

Neudorf School Dedication

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Translated by Allen E. Konrad – July, 2012
PO Box 157 Rowley, IA 52329

[Translator's Note: Pastor M. Fr. Schrenk comments on the school building in the village of Neudorf, located in the Caucasus region of Georgia, that was dedicated in October of 1889.]

[Begin Translation]

The Neudorf School Dedication on 15 October, 1889

From the notes of Pastor M. Fr. Schrenk

Motto: Praise be to God, praise to His Son,
Through Whom He shows mercy!
Angels, praise Him before His Throne,
Exalt Him also, my spirit!

Glücksthal on 17 October, 1889

By the Lord's grace, we were allowed, this past Sunday, on the 15th of the month, to celebrate, to the glory of the Lord, a lovely festival in Neudorf. The newly renovated school was dedicated. It was a double celebration because the church was dedicated at the same time. Participating in this Neudorf festival celebration, at my invitation, were two neighboring pastors: Birnbach from Bergdorf and Eppeler from Kassel. It made a very pleasant and solemn impression to find the farmyards in the colony and especially the school yard neatly cleaned up by the scattering of sand and flowers. The school house itself, which was to be dedicated, was painted quite pretty. Above the door to the entry-way was this inscription framed in oak leaves: "The Lord bless your coming in and your going out from now on and into eternity!" The large and the medium sized school rooms were smartly decorated with garlands of oak leaves and short sayings embodying a general truth. So there was this saying over the door between the medium and large room: "Feed My Lambs." On the side of the same was this inscription: "Let the little children come unto me for of such is the Kingdom of God!" The most beautiful decoration was to be found in the large room. In the background of the chancel area stood a teaching lectern, not only used for the teacher's lectures, but also, at the same time, used for worship service during the winter, since our church was not heated. Over the lectern, hanging on the wall, was a fairly large framed gilt cornice picture of the then reigning Emperor Alexander III. Beneath it were these words, framed with oak leaves and in the Russian language: "*Boshe zarja chrani!*" To the right of the Emperor's picture were the words framed in green: "He will graze his flock as a shepherd!" Jeremiah 40:11. On the left side of the Emperor's picture was the *Psalmatelle* from Psalm 84:7 [?], "The teachers will be adorned with many blessings!" A geographical map was also hanging on a new frame, which helped decorate the room. So everything festive was prepared and the community was in anticipation for the things which were about to take place.

At the ringing of the bell at 10 o'clock, the people entered their newly dedicated church which had been under construction for the past 2 years. After the singing of the hymn: "Lord, by Your Word Preserve Us..." (*Erhalt uns Herr bei deinem Wort*), the local pastor proceeded to carry out the rites of worship at the altar with the Invocation, Confession of Sins, Absolution, Prayer, the reading of the Epistle for that Sunday and the Confession of Faith. Then the congregation sang the sermon hymn: "Praise and Honor be the Highest Good..." (*Sei Lob und Ehr dem höchsten Gut*) and Pastor Birnbach preached the church dedication sermon from Luke 19:1-10. The theme of the sermon was "The Conversion of Zacchaeus".

- I. How Zacchaeus sought out the Lord
- II. How the Lord allowed himself to be found by him
- III. How Zacchaeus totally committed himself to the Lord

As these parts were expounded on, he made a fitting application on the congregation celebrating its church dedication and proposed serious thought-provoking questions. At the conclusion of the sermon, following with a short prayer and the congregation having sung the stanza: "The Lord is never ever separated from His people..." (*Der Herr ist noch und immer nicht von seinem Volk geschieden*), Pastor Eppeler, from Kassel, then spoke on the words of James 1:21-22. The theme of his message was: What we must do so that God's Word will be fruitful in us to His glory -

- I. We must do away with all uncleanness and wickedness
- II. We must accept the Word of God with meekness
- III. We must, however, also be doers of God's Word!

Both sermons were textual, simple and touching to the heart and, with the help of God, certainly a blessing in the hearts of the hearers.

The closing liturgy was again conducted from the altar by the local pastor and from there he spoke the benediction upon the congregation. Choral numbers, at the start and also at the close of the worship service of the congregation, were well presented. The festival offering of the morning and at the afternoon worship service was designated for the construction of the school.

Through the kindness of the Neudorf church council and the local schoolmaster and his wife, the pastors and their family members, together with other festival guests, were hosted with a noon meal in the small school room. It was announced that the dedication worship service in the school would take place at 2 o'clock. At the second ringing of the bell, just about all the benches in the spacious school room were occupied. However, those attending had time to look at the nice decorations of the new school house until the service began. After a brief sounding of the bell, one entered the small capacity school room where folks sat crowded (*Kopf an Kopf*) and stood right up to the exit of the school. The worship service was begun with the choral number: *We have built this house, O Lord, through Your kindness*. Then the local pastor announced the following dedication verses for the congregation to sing:

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| 1. Seht, wie der Herr sein Volk so liebt,
Das er uns ein Schule gibt, | See how the Lord loves his people,
That he gives us a school, |
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Dies Haus hat er erbauet
Der Grosse Hauptmann seiner Schar,
Die ihrem Koenig immerdar
Ob auch in Schwachheit trauet,
Singet, Springet frohe Chöre,
Dank und Ehre unserem König
Ihm sein alles untertänig!

He has built this house,
The Great Captain of His flock,
To them their King forever
Trusting Him even ever so weakly,
Sing, leap happy choirs,
Thank and praise our King
Everything in submission to Him!

2. Dies Schulhaus steht nun fertig da,
Und viele Gäste fern und nah
Erflehen mit uns den Segen
Auf dieses ihm geweihte Haus
Drin unsere Jugend ein und aus
Sich forthin soll bewegen.
Heiland segne diese Räume,
Komm und säumet sie mit Gnaden,
Sei uns gut für allen Schaden.

This school now stands here completed,
And many guests from far and near
Beseech the blessing along with us
On this the house being dedicated
in which our youth, in and out
Henceforth to move.
Savior bless this place,
Come and hem it in with grace,
Be good to us in every misfortune.

After this song, the local pastor spoke a prayer from the heart and then, based on Luke 7:5, gave his dedication talk on “He has love for his people and He built the school for us.” The dedication talk concluded with a prayer and a blessing from the Lord for the now opened school house. Then the act of dedication ended with these words spoken: “So I dedicate these school rooms and commend them for public use and also for the worship services during the winter months in the name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! O Lord give Your help and let everything be successful. Amen!”

At the close of the dedication, the following verse was sung:

Wir weihen grosser König
Herr, Jesu die dies Haus,
und flehen untertänig:
giess deinen Segen aus
auf diese Festgemeinde,
die hier versammelt steht
damit sie werde deine
und stets dein Lob erhöht!

Great God, we dedicate
To you, Lord Jesus, this house,
And humbly beseech:
Pour out your blessing
On this festival congregation,
Who are assembled here,
That they will be Yours
And always exalt your praise!

Now Pastor Eppeler spoke a message about the word which the risen Savior spoke to Peter: “Feed my Lambs”, which was an inscription at the door between the two school rooms. He indicated in the carrying out of this shepherding task who is to feed the lambs; namely, the parents and the teachers, and how the lambs should be fed; namely through education and bringing up in the training and admonition of the Lord. Finally, Pastor Birnbach told a short story about a school dedication at the Königsburg station in the Natal Province in South Africa. It was there that Berlin Missionary N. established a school among the native Africans (*Kaffirs*). After a year, the fathers of the African students came to the missionary and said, “Every worker is worthy of his compensation.” The missionary wanted to rejoice over the recognition they

were giving to in his work among the native Africans. They now asked him what he would be paying their children now that they had attended his school for a whole year. Amazed at this demand, the missionary told them that there was no question that their children would be paid something for receiving an education, but rather, they had an obligation to compensate him, the missionary, for the efforts he took with their children. Then the children, all but one, stayed away from school. But eventually, bit by bit, they came back until there were 20 students and, in October of 1888, a school house was dedicated, which the Natal natives put up on their own next to their small church. A timely and present-day application of this story was made for the Neudorf community. The community was exhorted by all three speakers to diligently and regularly send their children to the new school.

Then the congregation sang the following 2 verses:

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| <p>3. <i>Schau segnend unsere Lehrer an
und lass sie stets auf rechter Bahn
die Kinderheerden leiten!
Du grosser Lämmerhirte, du,
Hilf unseren Lehrern immerzu
Dir Deine Lämmer weiden!
Jesu, Hilf Du, Lehrern, Hörern,
Grossen, Kleinen, hilf uns allen,
dass wir Dir stets wohlgefallen!</i></p> | <p>Look with blessing upon our teachers
And keep them always on the right path
To guide the multitude of children!
You, Great Shepherd of lambs,
Help our teachers at all times
To feed Your lambs!
Jesus, help teachers, listeners
Great, small, help us all,
That we always be a pleasure to you!</p> |
| <p>4. <i>Begleite unsere Kinderschar
Mit Deinen Segen immerdar
Bei ihren Schüler-Mühe!
Lass wachsen die zu deinem Preis
damit sie einst als grünes Reis
am Baum der Kirche blühen!
Lass sie Vater, Dir ergeben
heilig leben und im Sterben
mache sie zu deinen Erben!</i></p> | <p>Accompany our flock of children
With Your blessing forever
During their student efforts!
Let them grow to Your glory
So that they, as green shoots,
Blossom on the tree of the church!
Father, let them give to You
Holy living and, when dying,
Make them Your heirs!</p> |

After Pastor Birnbach said a prayer and spoke the blessing, the choir then sang the Woltersdorf song (*Woltersdorfsche Lied*): “Blossoming youth, you hope of future times...” (*Blühende Jugend, du Hoffnung der künftigen Zeiten...*).

After this worship service, because it was already evening, the visiting guests were hosted once again to food and drink in the school room. (A poem written by Pastor Schrenk was recited during the meal.)

It should also be mentioned that the Lord made possible a particularly favorable arrangement in that the Neudorf Lutheran congregation petitioned the Central Committee of the Pension Fund (*Zentralkomitee der Unterstützungskasse*) in St. Petersburg, addressed by the local pastor, through the Odessa District Committee (*Odessaer Bezirkskomitee*) to the Chief Committee (*Hauptkomitee*), in which the congregation requested an interest-free loan of 1,000 rubles, which was granted by

the Central Committee. Once the Neudorf congregation accepted the necessary conditions put on them by the Central Committee, the Sr 1,000 was sent by Petersburg to the local parish to be transferred to the Neudorf church council, and the congregation was able to finish the construction of their school house without any interruption. Neudorf settler and member of the board (*Baurat*), I. Eberhard, provided the money that the congregation fell short of. The whole building project (installations and extension) came to a total of 3,500 rubles, of which about 1,600 rubles was paid and the remaining amount still stands as a debt on the school house. The 1,000 rubles from the Central Committee are to be paid back in 4 installments of 250 rubles from 1890 to 1893.

The school building has 3 rooms with stoves for heating, including a round furnace (*Hochofen*) of Meidinger construction, that uses coal for heating. The 2 large rooms have a moveable wall so that both rooms can be used together for worship services during the winter. This will be a big help. Thanks be to the Lord for this!

28 August, 1939

[End Translation]