (EEMN). Their support has brought others from the U.S. to assist in prayer, teaching



*Pastor Bob Nordvall*

and financial assistance. Especially important has been our connection with Pastor Bob Nordvall and his late wife, Karen. They became key friends of TAT during their first visit to Estonia in 2006. When Pastor Nordvall joined the EEMN staff in 2010, they became ambassadors for TAT, helping to spread Eenok's vision for TAT and the rebuilding of the Estonian Church.

Through those connections, we have been able to make con-tact with

LCMC and to take part in their 2007, 2012 and 2014 Annual Gatherings. We are glad to see LCMC pursuing the same values that are the basis for our school. LCMC has given us courage to face the world's struggles, because we do face the same problems in our society. We are glad to see the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, which is the only Lutheran church in Estonia, making clear statements concerning those issues.

## CHANGES AND CHALLENGES URGE US ONWARD

It has not been easy to be a small, independent college. In Estonia, all higher educational institutions must go through accreditation, and we were able to pass the requirements un-til 2011, when the Estonian government applied much more harsh conditions to the accreditation process. This made it impossible to continue alone any more—we just did not have enough finances. As the Lutheran Church had its own semi-nary and they were

dealing with the same problems we were, we found common ground on the doctrinal basis of the Bible and the importance of the personal relationship with God.

In 2013 we merged with the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church Theological Institute. Today TAT is a separate department within the Seminary, maintaining the TAT name and identity. As the result of the merger, a single, strong Christian college with 130 students was created to prepare Lutheran pastors, as well as to train Christian lay leaders and specialists to serve as Christian or pastoral counselors, Christian youth workers, chaplains, Christian family therapists, etc. Additionally, the merger has provided for better stewardship of gifts, as the two institutions now share professors and administrative costs. Already we are experiencing exciting results as enrollments increase and successful accreditation has been achieved in 2014.

## THE FUTURE

The school established by Pastor Eenok Haamer as the result of a vision from God and the inheritance of his father is being carried forward today by me. One of the first graduates of TAT in 1998, I work to continue and expand the work begun by my father, Eenok, who continues to serve as the spiritual leader of the school and to teach various courses. The Rector of the joint school is Pastor Ove Sander, who studied at the American Free Lutheran Seminary in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Ove Sander is called to be one of the speakers at the LCMC Annual Gathering in October 2015.



*Rector Ove Sander*

## BELIEVING IN MIRACLES

The bloodless "Singing Revolution" and resulting Estonian independence are not the only miracles in our lives and in the works of TAT. We have experienced miracles from day to day. To write down the history of TAT in detail would include a long list and description of the great miracles of our God. Some may not believe that God is at work in the world, say-ing "miracles" are just part of an unbelievable story—but we do believe! That faith has been passed on to us by our parents and grandparents through their prayers. Today we pray for our country, nation and schools, that God would raise up those who remain faithful and through whose life and prayer God can show His faithfulness, "...keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments."