



## **Estonian Free Church Theological Seminary Strategic Planning Document for 2021 – 2027**

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### **1. Key results of the strategic planning document**

During the process of developing the strategic planning document for 2021 – 2027 we decided to continue with the same mission and vision statements, motto and values. These are as follows:

**The mission.** The Seminary supports the comprehensive and lifelong development of individual Christians and congregations.

**The vision.** The Seminary is nationally and internationally recognized evangelical free church education centre, which through its activities empowers local churches and has a positive impact on society.

**The motto** – „*For the good and growth of the local churches.* “

#### **Values:**

- Biblical knowledge and Christian experience
- Based on the relationship with God
- Knowledge-based and practical
- Church-centred and teamwork-based
- Discipleship- and mentoring-oriented

We will next present the key results of the new planning period together with indicators and specific enablers. This is followed by the list of general enablers, that are also necessary for achieving the key results.

<i>Key result</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Enablers</i>
The alumni are mature spiritually and in their personality. They are leaders with an ability to learn, and they can work sustainably in the different areas of local church ministry and in the planting of new churches.	The number of alumni involved in formal leadership positions of local churches and their percentage three years and seven years after graduation; the number of seminary students and alumni who participate in church planting (percentage) three years and seven years after graduation. <i>The source: every second year the analysis of alumni involvement in local churches.</i>	The local churches send to the seminary prospective students with leadership potential for assuming different leadership roles in the church in the future; the study process develops the students spiritually and intellectually; there is a systemic activity network in place for helping to back the leaders' spiritual health and sustainable ability to work; the database of mentors is up-to-date and corresponding trainings take place; the management culture is team-based, supporting independent thinking and courage to make decisions.
The local churches and their leaders have embraced the seminary as a credible and important partner.	There are 4-6 church development seminars annually; the churches are using materials for small groups; the teachers address, in speeches and in writing, theological issues that are important for the Union; local churches request different short courses from the seminary to be offered on site; the seminary encourages the mission activity of local churches; the members of the Union of FEB churches actively participate in seminary activities. <i>The source: surveys and church membership analyses of the participants.</i>	We respond to the needs of the Union promptly; there is systematic cooperation with the leadership and the Board of Elders of the Union.

<p>International mobility becomes a two-way road.</p>	<p>There is at least one exchange of seminary teachers both ways in every two years; exchange students come to the seminary; we have begun with cooperative international trainings or with a joint curriculum for studies on the Master's level.</p>	<p>The cooperation with international partners has gained momentum; international contacts and cooperation are handled by one other staff member besides the rector; we have begun with seminary courses using the English language; courses using the English language are offered in cooperation with TCMI and IBTSC.</p>
<p>The seminary has contributed to the Christian message and activities being more visible and better understood in the society.</p>	<p>Adult education courses are attended by people (10-20%) outside the Christian community; podcasts and other web-related study forms are offered regularly and find users outside the Union of FEB churches; texts relevant to the current issues in society, and based on free church identity, are published annually in the secular media.</p>	<p>The processes in the society are regularly analysed, using also the data collected by the Estonian Council of Churches; we respond without delay to events and processes in the society; more people involved with the seminary will publish in the secular media.</p>
<p>The work done in the area of research and development has doubled.</p>	<p>All seminary teachers who teach more than one subject also publish their research (minimum one research article in three years).</p>	<p>The financing of research is based on results and is motivational; The formal workload of the lead teachers grows from 0.1 to 0.3 and includes research; there are more teachers who write and publish their research and have a master's level degree.</p>
<p>The Seminary has developed in all areas.</p>	<p>There are at least 100 students on the applied higher education course; adult education courses and conferences are attended by up to 1200 participants annually.</p>	<p>There is smooth and effective cooperation with the LNK (Union youth ministry) and the Friend's Hand (Union social ministry) in offering courses; we are using different forms of courses, including web-based courses. The staff and the workload of its members grows according to the number of students.</p>

## 2. General enablers that support achieving the results.

Enablers	Indicators
The staff of the seminary works in a sustainable way and there are prospective individuals for the position of the rector.	The feedback received from developmental interviews on the leading process is mainly positive; areas of responsibility are distinct, and their leaders are proactive; by 2027 the latest there are credible new candidates for the position of the rector.
The financial situation of the seminary is steadily improving.	The income generated by the seminary is increasing, constituting up to 25% of the budget; the salaries are on the same level with educational workers in general; the pay for research is performance-related; none of the fixed costs is dependent on support from abroad; income from different projects constitute 15-20% of the budget.
The methods of study in the seminary are modern and involve the students.	All the feedback given for seminary teachers is above the average; there is a training on the methods of study available at least once a year; the technological and didactical support is solid and readily available.
Social media and web-based programs are developed and are in use.	High level of educational-technological innovation; technological capability meets higher education standards.
The next generation of fine seminary teachers is being formed.	Every lead teacher has found a younger teacher in his/her respective subject; In the area of Biblical Studies at least two teachers have the knowledge of Biblical languages and the ability to translate the Bible, and they contribute to the preparation of the new translation of the Bible; The seminary has commissioned students to master's and doctoral studies and supports them.

## 3. Three Explanations

### No 1. The process of developing the strategic planning document

During the preparation of the former strategic planning document, we made several major changes, which are still in the process of being developed. Therefore, we do not change the mission, the vision, and the values of the Seminary. We want to proceed in the direction we have chosen.

In the process of compiling the strategic planning document, we took the following steps. From the beginning of 2020 the planning document was being discussed monthly at the team meetings of the Seminary leadership. We began by planning the entire process, and then evaluated the implementation of the former strategic planning document, analysed the

quantifiability of the key results and began writing down ideas for the new strategic planning document.

At the Board of Trustees meeting in June 2020 we sought to find answers to the following questions:

- Why should we do anything now?
- What would the local churches need during the next five years?
- How do we do this?

The answers to these questions are reflected in the key results. We made a decision concerning the timeframe of the strategic planning document, and decided that we continue with the same mission, vision and values for the Seminary.

In September 2020, the strategic planning document of the Seminary was under discussion by the representatives of the owner of the school, the Board of Elders of the Union of FEB Churches of Estonia. Many members of the Board submitted their proposals in writing after the meeting. After that we used the input to formulate the key results with indicators and enablers. This draft table was then discussed and amended by the Executive Board of the Union of FEB Churches, and after that, by the leadership team of the Seminary. We also added the explanations.

Next, we opened the strategic planning document for suggestions from all the students and the teachers of the Seminary. Using the feedback from them we were able to amend and specify the strategic planning document even more.

*In December 2020 (Dec 1, 2020) the strategic planning document was passed by the Board of Trustees of the Seminary, and it was authorized by the Board of Elders of the Union of FEB Churches of Estonia (Dec 8, 2020). The strategic planning document went into operation from January 1, 2021.*

## **No 2. How did we implement the former strategic planning document?**

Not all the key results were equally quantifiable, although most of them showed a change for the positive. The results that we deemed unsatisfactory we either reformulated for the new planning document or left them out.

<i>The key results from 2016 to 2020</i>	<i>The situation by the autumn of 2020</i>
The annual admission to applied higher education is 15 to 18 students	12 to 15 students, admission in 2020 is 20 students
At least 70 seminary students	65 students
8 to 10 students graduate annually	Years differ, but 4 to 6 students graduate on average.
The number of students from other churches increases	There are more students from Pentecostal and other Free Evangelical Churches, including attendees of the adult education courses (they include members of Methodist and Lutheran churches).
Adult education courses are attended by 400 people annually	The annual figures are as follows: In 2020 – 416 attendees (we are yet in the middle of the year) In 2019 – 677 attendees In 2018 – 495 attendees In 2017 – 456 attendees In 2016 – 486 attendees

The feedback from participants at adult education courses is positive	This is so, both in the case of longer and shorter courses.
The graduates of applied higher education and participants of adult education courses are more involved in the local churches and are supported by mentors.	It has been difficult to evaluate the growth of involvement in the ministry of local churches. Of the 25 graduates of applied higher education (from 2016 to 2020) 14 are working as pastors or assistant pastors, most of the other graduates are members in local church boards. The graduates of 2019 and 2020 work together with a mentor for one year.
All seminary staff members and students are actively involved in their local churches.	There are a few exceptions among the students. All seminary teachers who are responsible for certain subjects are involved in local church ministry.
In addition, from time to time they are helping other churches (in the Union as well as outside) with on site courses, visiting and at different areas of church ministry. The members of the seminary staff together are expected to make 25 such visits annually.	There are much more visits done. Every spring, during the Seminary Sunday, we visit 13 to 15 churches. The rector alone visits ab 10 churches annually. The lead teachers also visit churches during the year.
Once or twice a year there are conferences that promote and clarify the theology of Union churches, with a possibility to attend on-line.	We organize two conferences a year, with a possibility to attend on-line, and with a video-on-demand availability.
The teachers of the seminary, taken collectively, publish at least two books and /or articles in international journals.	Based on ERIS (Estonian Research Information System): In 2020 - 3 articles -2 by TP, 1 by HL In 2019 – 6 different articles and/or books (the book by PR, articles by TP, EP and TL) In 2018 – 2 articles by TP In 2017 – 5 different articles and/or books (articles by PR, TL and TP and the book on mentoring).
3 to 4 articles in theology are published in Estonian.	There are articles in almost every issue of the “Teekäija” magazine, written by seminary teachers or students. The diploma thesis of every graduate is summarized in an article in the magazine. 2 to 4 new articles in a year are available at the reading material section at the home page of the seminary.
In every year we publish a digital Bible Study material for use by the churches, and if possible, also in a print version.	The Minor Prophets in 2018, The Letter to Philippians in 2019, The Book of Jonah in 2019, Joshua in 2020, The Acts of the Apostles (completed in 2013) was lately added to the home page, The Bible Guide (from 2019 to ...) is continually being supplemented, with an aim to also be formatted as a mobile application.

Video lectures for independent work are used in at least half of the subjects.	In nine different subjects (i.e., 15%) there are video lectures available. Recently study videos for mentoring were completed.
Some courses (minimum 4) are web-based (up to 15 students in a year).	There are 2 fully web-based courses: “God, Creation and the Church” and “The Letter to the Philippians”.
Teaching methods are flexible and varied.	Some adult education courses are web-based. Teaching methods are varied, but there has not been a proper analysis of them. Feedback from the students is collected for every subject they take.
On the initiative of the regional leaders, there are functioning mentoring groups and courses in the four regional centres.	Three regional mentoring groups are active in Tallinn, Pärnu and Tartu.

### **No 3. What kind of changes are necessary during the new planning period and why?**

The mission of the Seminary is to be and work ‘for the good and growth of the local churches.’ Therefore, most of the goals of the Seminary are in keeping with the strategic purposes of the Union, the owner of the Seminary, and its local churches. The Seminary is a subdivision of the Union, and it helps to achieve jointly set purposes and jointly cast vision.

#### **The Board of Elders of the Union and the Board of Trustees named the following main needs:**

- The equipping and training of people for the ministry, support for the generational continuity and spiritual strength of those who are in the ministry, higher reputation of pastors;
- The need for experts in broad theological themes, who participate in theological discussion and reflection, who help to clarify the meaning of older and newer practices with an aim to explain, preserve and develop the integrated identity of the Union;
- The need to emphasize the priesthood of all believers, which results in church members being able to reflect on the meaning of their faith more deeply and being able to share it with other people;
- Greater clarity in missions and evangelism and more intense activity in this area, including church planting;
- To contribute to the society through participation in discussion, through practical projects, adult education courses and expert opinions, expressing one’s views on burning issues and timeless truths and cooperating with other organizations;
- Cooperation with media organizations (TV7, The Family Radio, Radio7, and others) that contributes to achieving aims of the media strategy of the Union.

#### **The leadership team of the Seminary expressed the following goals concerning the Seminary, the local churches, and the Union:**

- To find and maintain the dynamic balance between the Word and the Spirit;
- To find ways to see the power of the gospel active in new and effective ways;
- To understand that every believer has a spiritual responsibility;
- To break through the information barrier. We are not known in the society, and therefore our message is not trusted;

- That the leaders will be as well-versed in Biblical knowledge and as skilful in leadership and in discipleship as those whom they are leading;
- That we do not waste God's gifts to His people because of past experiences or foreign spirituality imported to us. Instead, through team-based leadership we should create an environment that brings forth creativity, depth, and the life-changing love of God;
- To achieve greater coherence between generations, so that young people would willingly embrace our identity and assume responsibility in different areas of local church ministry.