

Friends of Latvia *News!*

Friends of Latvia in Covenant Relationship since 1991

To advance to every resident of Latvia the joyful witness of Jesus Christ as the risen Savior...

Volume 9 | Issue 2

November 2017

Notes From the Chair

Greetings my friends! I hope your summer and early fall have been a blessed and productive time. It is hard to believe how fast this year is flying by! The holidays are just around the corner too, which is even harder to believe! It seems like we were just in Alabama for the 2017 FOL meeting and women's Emmaus Walk! What a truly wonderful week that was! Camp Sumatanga is a very special and holy place. I thoroughly enjoyed my time there, and I hope you did too.

I know many of your congregations had mission teams in Latvia this spring and summer. Some were in Cesis, in Riga, in Liepaja and Wesley Camp. It is always a special time to be with our extended family in Latvia, to be in mission and service together, and to deepen our relationships with each other and with our heavenly Father.

Our team from First Grapevine was in Latvia from June 24 to July 3. We had a mix of Latvian veterans and first timers in our group. It was an amazing week of mission, fellowship, discovery and worship. Our first timers took a tour across Latvia and visited our major mission initiatives (Hope Center, After School Program, Wesley Camp) and nearly all of the Latvian congregations. The veterans helped with painting the foyer of 1st Riga church (our covenant church) and assisted in preparing crafts and other items for Wesley Camp. We also visited and participated in new mission opportunities in the town of Ropazu (1st Riga has a relationship with them) and also the Latvian Blind Institute and the Latvian School for the Blind. These were very rewarding experiences and a big blessing to us all. Our Grapevine and other local Texas folks were also blessed by a short (too short!) visit by Gita Mednis and Gita Binane in September, as part of their U.S. visit to supporting congregations. I know all of us enjoyed and cherished our time with them!



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**Friends of Latvia
Annual Gathering
April 13-15, 2018
Maryville, TN**

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Earlier I mentioned our church and others visited and worked at Wesley Camp this summer. In this issue, Chris Greene, chair of the Wesley Camp Advisory Board, shares some of the exciting things happening at Wesley Camp, particularly with regard to the cabin construction! We also have a report from the Wesley Camp Board on the current operations and activities happening at the camp.

I wanted to give you a quick financial update on the three main areas of focus for FOL we discussed at the FOL meeting this spring: Wesley Camp, Hope Center, and Pastors Income and Salary. As you recall we focused on increasing monthly, recurring commitments from all of our connectional churches and those with a love for Latvia. YTD September 30, 2017 giving data through the GBGM Advance showed the following:

Area	# of Recurring Commitments	YTD \$ Total
Pastors Income and Salary	7	\$10,725
Hope Center	7	\$12,900
Wesley Camp	9	\$7,500

The # of recurring commitments may not be totally accurate, but I think there are more than for the same period a year earlier, which is a good thing! Please continue to spread the word in your congregations, small groups, etc. about the great things going on in UMC in Latvia and invite them to be a part of our mission!

Finally, you may have seen the earlier Save The Dates e-mail for the 2018 FOL meeting! It will be held April 13-15 at the Fairview UMC in Maryville, TN. For those coming from out of town, it will be a Thursday PM (April 12) arrival with full conference days on Friday and Saturday and a worship service and departure on Sunday (April 15). Watch for more details in future e-mail updates and newsletters.

May God continue to bless you and yours during the upcoming holiday season!

Blessings,



Mark Croft, Chair
 markcroft@hotmail.com
 FUMC Grapevine, TX

Partners Needed!

Edgars Šneiders let us know that we are still in need of partner churches for the following congregations/ministries:

- ◆ Matras Congregation
- ◆ Liepa Russian Congregation
- ◆ Liepa After School Program

If you know of a congregation that is interested in partnering with Latvia, please let them know of these opportunities! Contact the LAMB District Office at metodistu.birojs@gmail.com or Edgars at esneiders@inbox.lv for more information.

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Standing Committees

Wesley Camp

Chris Greene – Chair, Richard Payne, Lawton Higgs, Antra Griffith, Kay Davis, Joe Acker

Hope Center

Steve Pullins-Chair, Jim Nance, Holt Cason, Dana McCarty, Kristine Rozefelde, Gita Mednis, Wayne Richards

Pastor's Income

Randy Tolleson, Mark & Julie Croft, Chuck Gildrie, Edgars Šneiders, Janis Grunte, Jim Hayes

Greetings From the Co-Chair

Chuck Gildrie

On July 21, Ziggis married Signe Ruginas at Second Methodist Church Riga. In Latvia, the tradition Ziggis and Signe followed means that there is a three-day celebration. Though the wedding occurred in the afternoon, they were not officially married until midnight after passing over 7 "bridges." He had to carry her over a bridge, they put a lock on a bridge signifying their commitment to each other, they had to pop balloons that were stretched over a road together signifying team work, the guests had to commit to certain promises to show their support, the couple wrote their pasts on a ceramic jug which was broken, and others. It was fascinating to watch as they entered married life surrounded by family and friends who agreed to be their support system. There was a feast later with drinking, dancing and skits. All slept at this venue, and then the married couple made breakfast for all. More partying followed.

After the wedding, not having slept for 40 hours and having drunk more alcohol than I have in 40 years, I went to a church conference in Ireland to see if the Faithful Men should go there to add our support to their effort. What I found was a Methodist church in Dublin, Dundrum some of whose members became excited about joining our efforts to support the Latvian Churches. Their pastor had worked at a church who did support a Latvian church for about 5 years but he could not remember which one. They also wanted to be "twinning" church with Fairview as a couple had come to us about three years ago to put on a marriage enhancement program. I called Janis Grunte to alert him of the possible interest, gave him the information and encouraged him to get in touch with them to partner with Matras.



Giving to the Advance

Your gifts make a huge difference! Below are the Advance numbers related to giving to Latvia, along with last year's total given and 2017 Year-to-Date giving (according to the Advance tracking feature on the GBGM website at www.umcmmission.org/gift-tracking). To give online through the Advance, go to... www.umcmmission.org/advance

Hope Center

Project Number: 3020447
Goal: \$21,000.00
2017 YTD: \$13,501.87

Latvia In Mission Together

Project Number: 00235A
Goal: \$33,711.30
2017 YTD: \$23,034.25

Pastors' Income Fund

Advance project: 14706A
Goal: \$28,000.00
2017 YTD: \$11,210.00

Wesley Camp

Project Number: 15160N
Goal: \$10,825.00
2017 YTD: \$8,050.00

Giving Tuesday November 28

Global Ministries *does not* have matching funds for Giving Tuesday, but we still encourage you to use this day to promote awareness and giving to Latvia through the Advance!



Pastor Income Update

Randy Tolleson, Pastor Income Chair

You've Met the Pastors and Felt Their Loving Impact

When one of the pastors from Latvia shares an update or faith story, their emotion tends to appear as gratitude to have been chosen to serve. Their matter of fact observations of helping people in such dire circumstances are just the cards dealt and it's simply seen as their duty - as the hands and feet of Christ - to step up and help. Time and again I'm honored to be with these Latvian pastors and to hear of their deep faith and complete reliance on God's faithfulness. You've heard the stories and none of us doubt the positive impact of their good news and of their service.

Be sure to step up and support this good work with planned giving through the Pastor's Salary Advance. Any amount helps them help people in serious need.

You may [click here](#) to access a collection of video and handout resources (via Google Drive) to share the story of these pastors in your church and in your community. ♦



Bringing the Emmaus Walk to Latvia

Wannell Scott

After a wonderful FOL meeting early in 2017, our female Pastors from Latvia and some others experienced the Emmaus Walk. It was an amazing experience for our Latvian friends and for the pilgrims from the U.S. as well.

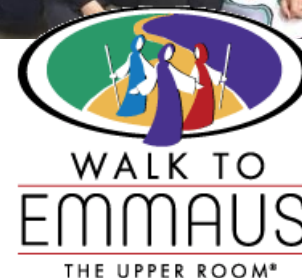
On Tuesday, October 24, I met in Nashville with Rev. Stephane Brooks, International Director of Emmaus, and Peter Richardson Europe Regional Leader for Emmaus and Chrysalis. We talked at length and came up with a plan to make Emmaus a reality in Latvia.

First thing we need is more Laity to experience the Walk to Emmaus. If you are part of an Emmaus Community and would like to see Emmaus brought to Latvia, we could use your help. We need to sponsor laity to experience the Emmaus Walk and to work a walk as well. These two things are essential to bring the Walk to Latvia. I am asking each of the United Methodist Churches in Latvia to identify at least one person in their congregation to attend a Walk to Emmaus. We find that we can send some to Ireland and possibly bring some to the U.S. These will be pastors and laity that can experience the Walk for the first time or to work a walk behind the scenes and in the conference room.

How can you help? If you have attended a Walk you can be a sponsor. This would entail not only being a sponsor with the normal duties, but also helping with the expenses. We would like to ask the Sister Churches to help with these expenses as well.

We feel this is one way we can help the churches to spread the gospel in Latvia. The purpose of the Emmaus Walk is to equip the laity of the churches to spread the gospel.

Please be in prayer for this and if you have questions please email Wannell at dirce@fumcflorence.org. ♦



Wesley Camp News

Wesley Camp is Growing!

Chris Greene, Camp Wesley Chair

2017 showed some encouraging growth at Wesley Camp and we are excited about what the future holds!

During the Annual Friends of Latvia meeting earlier this Spring, we voted to rearrange the Wesley Camp Board to be entirely lead by our Latvian leaders. This allows those closest to the camp and those who understand their culture best to make the proper Holy Spirit lead decisions for camp. In addition, we then formed an Advisory Board to Camp Wesley, made up of both Latvians and Americans who can support the effort and decisions made by the Wesley Camp Board.

The advisory board stepped into action in early Spring and started several campaigns to increase funds needed for camp improvement. As of today, the advance fund for camp has increased to over \$300 monthly giving. In addition, out of great generosity, an anonymous couple started a giving frenzy when they issued a match giving challenge of \$13,000 for the construction of the first cabin at camp. That challenge raised \$24,800 which pays for the first cabin and gives us a good start for the second. The first cabin is nearly complete. As Richard Payne said, it's actually hard to call it a cabin, it is built more like a house and is impressive in design and functionality. See pictures below in Anita's camp report.

So why is this important? Anita has done a great job giving us a look inside the life of camp this year in her report below. Lives are being changed and that is what we are looking for! Thank you Anita, Gunta and Edgars, plus anyone else who had a hand in reporting the good news of Camp Wesley 2017!

Thank you FOL for your support! ♦



Wesley Camp Scholarships



Wesley Camp needs us to be more vigilant about fundraising to continue to support this ministry.

If churches could together raise enough scholarship funds for

200 campers at \$100 each...

...that would be enough to pay for both the camper expenses and for the expense of keeping the camp open.

Give your scholarship donations through

www.umcmmission.org/advance

Project Number: 15160N

Notes from the Camp Director

Anita Ercuma



Thank you all for amazing first year serving together with you all in this God's blessed place. Each day I felt how amazing is God and how huge the works He can do. On each step each day me and my family feel His spirit and guidance.

God has borne much fruit this summer in Wesley Camp and we are thankful and joyful for His Holy Spirit's guidance and work.

Young girl took part in staff team as unbeliever, just because she wanted to help with good works for children and youth. During the camps she were there, she got to know Christians and God first time in her life and during one of the camps there was opportunity to receive Christ as God who has died and risen for her. It has changed her life totally, she has first love, passionate love for Christ. She is part of Liepaja congregation and is part of the new starting worship band as voice. We are joyful and pray that she would become disciple of Christ.

One of staff boys who also took part first time in staff team was very silent and also distanced from everyone. But already in the first week Holy Spirit opened him and he became part of the serving team. He has also a little disability, he is not able to read but one of the experienced staff persons took to mentoring him and when there was time for Bible reading for a day, then she was reading to him and discussing it. It has given great joy to all of us, and it proves again and again how mighty is our God and that He works in this holy place that we call Wesley camp.



In Evangelization camp there was one boy from dysfunctional family who just before camp came out of crisis center. Pastor who sent him was worried whether he would behave well and if he would be welcomed by others. He was a sweet boy with a broken heart and needed love. He said to his pastor that summer camp was the best experience he has ever experienced. It is again a sign of God's presence and His work.

This summer with Holy Spirit's guidance we experienced one united team where staff, shepherds and leaders were there to support and encourage each other. Each evening when the kids sleeping we came together to worship God with songs and one from staff together with one from shepherds group shared a message. It united us in spirit and lifted us up even when the energy was not there anymore. Only in God we can be reunited and renewed.



Apple festival was September 16, it happens each year on 3rd Saturday of September. We spent good time together in fellowship with each other and friends from Denmark. There were no apples this year so we spent more time in bible study and activities. Even there were no apples, we still were able to find enough to bake an apple pie.

From practical things in camp we finally got security system installed. Very big thanks to Danish conference for support on this project. It was almost the last step to get insurance for Wesley camp buildings and inventory.

Special thanks to Chris Greene and Richard Payne and each person who helped with prayers and funds to get our first cabin built. It's really amazing to see how God does His job and even such big projects are not impossible to Him. Building will be done this fall, we plan to have around 20 sleeping places there.



Liepajas church got their project done and new volleyball field is almost built. Thanks to Ronald and Carol Charette for volleyball net.

One of our biggest prayers this year is roof for Holsten home. It has a leak and it is not fixable. Fixing it would cost around 5000eur.



The bus we use to pick up people and to get all the equipment to camp, has a technical passport which ends in November and we are not sure that we will get it fixed anymore. ♦

Working at Camp Wesley

Michael Barr, Volunteer

I built a new picnic table and bench based on the same measurements of the old, using extra wood the camp had. Marcus helped me with the cuts, and other teens used the sander to smooth out the bench. The table is heavy and sturdy, built to last. We made good progress clearing overgrowth. Atis Baumanis worked with a landscape architect to come up with a plan. We dug out a couple tons of dirt (literally!) and unearthed a dozen large boulders. (I suppose these rocks were original wall supports inside the outbuilding.) We added a layer of sand, a permeable barrier to keep weeds from growing, more sand on top, and then rented a bore. We drilled 50 cm holes spaced perfectly 1 meter apart. Folded left over tar paper to create a cone inside, mixed and added concrete. A threaded pole is in each, to which the new foundation will attach, next year. ♦



Connect

Don't forget to be in communication with our friends in Latvia...
to nurture and grow your relationships!



Cēsis

Pastor: Kristīne Rozefelde | kristine.rozefelde@gmail.com

LAMB Cēsu draudze

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Jelgava

Pastor: Jānis Baumanis | janis@galileja.lv

LAMB Jelgavas draudze

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Kuldīga

Pastor: Zinta Dzintara | zinta_dz@inbox.lv

LAMB Kuldīgas draudze

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Liepa

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LAMB Sarkaņu draudze

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Bishop of the Nordic and Baltic Area: Christian Alsted

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Connect Online

The Friends of Latvia website contains contact information for each of the churches in Latvia, the latest news, upcoming mission trip dates and events and links to Advance giving. If you have information you'd like to share on the website, please email it to FOL Secretary, Julie Croft, at secretary.fol@gmail.com.



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