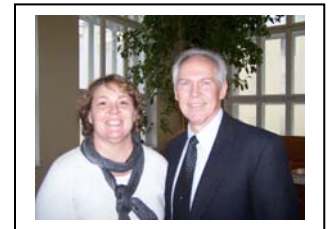




Latvia Mission Trip



On October 22 Susan and I had the opportunity to go to Riga, Latvia to work with the congregation in an evangelistic preaching and teaching campaign. This was my ninth trip to Latvia and Susan's first. Michael and Susie Wyatt from Texas also were in Riga at the same time to work also. God blessed us with safe arrival and return.

We were met at the airport by the preacher, Victor Barviks, who is a Latvian-American from California. Victor's parents escaped from Latvia in the 1940's during one of the Russian invasions and ended up in California where he was born.



Although some years have now passed since the fall of Communism, the country and the Christians in Riga face their struggles. The economy there is actually worse than here, and brethren are faced with trying to support themselves on as little as \$600 a month, and probably some of the widow and widowers far less. Their expenses for food are equivalent to what we buy in the United States, along with other things we saw (I saw a woman's sweater for \$60 slb). So they are under severe economic stress at this time. For us personally, the dollar was worth the least that it had ever been on any trip to Latvia. We received on an average of 46 Santiums per dollar and in the past had generally received up to 60. So the costs for us personally were up about 25% from just a couple of years ago.

The church in Latvia struggles because of the total absence of any form of religion or acknowledgement of the existence of God. We can not even grasp the effects of this upon their culture and society. Young people, adults, families and elderly living without the concept of God in their minds and suffering the present and eternal consequences. We as Christians are concerned about our culture, and rightly so, but what we need to realize most people in the United States believe that the Bible is the Word of God, believe in God and Jesus and so for the most part the existence of God is not a major hurdle with people, but in Latvia it is.



The theme for the Bible study series was through the book of Philippians entitled "The Calm in the Storm." The lessons were designed for Christians as well as those were not. Attendance at Bible studies averaged about 20 with visitors being present at every worship and session with the exception of one time. One of most exciting things was to see those who had been baptized on the last trip (2007) and previous trips inviting their friends and neighbors to the Bible studies. Susan had the opportunity to teach the ladies' Bible study which they appreciated very much. There are two or three of the sisters in Christ who spoke English so this allowed Susan to spend time with them.



Ladies' Bible class

During the past years we have had some of our lessons translated into Latvian and some into Russian, but do to the death of Maksim Yousin in 2008, Gunars did all of the translation into Latvian. If Russian was needed then some of the members sat by Russian speakers and quietly translated in that manner.



The city of Riga was very much like NYC. A metropolitan capital with the same modes of transportation, etc. Our primary means of getting from place to place was by walking which meant putting in about 5 to 8 miles per day. It also meant returning with clothing that fit a little bit better.

The Bible studies were held in the same place as they had been in the past and that was in the third floor auditorium of the Riga Night School. The school is ideally located in the central part of Riga near the central market, bus and train stations. Some of our time during the days was spent going to the parks to distribute the invitations to the Bible studies and talk with the people.



In addition to seeking the lost we were able to encourage the saved by spending time with them in their apartments, their coming to our apartment, or just being out and about with them. There is only one congregation of the church of Christ in Latvia and so they long for the opportunity to be with us and talk about things that are important to them.



Antra, Katrina, Susan



Vija, Rolands, Susan, Wayne



Vija, Ana, Valentiana, Sveta

Katrina (pictured above) was a baby the first time that I went to Latvia in 1997 and one of my first pictures of her is in a stroller on the cold and windy beach of the Baltic Sea.

Through the years Rolands has battled cancer, but he is doing well as he and Vija are now retired and struggle economically.

Although the Christians in Latvia speak a different language and have different customs and culture they are just like us. They respect the Bible as the Word of God and want to do His will. They care about one another and their families. They have to work to make a living and trust in God every day. Thank you for your interest in the Lord's work in Latvia as well as the prayers offered and financial support given. They need for someone to go and help them and encourage them every year, but it may not be until 2011 that we can return. We are thankful to God that we had the opportunity to be there this year.

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