

Partnering with East European Missions Network



Story about God's Guidance Throughout the Century

Siimon Haamer, dean of TAT

I'm sharing with you a story of a long-time journey that has brought us to this day and is the background and reason of the HOME of HOPE (HoH) project.

My grandfather Harri Haamer was ordained in 1929 and the story of a pastors dynasty began. Harri experienced hardships during his 58 years of service as a Lutheran pastor, because he suffered together with his nation under those difficulties Estonians were facing because of World War 2 and aggressive atheistic Soviet occupation that began in 1940. **During the first 10 years of occupation about 70% of Estonian Lutheran Church pastors were killed, imprisoned, deported to Siberia or escaped to western countries.**

My grandfather wasn't afraid to continue proclaiming the Word of God during Soviet occupation although it was life threatening. He got his punishment. He was arrested in 1948 and was accused of organizing youth work at the church. He spent 8 years of his life in slave labor camp in Siberia but while there he didn't stop being a pastor. He survived and returned and pastored 32 more years until he died in 1987. He wrote a book "We shall live in heaven" about his journey to Siberia. This is available in English on our website.

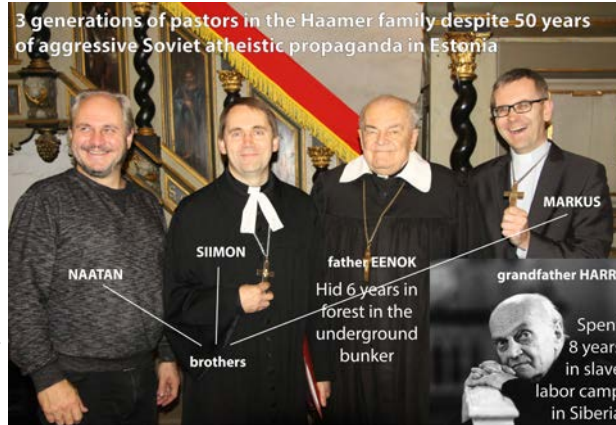
I recently read my grandfather's diary. At the end of the 1950's, after he was back from Siberia, he wrote that it is so sad that

young people are taken away from churches and there

is no Christian education at school. He was writing to Soviet authorities and explaining why it's important to educate young people in the Christian mindset and was hoping that his concerns would get their attention. But of course, nobody listened to him and he just got in trouble and the KGB (Russian secret police) wasn't very friendly to him.

Going back to the end of the 1940's. After my grandfather was arrested the rest of his family needed to escape from their home a year later because Russian authorities wanted to deport them to Siberia as well. A result of that was that **my father hid 6 years in the forest, 4 years of that time lived in an underground bunker. He was 13 years old at the onset of his journey of Colgata.**

My father Eenok got very ill in the bunker and was lying there weeks without seeing any daylight and receiving any medical care. He has told me that there was a moment when he felt himself being on the edge of life and death. At the very same moment his mother opened the Bible and got a passage from Philippians 1:23-26: *I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart*



and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again. God gifted him life and it is clear that this gift was given on purpose. Hardships in the bunker were preparations for the future. In 1964 Eenok became an ordained Lutheran pastor.

Under pressure and persecution Christians need strong pioneers who know that if there is no opportunity for a better life... no future, no solution, no food, that there is always Jesus Christ our Savior who is very, very close. And one can joyfully sing praise songs—praising the Lord for those bitter thorns that wound. Eenok has been such a Christian leader already for 55 years and today at 83 years old is still continuing to serve three congregations.

Eenok had the privilege of seeing Estonia regain its independence in 1991. My grandfather unfortunately didn't see that happen but he believed that this would happen. Being independent again also meant

That is why we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe.
1 Timothy 4:10

oppression toward Christians was finished. Since that time, we are able to speak and work freely without any fear but the problem is that during 50 years of aggressive atheistic propaganda continuity of our Christian identity was cut. Now we are trying to work hard to heal our country from this damage but we need many efforts for this.

One of the efforts is the Christian college, Tartu Academy of Theology (TAT), that was established by my father in 1992 to train Christian leaders. HoH is the result and natural continuity of 27 years of good and the fruitful work of TAT.

A meaningful part of this story is that my two older brothers and myself are all Lutheran pastors as well. We chose to become pastors already while under Soviet occupation. We are carrying on this legacy that began about a hundred years ago. Our story continues and we are convinced that HoH has a very important role in this continuing story.

In the next article I will be sharing with you my own story. I didn't yearn to be in the situation where I am today—my signature is on a contract where is written an amount of money that I have never owned or seen. I have made decisions in faith because I have experienced God's guidance and presence. This is my faith journey and I'm very thankful if you will be my co-wanderers.

PRAYER REQUESTS

- Pray guidance and wisdom that HoH would be filled with people, activities and organizations that proclaim powerfully the Word of God.
- Pray God's blessing for HoH project and fundraising campaign.
- Pray for major gifts for HoH before June 30th.
- Pray revival for Estonia. For the country that lost its Christian identity during 50 years of aggressive Soviet atheistic propaganda.
- As the school year is coming to an end, please pray for our students who are graduating, finding jobs and going to work.
- Pray that many people would get the call to come and study at TAT.
- Pray for our workers and lecturers.

HOME of HOPE FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

Goal: \$1,780,272 USD

Raised \$333,106

June 30th, 2019

\$1,447,166 to go

May 21st, 2019

Price of the HOME of HOPE is today 11,5% higher than we were expecting a year ago. The reason is that at this time we were not able to foresee all expenses we need to make in order to realize vision of the HoH.

Siimon's Story

I was born into a Christian family and all the days of my life have been framed by prayer. This is truly a special blessing. **I feel that my biggest treasures are the intercessory prayers of my grandparents and parents.** Today I'm passing on that blessing to my children.

Still, I can't say that walking with God is easy. I was born in 1973 and I remember very well how life was under Soviet atheistic pressure. Being a child, I didn't feel the pressure that my parents and grandparents felt but I saw their unhappiness and struggles. **A pastor's family was basically excluded from society.** Salary from the church was very, very small and there wasn't an option to have an additional side job—everyone was afraid to hire a pastor. I have two older brothers and one younger sister and I'm amazed today how our family with four children survived through the Soviet occupation. I don't remember feeling hunger although I know that often we lacked food. God was taking care of us and sent helpers, otherwise we wouldn't have been able to survive. However, because of poor food I suffered from rachitis and that is also affecting my life today.



My Family: Siimon, Kärt (11), Eerik (18, world top 5 U20 pole vaulter), Reet-Ingrid (teacher of religion & history).

I attended state school, along with my brothers and sister, because home schooling wasn't allowed. At school, teachers tried to teach us according to the Soviet mindset. If this didn't seem to prove successful, my parents were warned that they were ruining the lives of their children. Sometimes I experienced teasing at school because I was Christian but I had a strong and supportive home and those situations didn't have an impact on me.

At home nobody ever said that I should become a pastor. Nevertheless, my decision was made pretty early. When I was 9, a teacher at school asked each student what they would like to be in the future. Already at that age I answered I wanted to be a pastor. And I never changed my mind. I graduated from high school in

1991 (the same year Estonia regained independence) and began theological studies when the Tartu Academy of Theology (TAT) was established in 1992. That same year my supervised practice began because father took me along with him to serve his congregations.

In the summer of 1998, I was among the first graduates of TAT. Right after my graduation I began to work at TAT to help my father. I became very busy administrating and managing the school. Years passed and I started to feel myself to be like Jesus says in Luke 9:62 „No one who puts his hand to the plow and then looks back is fit for the kingdom of God“. I felt that I was not being faithful. I had a goal to become a pastor but I had not met this goal. I worked hard to run TAT because we needed to teach a new generation of Christian leaders for Estonia. I just couldn't step away from this. I was like on a crossroad. It took several years for me to understand that actually I'm not one who has put his hand to the plow and then looks back. I have answered God's call, only He gave me a task different than what I had planned. He also blessed me with gifts I need for this work. I can say that I

have been faithful to this work. I didn't run away when TAT had only debts and no money, when other close co-workers were leaving and professors were displeased because they had not received any salary for months. I'm thankful to God that He sent solutions little by little and not just solutions but also new perspectives.

Today I'm an ordained Lutheran pastor. I don't have my own congregation but I'm helping my father to serve his three congregations. It's not possible to run a school and congregation at the same time. I care for my wife and children and they need me as well. **Today I see that all of my own experiences and the hardships of my parents and grandparents, have been preparations for this present action. Establishing a Christian Outreach Center in the country that is proclaimed to be the least religious country in the world can't happen without great test of faith.** We just can't wait for perfect circumstances. we have to step out and act when God is giving signs. HoH is exactly a project like this.

I'm very thankful to all of you for your prayers and donations and I hope we'll succeed together with this HoH project. You are part of God's plan.

VOCATIONAL BIBLE SCHOOL

In addition to our regular bachelor and master degree study programs we'll establish Vocational Bible School in co-operation with St Paul Lutheran Church, located just across the street. Bible studies will take place in the evening or morning once or twice per week and will have an interdenominational approach. We welcome non-religious people as well of course. In Estonia people who are not affiliated with any church are often hesitant to attend events and studies that take place in the church. We don't give the expectation to participants that they need to make long time commitments and since we are not a church, this opens a door for people to freely participate.

Big Classroom at HoH on May 21st, 2019.



CHRISTIAN RADIO STATION

The radio station broadcasts 24/7 all over Estonia and to a large part of Russia. Every Sunday there are 6 services from various churches on the air. According to feedback, non-Christians are also listening because this is the only Estonia wide radio station producing and broadcasting programs that nurture people's hearts.

Space for radio studios at HoH on May 21st, 2019.



Space for Pastoral Care Center at HoH on May 21st, 2019.

PASTORAL CARE CENTER

Estonian people are very much in need of spiritual help but many of them don't know where to find it. Often they are hesitant to go to church because they are afraid that their minds will be messed up there. This was the goal of Soviet authorities during 50 years of occupation. Now people want to make their own decisions for their lives. Clear evidence of spiritual need is evident in the huge popularity of self-help literature, new age philosophies and different kinds of spiritual practices. We need places that support people in their spiritual struggles outside of Church buildings. The Pastoral Care Center will be offering that opportunity and, at the same time, provide a coordination center for Estonia's wide network of pastoral care givers. There are already 60 people from across Estonia who have joined with this network and are ready to start working among their local communities. They are TAT alumni or participants of our continuing education training courses.

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SPIRITUAL MENTORING CENTER



Spiritual Mentoring Center and pop-up office at HoH on May 21st, 2019.

We recently conducted a year training course for spiritual mentors for Lutheran Church pastors. Today we are building up the mentoring system in the Estonian Lutheran Church. In Estonia, pastors often feel alone and abandoned and they need support. Unfortunately many of them won't take any action to find a spiritual mentor. That's why we need to offer opportunities for them. As it's very difficult to get those who have pastored 10-15 years or more involved in the mentoring

program, we are concentrating our main focus on young pastors who have recently graduated from the seminary or are still studying. This brings a new attitude into the church and changes a pastor's mindset little by little, building a healthier body of pastors. It's a long time process.

SERVER ROOM FOR ESTONIAN BIBLE WEBSITE

At HoH, this fall, we will not only have a special server room for Christian Radio servers but also a server that hosts the Estonian Bible internet version. This will provide much more secure conditions for the server, as currently, it is located in the kitchen of TAT's alumni who is maintaining the Bible website.

Server room at HoH on May 21st, 2019.



YOUTH AND STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Union of Evangelical Students

Tartu University, Estonia's oldest and largest university (est. 1632) is located in Tartu, a city of 100,000 inhabitants and about 20,000 students. There are various student organizations including the Union of Evangelical Students which has an interdenominational approach. We hope to have good collaboration with them and we will open our rooms for their events.

Scout and Guide Troops

After HoH is launched this coming autumn some scout and guide troops will start to use our space regularly for their meetings. In the 1990's, scouting was one of the youth ministries held in many congregations in Estonia but today scouting is less connected with churches. We want to introduce scouting again as one attracting opportunity for church youth work.

Youth Bible Camps

In co-operation with East European Missions Network and other Christians from the United States we have organized English Bible camps for adults since 2006. This year in August, we are having the first Bible camp mainly for youth which is being organized together with St. Paul Lutheran Church, located across the street from HoH. Next year will we be able to offer a much better setting for this event. While we were making room plans for HoH we paid attention to the needs of this kind of camp. That's one reason why we will have at HoH one big classroom, two medium ones and several smaller multipurpose rooms for small groups.

Estonians Supporting HOME of HOPE

We are very happy that we have received donations for HoH from Estonian people. The proportion of Christians

is small in our country and the standard of living is not very high so the gifts are not large, but it is a good and encouraging sign that Estonians see the value of this project and are showing their willingness to support in various ways. Some are willing to volunteer in helping to promote this center and/or to run different activities at HoH once it's established. We are receiving good donations from the companies that are providing interior work. Here are some stories.

LAUR, OWNER OF THE DEVELOPMENT

When we started to investigate opportunities for HoH we contacted Laur, because his real estate development seemed to be a very good fit with our vision, especially because of the location. We shared with him our thoughts and also explained that we did not yet have the required funds. He offered that his architects will design rooms according to our needs and we don't need to sign a contract and to make any payment. This was very meaningful because without this, we wouldn't have any visual materials for our plans. We were able to say "yes" to Laur in June last year when we knew that we were able to raise the down payment. Then he started to build according to our vision without having a signed contract or any money from us. He just trusted our word and was helping to make HoH a reality.



SIIM, LAWYER

To Prepare the bill of sale last summer, we hired a lawyer because we couldn't do this without professional help. We are very satisfied with Siim, the lawyer, and confident we got a contract that represents best interests. After this process was finished we asked Siim to send us a bill. A couple weeks passed and we had not yet received a bill so we called him. He told us he is not sending a bill because this project is financed by volunteer giving and it felt wrong to be paid money like this from volunteers. His work on this project was a charitable donation from him.



ULVAR, OWNER OF A FURNITURE COMPANY

Siimon met Ulvar three years ago and last autumn shared with him about HoH. Ulvar understood very well the need for this kind of center and wanted to be part of the process. Now he is making furniture for us and is providing glass walls, doors and removable walls. He promised to do this at a price lower than any other company. He kept his promise. His costs are \$7,000-10,000 lower than others. At the same time, we know the quality of the work his company provides is very good.



MAREK, OWNER OF AN ELECTRICAL COMPANY

About three years ago Siimon came to know Marek. In the beginning, he didn't know that Marek was the owner of a low current systems company. A year ago when we started HoH project Siimon shared our crazy plan with him and discovered he has this business. Marek became very enthusiastic towards our plans and promised to build all the low current systems at HoH under actual cost. Marek's employees are working now at our construction site. Compared to other offers that we received for the same work it seems that his donation is somewhere between \$5,000-10,000.



MARGUS, OWNER OF AN INTERIOR COMPANY

When we began to look for a company that could provide interior work for us, we got suggestion to contact Margus. We shared with him about HoH project. Margus became interested in this vision and made an offer for interior work that was about \$25,000-30,000 less than others. He said that his offer included charity work. He had been offered a project manager job for construction work and was not adding his salary to the cost of our project.



FUNDRAISING BANQUET

April 12th we had a fundraising banquet in Estonia. This was uplifting evening with about 60 guests. Our friends from U.S.A. were setting up a matching fund of \$5,000 and Estonian people donated during the banquet \$15,547. That means total income of this event was \$20,547.



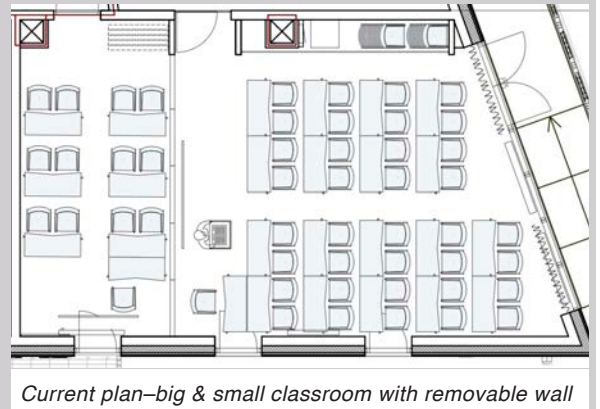
Alternative Room Solutions at HOME of HOPE

As we plan such a big and expensive project like HoH, we think also about alternative room possibilities, keeping in mind changes that may occur in 15, 20 or 30 years. Our own needs may very well expand or current renters may move out and we may need to offer different functions for some rooms. We've included the possibility of alternative room designs. Flexibility to make changes in the heating, piping, wiring, ventilation and air-conditioning systems is built in. That has made construction a bit more expensive but it was important to build in these alternative solutions because years later it would either not be possible or would be extremely expensive. These are the described rooms with current and alternative solutions.

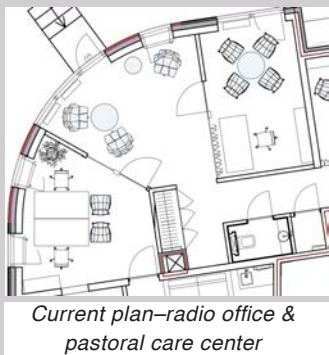
The **GUEST APARTMENT** could be used as a regular apartment or an office space without any changes. Both rooms of the apartment have removable glass walls (see diagram) that can be easily removed to make the space more open.



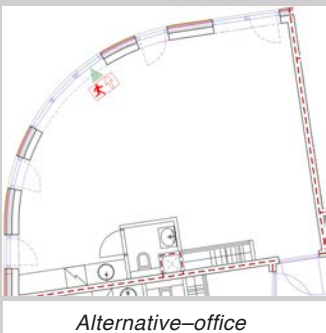
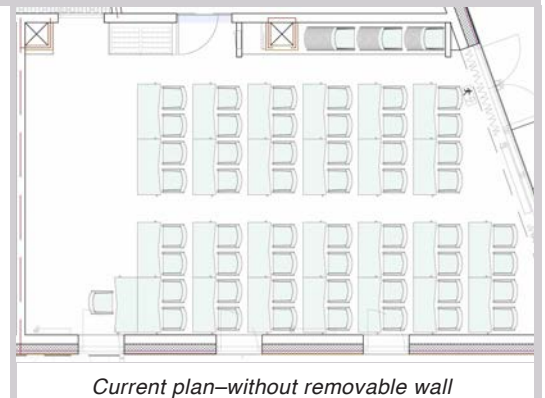
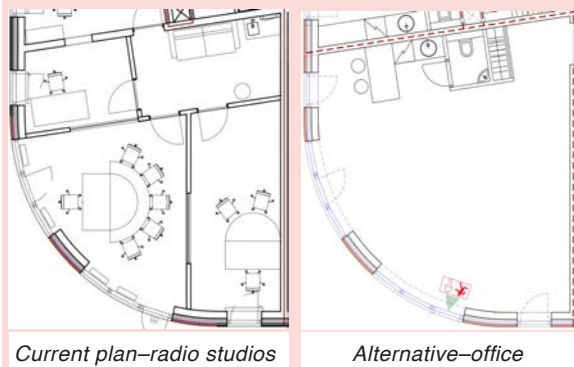
The **BIG+SMALL CLASSROOM** can also be used as a separate space with private entrance from the street without having any connection with the rest of the HoH rooms.



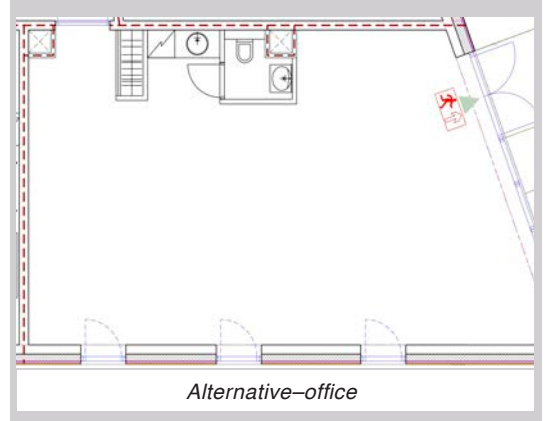
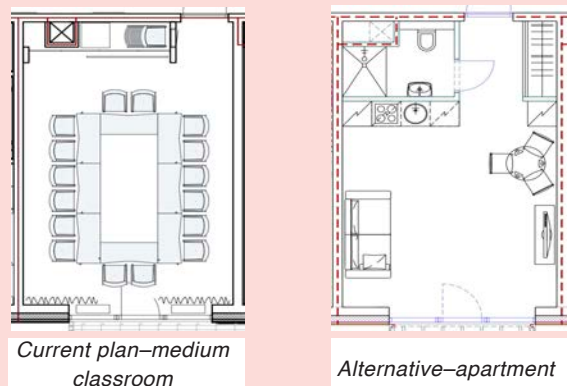
The **PASTORAL CARE CENTER AND RADIO OFFICE** could also be used as separate space with private entrance from the street without having any connection with the rest of the HoH rooms.



The space the **RADIO STUDIOS** occupies can be a separate business space with a private entrance from the street without having any connection with the rest of the HoH rooms.



The **MEDIUM CLASSROOM** could be used also as a small apartment or an office.



We are led to think long-term and build in the usability and flexibility needed to guarantee the success of this project God has given us.

We Need Your Help!

GIVING

CHECKS
Charity Lutheran Church (Tax deductible.)
120 Aspen Ave.
Bismarck, ND 58503,
U.S.

ELECTRONICAL
To give electronically through Charity Lutheran Church (Tax deductible) go to www.charitylutheran.org/give and follow the steps.

Mark designation "Home of Hope" in the memo portion.

We have investigated loan opportunities and we would be able to get large amount of mortgage loan for 3-4 years if we won't be able to raise full amount before June 30th. **But it's important to let you know that we won't be able to borrow as much money as we are missing at the moment. We need to use all of our efforts during these couple of weeks that we could at least double current amount in order to become applicable for loan.** This doesn't mean that we back out of our promise that all gifts given for HoH will be used according to the very purpose. This just means we have to use radical actions to get loan, i.e. Simon has to use his only property, his home, for that.