

CAREE COMMUNICATOR
Spring-Summer-Fall 2007

Editor: Paul Crego
Executive Secretary, CAREE
2921 10th St. NE
Washington, DC 20017-3407
(202)635-2930
pcrego@yahoo.com

In this issue:

ANNUAL MEETING (Feb. 1, 2008)
MEMBERSHIP DUES REMINDER
TEACHING IN CROATIA (Jim Payton)
TRIP REPORT - KAZAKHSTAN (Walter Sawatsky)

ANNUAL MEETING:

Our next Annual Meeting has been scheduled Friday, February 1, 2008. We will meet in the Reformed Church of America's meeting room at the InterChurch Center in New York City, 475 Riverside Drive.

We ran into several conflicts for a proposed meeting in November. Unforeseen complications with scheduling a meeting room delayed plans, and by the date that was fixed, all the rooms at the hotel we use for our conferences were already booked for the entire weekend.

Paul Crego is making arrangements with Hotel Edison at 228 West 47th St (the hotel we have used before for our conference hotel; they has given us preferential rates).

Duncan Hanson will be able to be with us, and will present a summary of the Third European Ecumenical Assembly, held in early September 2007 in Sibiu, Romania. He will also tell us about his work in Eastern Europe over the last few years.

In addition, one of our former graduate student members, Heather DeHaan will speak about the ongoing research she started during her graduate program. She is now Assistant Professor of History at the State University of New York at Birmingham. We hope also to hear from some of our current graduate students and their current projects that involve contact in Eastern Europe. Furthermore, we are planning on reports from those who have been in Eastern Europe since our meeting last November (2006).

Further details about the program and meeting agenda will be in the next Communicator.

MEMBERSHIP DUES REMINDER

If you have not sent in your 2007 membership dues now is a good time to do it, and you could send the 2007 amount along with your 2008 dues and be ahead! As of our last Annual Meeting we decided that our annual contribution would be \$50, and that retired members could decide whether they could afford that amount or something different. Graduate students are still covered by our gratis membership policy.

You may send your checks payable to CAREE to: Paul Crego, Executive Secretary, 2921 10th St. NE, Washington, DC 20017-3407.

If you are not sure of your payment record, please feel free to contact Paul at pcrego@yahoo.com.

TEACHING IN CROATIA

Jim Payton

From May 21-25, 2007, I had the privilege of team-teaching a course at the Evangelical Theological Faculty in Osijek, Croatia. ETF is one of the largest evangelical seminaries in Eastern Europe: it has drawn students from all the former Communist countries, as well as from North America, Africa, and the Far East. Students are well instructed in English in their initial year at ETF, and instruction can be given and readily understood by the students in English.

Prof. Dr. Peter Kuzmic is rector of ETF. He invited me to join him in teaching a course on “Ecumenical Relationships with Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy.” It was an upper-level course, taken by third- and fourth-year students (plus a couple of graduate students). Some twenty-two students enrolled in the course, all of them from Southeastern Europe: two from Romania, another from Serbia, one from Bosnia, and the rest from Macedonia and Croatia.

The students were engaged and eager in the course, even though it came near the end of their academic year—and, like students everywhere, they were eager to have the year finished. It was stimulating to interact with them, since their experience of and prospects about ecumenical interactions were shaped by their experience as evangelicals in countries which are either overwhelmingly Catholic or Orthodox. Discussion about the challenges and opportunities of ecumenical interaction was intense and insightful, reflecting the range of opinions and concerns one might expect anywhere, but focused on the situations to be encountered in Eastern Europe.

We surveyed the early church’s ecumenical councils, the developments during the middle ages and through the Reformation, and then moved into more recent history—dealing with the explosion of denominations in the period since the Reformation, with the significant transitions inaugurated by the Second Vatican Council, and with the changed situation for Orthodoxy since the collapse of Communist domination. Dr. Kuzmic familiarized the students with the Lausanne Covenant and other elements of specifically evangelical movements in regard to ecumenism.

We took advantage of the opportunity to have direct interaction with major Orthodox and Catholic centers. We traveled to Belgrade and visited the Serbian Orthodox patriarchate, where we were given a guided tour of the patriarchal museum and library. Afterwards, we enjoyed lunch at the Orthodox seminary student union and toured the seminary. After his class finished, an ethics professor (a Serbian Orthodox monk) spoke with our class and welcomed us warmly. Then we went to the Temple of St. Sava, which is currently under construction (and will continue to be, for a long time). When completed, it will be the second largest Orthodox church in the entire world (second only to Christ Cathedral in Moscow). The gleaming white external facade was brilliant in the afternoon light. Inside, the construction continues: we admired the magnificent marble columns, walls, and balconies. A temporary iconostasis allows for services to be conducted. No other iconography or frescoes graces the cathedral yet.

The following day the class traveled to Djakovo, to the Roman Catholic cathedral and seminary there. One of the seminary professors gave us an engaging tour of the cathedral. It had been designed and its building was overseen by Bishop Josip Jurij Strossmayer, a major figure in both nineteenth-century Roman Catholicism and in the development of Croatian nationalism. The tour highlighted some of the striking distinctive features of the cathedral—among them the fresco of the twelve-year-old Christ holding forth among the elders of the temple in Jerusalem, in which the features of several of the elders are those of leading intellectual luminaries of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; the free-standing altar in the middle of the sanctuary, anticipating some of the changes inaugurated by the Second Vatican Council a century later; and a fresco depicting the peoples of the earth (not just the Magi) bringing their gifts to the feet of the infant Christ, held in the Virgin Mary's arms. In the fresco the gift-bearers wear the distinctive dress of various Slavic peoples. Afterwards, we toured the library of the seminary and had a question-and-answer period in one of the seminary lecture halls.

ETF has a brand new, sophisticated building, with well-appointed classrooms, excellent computer capacities for the students, a fine library, and comfortable apartments to house visiting professors. The students are engaging and friendly, and other faculty members include some Eastern European scholars and two North American missionary couples (the Harpers from the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. and the Titus family from the Reformed Church in America). Ambitious plans for setting up further graduate programs seek to assure a well-trained leadership for the evangelical movements in Eastern Europe without the danger of the “brain drain” that has too often resulted in gifted Eastern European scholars remaining in the West after finishing their graduate programs.

I am grateful for the opportunity I had to teach this brief course and to contribute to the work of this significant institution. I made sure that the students heard about CAREE, and Dr. Kuzmic offered positive comment about the work CAREE has done and continues to do in Eastern Europe.

TRIP REPORT - KAZAKHSTAN

Walter Sawatsky

TRIP OVERVIEW

This trip involved teaching History of the Evangelical Movement in Slavic Lands (including Kazakhstan) with an additional week to visit 4 Russian cities (Novosibirsk, Omsk, Petersburg and Moscow). I hoped to get a more recent impression of church developments both in Kazakhstan and Russia, renew contacts with several Orthodox missiologists, in part to test out their willingness to participate in a projected conference on missiology June 4-8, 2008, either in Petersburg or now more likely Kishenev, Moldova. The report starts with reported conversations and church visits throughout the first week, then something on the Bible Institute and teaching there, followed by further conversation summaries organized by city visited. For those interested, I wrote a longer report (16 pages) more in the form of a descriptive diary, drawn largely from daily email notes to my wife Margaret, but also containing more detail on specific conversations than seemed necessary for the formal report to MCC.

CONVERSATIONS IN KAZAKHSTAN

As part of getting over jetlag, Alexander Karyakov took me on a tour of the mountains nearby on Saturday, which was an opportunity to talk and get more closely acquainted. He is a graduate of Odessa Baptist Theological Seminary, where he took note of the many publications by John H. Yoder and wanted to talk about the grounds for pacifism. Rector Oleg Korotki first met me at the airport, and we had an initial conversation at breakfast. There is an academic dean, Dimitry Larionov, but for each program of studies - missionary school, Sunday School teaching, School of Evangelism (and I think some others, now starting one on Mission with Muslims) there is a program director. Karyakov is responsible for the School of Mission, but like the other persons mentioned, teaches courses in all the programs.

Sunday Oleg Korotki had arranged for me to attend the 2nd Baptist Church on Buddenvo 16, a church of over 800 meeting in a large church building built in 1994. It was Thanksgiving, with many special features during the worship - choir, solo, duets, trio, children and adults reciting poetry - plus the usual order of worship with 3 speakers interspersed with congregational singing, free public prayer at the beginning and end, and a pastoral intercessory prayer at the conclusion of the service. I was the second speaker, trying to speak in Russian with reasonable success. The fact that a young Kazakh man came forward after the next song to be converted I attributed to what had already been happening, in spite of my attempt at a sermon.

Later in the early evening we traveled to the Salvation (Spasenie) church, scarcely a half dozen years old. This was a small group (60 people) with a very energetic and musically gifted pastor. Worship consisted of a worship music team, songs projected on the wall, with the pastor playing keyboard. The rhythms were quick, sometimes syncopated, and I knew few of the songs, whereas at the first service I could have sung all but one in German or English. Pastor Viktor had asked that I give a longer lecture on

Christians Associated for Relationships with Eastern Europe

www.caree.info

the history of the evangelical movement, since his mostly new believers knew virtually nothing. So I preferred doing a broad survey, built around John 17 and Acts 2, in English with translation. I had first introduced my self in Russian, then when I switched to Russian my translator (Oleg Korotki) felt out of rhythm (we had spoken exclusively Russian with each other) so the translation was uneven. One member of the congregation took turns with him in translation. The audience was very responsive, interrupting with questions and comments. The minister then led a shorter song and worship section, gave announcements and a closing prayer, inviting those who wished to stay behind for questions (another 15 minutes). Afterward Korotki remarked this was the only church of its kind within the Kazakh union - its use of more contemporary music and very open casual style. The pastor exuded lots of charisma, several of his children were active participants in the worship group, and during the announcements I was reminded of the American style of intimate interaction between pastor and people. They get little help from the Union, put up a church building with a tall steeple in the Lutheran style, but the building was not entirely complete. So he was also organizing work groups for painting and finishing the ceiling panels.

As a result of these encounters, Oleg Korotki and I had supper together and talked for nearly an hour thereafter, mostly in English so he could get more practice. His life developments tell a particular story, hence this short sketch. Oleg grew up in a non-Christian family in Zaporozh'e, Ukraine. He was converted in an ECB union church in 1982, but soon after moved to another town where they became part of a Council of Churches ECB church, headed by a man who was very negative toward the registered Baptists. Oleg became youth leader, then assistant pastor. Then for work reasons they moved and they became part of an independent ECB church (autonomous) which suited him better. From there he was encouraged to study, so he went to the Bible College in Zaporozh'e. Its leader then urged him to go to seminary, specifically to his father in law's seminary in Irpyn. While there, Korotki and family attended an independent church, but then Rector Brynza urged him to become a teacher in an ECB union school, but they would need to join a union church. Soon after, instead of going to Israel as missionary as they had planned, they accepted the call to Almaty, and have been there 5 years. Now Oleg is beginning a doctorate in expository preaching, at the Clark Summit Baptist college and seminary in Pennsylvania. His first round of studies is a module in October when he hopes to improve his English.

So we exchanged understandings about what had happened to Gennady Kriuchkov (had met him several times), describing him as someone who formed views on things and then did not change, expected others to agree fully or leave. That was apparently the essence of what happened to Peter Peters, who was dismissed as Kriuchkov's right hand man about 3 years ago. Where he stood on dispensational theology he did not really say, but we talked about it in connection with my telling him the story of the Russian Bible Commentary project (he is using Barclay's Mark volume with a Bible study group this semester and finds it very helpful), and the way in which Jakob Dukhonchenko had resisted the volume on Revelation because it did not take a dispensationalist line. So although doing two sermons was quite a stress while trying to

Christians Associated for Relationships with Eastern Europe

www.caree.info

get ready for teaching students, just starting in theological studies, the weekend turned out to be a time of warm fellowship. Korotki, like Dukhonchenko long ago, made a habit of starting with prayer. At the airport when we were seated in the car, he first prayed before we set out. Sunday again before starting to drive he invariably said a prayer first.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE AT ALMATY BIBLE INSTITUTE

The school has existed for 13 years (started in 1994). The first director had emigrated to Sacramento in 2002, so Oleg Korotki, completing his MDiv at the Baptist seminary in Irpyn (near Kiev) had been invited to succeed him. The school's special focus is not to offer a full-time campus program, but rather to use the facilities for extension courses, usually 2 year programs with students coming 4 times per year for 2 weeks of intensive training. Thus the school serves about 1500 students, but the classes of different groups rarely overlap. In my case the Missionary Program brought evangelists and church planters together, from Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The school is one of three Bible Institutes under the Union of Ev. Christian Baptists of Kazakhstan. The other two are in Shchuchinsk (where I taught around 1999) and Chimkent. In the latter there is a change, its dean just moved to Almaty to head up a program on mission in Muslim regions.

The Almaty school is under the Union, but its primary financial sponsor is Slavic Gospel Association, now headed by Probst. For example, Oleg Korotki and Dimitri Larionov (Dean) are supported by SGA, Alexander Karyakov is supported by Campus Crusade. There is funding for the operation (rent for the land, owning the property, food and salaries of support staff) from SGA mostly, virtually no financial support from the Union. Students get help from their sending churches, and in needy cases a fund from SGA and other missions covers tuition and travel. The school sees itself as consciously conservative, compared to Baptists in Russia and Ukraine, but apparently a strong dispensational emphasis from Probst is not necessarily shared by teachers.

This class came with only a week of theological studies behind them so far, many of them without long exposure to Christianity, so setting out to lay the groundwork from general Christian history in order to locate the Evangelical developments turned out to be a challenge. During a break a man of about 30 addressed me in excellent English. He was from Uzbekistan, was the representative for Bibel Mission in Uzbekistan. The Baptist seminary, still is not registered, and is down to 4 students, and getting qualified teachers is even more difficult (I did not get a visa when trying in winter of 2005). So the representatives of the Bibel Mission in Almaty urged him to bring some of their workers in Uzbekistan to the Almaty school. So he brought 10 students, who now represented the largest contingent from one place. He came across as broadly interested, trying to make sense of how to do ministry with a variety of Christian groups, so found the historical overview stimulating, he said.

Later in the evening another student came to discuss the assignment. In so doing he began to describe two different ways of organizing for ministry happening in Kazakhstan, and he wanted to know whether both were acceptable from the viewpoint of the early church or from historical developments. Some Kazakh groups functioned as

Christians Associated for Relationships with Eastern Europe

www.caree.info

small groups with a leader, four such groups would meet regularly with a coordinating leader, and then periodically all the small groups met with the leader in chief. Their style consisted of talking while drinking tea, their worship was not as structured and predictable as was that of Kazakh ECB Union itself. The latter was under the firm leadership of its president (Frants Tissen), to whom regional superintendants reported, and who in turn oversaw the work of presbyters and deacons in local churches. Worship too was more structured. After I pointed out that even in the structure or polity of the various ECB unions across the former SU there was considerable variation, he got to the point of saying that there appeared to be many ways of organizing, partly to adapt to specific cultures, or to do tasks. What he obviously liked about the Kazakh group, was their simple 3 fold approach: 1) bring persons to conversion/salvation; 2) disciple them in Christian growth so that 3) they can bring others to salvation. They were indeed growing churches.

On another day our class was ended a half hour early in order to have everyone hear the previous Rector, Zinchenko (in Sacramento since 2002) speak to them. Another pastor of a church of about 60 members asked to talk to me instead. That turned out to be most interesting, mostly because he described the increasing spectrum of meanings assigned to the classic leadership roles - deacon, presbyter and bishop - and also to describe an increasing authority of the Kazakhstan ECB Union leadership. Frant Tissen has been president since before 1989. There are now 6 regions (oblasty) headed by a senior presbyter. At the latest congress, Tissen proposed and the delegates approved the creation of a senior presbyter council with the right to take decisions including final approval of all ordinations. The local minister was not opposed, but he was trying to make sense of the shifts, and described his own situation. He had been encouraged to do a church plant. After a while he was ordained as deacon of the church, then more recently his ordination was declared to give him not only the rights of deacons traditionally, but also to perform weddings, funerals, lead communion and essentially function as a full fledged pastor. The only exception was he did not have the right to ordain others, including to ordain a new deacon for his church. He went on to describe persons called presbyters without having some of the rights he had, whereas others did. It seemed as if each status was decided by the situation without generally clarity on policy.

Once the first round of student papers were graded by me, more of them started doing some serious reading and the papers they turned in to the question of the day became quite good. By the third day many wanted to discuss things that came up with me privately. Once person, for example, from Pavlodar was reading in my book about the torture and killing of Khmara in Kulunda (near Barnaul Russia) and realized the man's brother was now in his church, so he developed more of an interest in the issues at stake in the divisions. Since they had turned in their final papers before the final class session (and most left for home within an hour) I decided to make my treatment of the postsoviet years in two forms: a) to give them tips on where to read more analytical articles on what was happening so they would not simply be forming their views on a personal impressionistic basis. Secondly I used pictures from various church initiatives in Ukraine and Russia in order to present what I had handed out as more detailed lecture notes; b) I

Christians Associated for Relationships with Eastern Europe

www.caree.info

decided to use short video clips from the reconciliation conference in Donetsk last March to give more a sense of the immediacy of what reconciliation involved for participants. So they watched leaders from the registered union, the autonomous and reformed (Council of Churches ECB) reflect on the issues. The translator, the academic dean, was that interested that right after class he made a copy of my DVD (received from DCU) for himself and the school.

Late on Thursday night after completing grading I had a short meeting with Anton Andretsov, about whom I had first heard that morning. He appeared to be in his mid thirties, married with young children. His parentage (parents and grandparents) included Kazakh, Russian, German, Jewish which I think shaped his interests. In 2004 he successfully defended his doctoral dissertation (of which he gave me an abstract and promised to send me a digital version of the whole thing minus some charts by email) on the topic of the role of the Protestants in Kazakhstan from about 1880-the present, arguing at one point that between 1900 and 1990 the Germans (before the big emigration) had constituted 8% of the population, but had left a disproportionately large impact on religious and economic life. He teaches church history at the Bible school, does advising on website design, and his main work is as Docent (prof) at the State Pedagogical University in Almaty. His next big project (for the Dr. Nauk (like a habilitation) is to write a history of Christianity in Kazakhstan, starting from the very earliest sources (of which he had found many in the archives he has explored in various Kazakh cities. It was his initiative to get in touch, saying he had read my book and was very appreciative. He is also a preacher at the 2nd Baptist church. So I will try to foster ongoing contacts with him, he is certainly likely to be the most authoritative scholar on Christianity in Central Asia. He also uses English and German in addition to the Russian (which we spoke together) and I think Kazakh.. When I read his dissertation abstract (a 30 page booklet in the European style) he kept stressing how much the Mennonites had helped shape developments in Kazakhstan, as early as the 1880s. He argued that the Protestants (Lutherans, Mennonites, Evangelicals) by the early 20th century constituted 8% of the population and made major contributions in all areas, including in building religious pluralism. So much of what he was referring to is generally unknown in the West, not just by specialists, but the Mennonite public has no idea.

(Report on the Russian part of the trip will be in the next *Communicator*.)