

FRIENDS OF LATVIA

Volume 2; Issue 4

December 2010

FRIENDS OF LATVIA IN COVENANT RELATIONSHIP SINCE 1991

WE AGREE TO ADVANCE TO EVERY RESIDENT OF LATVIA, THE JOYFUL WITNESS OF JESUS CHRIST AS THE RISEN SAVIOR.

FOR YOUR CALENDAR

2011

FRIENDS OF LATVIA
CONFERENCE

HOSTED BY

FIRST
UNITED METHODIST
CHURCH
MARYVILLE, TENNESSEE

APRIL 29-30, 2011

Friends of Latvia 2009-2011 Officers

Chair:

Jim Hayes

jrhayes46@bellsouth.net

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rstolleson@att.net

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djnance@sbcglobal.net

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In Mission Together: Developing Leaders

The Maryville District in Tennessee has enjoyed an In Mission Together Partnership with the 13 Latvian congregations since 2008. The focus of our partnership is leadership development. In October 2009 we held a pastor training event at Straupe. This October we held pastor and laity training, holding two two-day sessions, one at Riga First and one at Liepaja. Both trainings were well attended with participants from every congregation. Classes were held on church administration, sermon preparation, Wesleyan means of grace, small group ministries, prayer ministries, visioning, and empowering the laity. It was truly a blessing to learn and share together and of course, to experience wonderful Latvian hospitality.

Our commitment for 2011 is to host a training event for the Latvian pastors in the bounds of the Maryville District. The Friends of Latvia gathering is scheduled for April 29-30 at First UMC in Maryville. We have scheduled the pastors' training school for May 1-6 at Camp Wesley Woods in Townsend, Tennessee. Our goal is to expose the pastors to leaders who are unable to make the trip to Latvia and to expose the pastors to the congregations and ministries of the Maryville District. We have intentionally scheduled the pastors' school so that the pastors can come in time to be present at the Friends of Latvia gathering.

We are currently fundraising to cover the cost of bringing the pastors here for the FOL and pastors' school. We would like

to invite partnering congregations to join us in this effort as we trust that all of us will be strengthened by the broader representation of Latvian pastors at the FOL event. We also want to encourage partnering congregations to take advantage of this opportunity to have the pastors either come earlier or stay longer so that they may visit in the partner congregation while they are in the US. We are currently determining which pastors will be able to attend.

The focus of our partnership is leadership development.

As this list is finalized we will be happy to coordinate with partnering congregations to share in expenses and to finalize travel arrangements. Any contributions toward the travel costs for the pastors can be sent to *(continued on page 3)*



People were encouraged to share and pray in groups for one another during the Latvia Annual Conference in August.



Our newspapers today are filled with such a negative view of humanity; read them and you will believe that the world is a depressing place to live.

In my home community and church, however, we care about each other. When someone is sick or hurting, we come to them with expressions of concern and love. When someone has a joyous occasion in their life, we celebrate with them. We create a small oasis of love amid a world consumed with materialism, hate and self-centeredness. This is what Christians do as we love God and love our neighbors.

When we think of Latvia, we can dwell on the negative aspects of the economy or of life in their society. But instead when we visit our Christian friends in Latvia we are filled with optimism and experience their expressions of love and faith. It doesn't take long for us to feel their enthusiasm for God and the future. This is why so many of us love the people of Latvia; when we are with them they are filled with anticipation for the possibilities of the future; we feel God's presence and are blessed. Praise be to God.

The 2011 Friends of Latvia Gathering is finally coming into focus. A site for the event has been selected: The First United Methodist Church, Maryville, Tennessee has agreed to host the event. The church is located just minutes from the Knoxville Tyson McGee Airport. This will be our first Gathering without Lithuania and we wish them well as they hold a separate gathering of Friends of Lithuania in 2011. In 2011 the Friends of Latvia is working with the Maryville District of the Holston Conference as they bring Latvian pastors for leadership development training in conjunction with our Friends of Latvia Gathering. The Maryville District has a partnership with the Latvia District and have requested that Methodist churches who have a supporting congregation in Latvia help to bring their pastors to the US to attend the Friends of Latvia Gathering and to attend the Leadership Development Training. Please discuss this in your churches and help bring your pastors to the US for the April 29-30, 2011 Friends of Latvia Gathering.

May God continue to bless us and our churches as we seek to support the growth of the United Methodist Church in Latvia.

Jim Hayes, Chair
jrhayes46@bellsouth.net

Invitation to Share Your Thoughts

Building on the success of the 2009 and 2010 Gatherings, I would like to suggest some topics for the 2011 Friends of Latvia Gathering. Devotions are an important part of the event and should be led by both Latvian and US pastors.

Regular topics for discussion could include:

- * The Hope Center
- * Wesley Camp
- * Update: Connecting Congregation
- * Update: Pastors Salary
- * Nominations and Election of FOL Officers
- * Fund Raising Idea Sharing
- * VIM teams in Latvia
- * Skype - using it to communicate
- * Ways to improve the FOL news
- * Reports from --
 - Gita Mednis
 - GBGM (Rev. Patrick Friday,
 - Dr. Bill Quick
 - Dr. Ullas Tankler)
 - World Evangelism (Rev. John Campbell).

Please e-mail Jim Hayes at jrhayes46@bellsouth.net with your thoughts as we seek to organize a relevant and successful 2011 Friends of Latvia Gathering.

Jim Hayes, Chair
jrhayes46@bellsouth.net

First UMC Maryville Hosts 2011 Friends of Latvia



As Smithfield UMC in North Richland Hills TX plans the June 2011 Cesis trip, the foundation is laid:

- * This work is for God's glory. We are merely blessed to serve. This is the basis for our every meditation and for every conversation with those people curious about the work.
- * Pray unceasingly and have faith that the Spirit will guide and protect you. He won't give you more than He can handle.
- * We are wealthy beyond the imagination of most people we will see in Latvia. Our new friends there may be well-dressed (often in borrowed clothes) but they are spiritually pure. They will teach us volumes.
- * The work we do is important but the love in the eyes of our new friends is far more important. As God's work is done, we will see it in their eyes and we will be delayed in the plans we have made. Those are the times we are on God's agenda.

- * When we are forced to change our plans, God gives us an opportunity to handle the change in a loving way.
- * We will be closely observed as we prepare for our journey and while we are in country. We will be blessed to witness miracles, and people may well witness you as a miracle.
- * Our journey will begin and will be over very soon. Keep a journal. Our witness and stories upon our return is as important as our work while in Latvia.



Randy Tolleson
rstolleson@att.net

SOUTHWEST DISTRICT OF NORTH ALABAMA TO PROVIDE VITAMINS

Dr. Bill Brunson, DS of the Southwest District of the North Alabama Conference announced in the District Fall newsletter that the District would undertake to raise the funds to continue providing vitamins to the Latvian Methodist Church for the winter of 2010-2011. This district started the vitamin program in 2006 and provided vitamins for approximately 350 senior adults. In 2007, the Fairview UMC in Maryville, TN provided the vitamins along with a massive amount sent to South America. In 2008, at the suggestion of our friends in Latvia, funds were sent to Latvia so that those who received the vitamins could easily read the contents of the containers. A family from the Southwest District in Alabama provided the funds to do this. In 2009, the Hannah UMC in the Southwest district raised funds with a special Christmas offering to provide the vitamins with the stipulation that children in the village of Sarkani be included in the distribution.

The inspiration for this project came from Rev. Gita Mednis, who in the summer of 2005 first shared with VIM team members from Alabama that the elderly were especially vulnerable to sickness during the harsh winter months in Latvia. She noted that often the diet of the elderly was reduced to potatoes in the late months of the winter. The economic condition in Latvia has suffered a severe set-back due to the worldwide recession and this has hit the elderly especially hard. The children of Sarkani were included because of the severe economic

condition of their homes and village. The village offers "housing of last resort" to families who are on the bottom rung because of unemployment and/or addiction.

Dr. Brunson has asked that each church in the district receive a special offering for this purpose. The goal set for this offering is \$7,000. It is hoped that this will be an ongoing effort on the part of the district.

Joe Acker
jdacker@centurytel.net

(In Mission Together, continued from page 1)

**Maryville District
P.O. Box 905
Alcoa, TN 37701**

Make the check payable to the Maryville District and marked for Latvia. We estimate that the total cost will be approximately \$2,000 per pastor attending.

We thank you for joining us in this opportunity to share together in worship, fellowship, planning, and learning.

Carol E. Wilson
Maryville District Superintendent
carolwilson@holston.org

It is such a blessing to receive e-mail from different ones associate with the Friends of Latvia. Peek over my shoulder to see what has arrived in my inbox

Dear Dana,

I am Gunta Grina- the local pastor of the United Methodist Church in Kuldiga. My congregation ladies made different kind of knitting. Through Kristine Vainovska they were brought to your church and many of your congregation members bought them.

In the name of all my congregation I want to express deep, deep thank you for buying them and in that way helping with fund raising in our congregation.

May God bless you and every member of your church.

With pleasure
Gunta Grina



Averiee Osmundson models a pink hat knitted by the Kuldiga ladies. Kristine is showing Angie Osmundson a picture of the knitters.

I received this correspondence after sending the e-mail reminder about the next newsletter. It was followed quickly by the following e-mail. It made me smile!

Cjav man mīļā.
Vai pārtulkosi?
Daudz mīļas bučīņas.
j.

I am sorry.
Please forgive, this e-mail was sent to the other e-mail for translation.
Janis.

Dear Dana,

I want to thank you for sending a copy of the Sept. Friends of Latvia newsletter to me. I'm sorry I have taken so long to thank you. I have been asked to try to find out how to become a connecting church with a church in Latvia. What is the procedure, paper work and money needed to do this? Could it be done with another church? Would you happen to have this information? I believe your church is connecting with Riga 1.

I went back to Latvia in August this year. Mostly I wanted to see how the churches and the Hope Center are doing and to attend the annual Church Conference. I spent most nights at Riga 1 but I got to spend three nights at Straupe where eleven of us from Williamsburg U.M.C. worked in Aug. 2006. I wanted to see all that had been done since we were there.

In Aug. 2009 I was there and helped Holt's group work on the sanctuary at the Liepa Hope Center so I got to see how great it looked during this years conference. Also Joe Acker took me to see Camp Wesley which I hadn't seen before. I attended a church service at the new church at Cesis. The best was seeing friends from before and getting to know others.

Thanks again Dana.

Blessings, Charlie Clark

Refer to page 9 to see how Charlie Clark helped his congregation get involved.

Thank you to Ullas Tankler for providing pictures from the August Latvia Annual Conference.

If you're on Facebook, check out these photos of the Faithful Men 2010 Mission Trip.
www.facebook.com/pages/Friends-of-Latvia/76939152110#!/album.php?aid=313296&id=827899831&fbid=10150095807319832

MATTHEW 35:40

'TRULY I TELL YOU,

WHATEVER YOU DID

FOR ONE OF THE LEAST OF THESE BROTHERS

AND SISTERS OF MINE, YOU DID FOR ME."

WESLEY CAMP PREPARES FOR SUMMER 2011

It is bitter cold in Latvia now and it appears that this will be an especially tough winter. Wesley Camp has been winterized and with the exception of some week-end retreat type activities will remain quiet until spring. However, plans are under way for an active summer. A final schedule for each summer camp has not been released, but Wesley Days, a week of camp preparations open to all ages, has been scheduled. Wesley Days will begin June 27 and end on July 3. Last summer during Wesley Days the camp was cleaned up, the grass cut, a new roof was put on the pump house, and a drying shed was built.

During the 2011 summer we expect a good amount of work will be done. There are two particular projects which need to be completed 1) a drop-in ceiling needs to be installed in the dining hall and 2) we want to build the first platform on which campers can erect their tents. This last project is especially needed during rainy weather. In the past many projects were accomplished by using local contractors. Funds for such constructions projects are now virtually exhausted so we are going to need VIM teams who can raise money for the projects they plan to do. We are working to get an estimate as to how much each of these projects will cost. The camp director, Romans Budnika, is at sea currently but he will secure this information when he returns in late winter.

Anyone who is interested in being a part of a VIM team to Wesley Camp for a week to ten days should contact Joe Acker by e-mail at jdacker@centurytel.net.



Wesley Camp version of a pick-up.



Dear Friends,

It has been a very exciting and event filled 2010. We have begun a new church year. We have embarked on our Advent journey with our eyes raised to that miraculous event of God Almighty entering into our history, our lives as a fragile, helpless babe born into poverty and danger. It is a time of reflection, renewal, discovery and recognition.

We light 4 Advent candles and symbolically name them hope, peace, joy and love. Attributes which Christ brings into the world and into our lives.

Hope – We have hope in Christ for He has promised us a new life of freedom. We have hope in our God for He has promised to be with us always. These dark, economically challenging days are survivable because we have hope in our Lord who is faithful and who will provide. We have hope for our church and for a spiritual awakening in our homeland because of your loving hearts and support to keep open our doors and ministry. We have hope for the young mothers in the Hope Center and for their babies. A hope that comes directly from your support without which there would be no Hope Center and no possibility for a new beginning for these young mothers.

Peace – We have peace in our hearts because God dwells in us. We have peace in our hearts because we serve a God that promises us eternal life with Him. We have peace in our hearts because we are the beloved Children of God, worthy in His eyes, loved by God Almighty. If He is on our side what do we have to fear? We have peace in our hearts because you are in our lives and we do not walk this faith journey alone.

Joy - We have joy in our hearts because God has given us such abundance! We have joy in our hearts because the Holy Spirit refreshes our souls and helps us to see all the wonders of God's creation and love. We have joy in our hearts because we are His. We have joy in our hearts because you are part of our family. Each one of you, unique in your own way, allowing us to glimpse the love of Christ, allowing us to better understand and experience the joy of belonging to a much larger and very special community whose focus is not on its own issues but rather on Jesus and His Mission.

Love - We are loved! We are loved by God Almighty! We are loved so much that God gave up all His power, might and majesty to become human. He lived a life filled with many of the things we experience. He lived with temptations, pain, hunger, poverty, hard physical work, longing, hurt, tears, joys, friendship, popularity and ridicule and finally betrayal. All this to show and convince us of His love. You have made agape love real for us. We can truly say our hearts are filled with love for you – individually and as groups.

THANK YOU DEAR FRIENDS AND HAVE A BLESSED CHRISTMAS

GITA AND ALL OF YOUR FRIENDS IN LAMB

UPDATE ON CESIS CHURCH BUILDING FUND

The building fund for the Cesis church is now is approximately 60% collected. The initial purchase amount and the remaining two annual payments were sent to the district office in Riga. The annual payments were sent in advance of the due date in order for the funds to be converted from US dollars into Latvian Lats. This was done as a hedge against the falling value of the US dollar. The amount needed for these two payments was \$11,000.

None of the loan amount of \$35,000 has been repaid but the balance of the fund being held by the treasurer's office of the North Alabama Conference is approximately \$10,000. This leaves a balance needed to be raised of \$25,000.



CESIS BUILDING FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Purchase price for building: 33,000 Ls (25,000 at closing and 3 payments totaling 8,000 Ls) At the current rate of exchange this would equate approx. \$66,000.

Remaining to be paid: 2 payments of 2,666.66 Ls (at current exchange rate approx. 5,333.33 each or a total of \$10,666.66)

Received to date:

<u>FROM</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
Farmingdale UMC	\$10,000
Individuals	\$10,000
Individuals	\$10,000
Individuals	\$ 1,000
Individuals	\$ 500
Martin UMC Genesis SS class TX	\$ 800
Smithfield UMC TX	\$ 2,257
FUMC Carrollton, GA	\$ 250
Meadowbrook UMC TX	\$ 420
Individuals	\$ 100
Individuals	\$ 200
TOTAL	\$35,527

The current balance in the account is \$10,712.00. The last activity in the account was a small gift on September 1, and the transmittal to Latvia for the advance on the payments due in 2011 & 2012.

Consider giving 1 or 2 less gifts this year and instead pledging support for the Cesis Building Fund, giving a one time gift to the Hope Center, committing to provide for Kristine Vainovska or sending a love offering to the Pastor of your Connecting Congregation. Guaranteed to make you feel good all over!

Friends of Latvia to make disciples of Jesus Christ

Gift Transmittal

Please complete below and enclose with your gift for the Cesis Building Fund.

To:
Scott Sellman, Treasurer
North Alabama Conference UMC
898 Arkadelphia Rd.
Birmingham AL 35204

CHECK YOUR PREFERRED METHOD TO GIVE:

- Single gift amount
- 3-Year Pledge amount
(reminders will be sent)

Make checks payable to:

North AL Conference of UMC
(IMPORTANT)
FOR: CESIS LATVIA INITIATIVE

Your church name and address

Your name and address
 (receipt mailed to your address)

SALARY SUPPORT FOR KRISTINE VAINOVSKA

As reported in the Summer FOL newsletter “there is no more funding for Kristine’s job. She received her final pay for August. Most of you know how valuable Kristine has been to the church. For the last 3 years, Fairview UMC and the Faithful Men’s choir has been providing for her salary.”

“God has called Kristine to the ministry. She is ready to answer the call and hopes to begin her studies in January via the internet. She also wants to continue to serve the church. Kristine at present is working as Youth Co-ordinator and VIM team coordinator and wants to continue this alongside her studies. If any church has the where-with-all to help fund her salary, we would be able to continue to be blessed by her ministry and gifts.”

SALARY SUPPORT UPDATE

Kristine will be serving LAMB as the Youth co-ordinator. She will do a fantastic job and be able to better use her gifts in Christian Theatre that she has been looking forward to starting.

There are pledges for monthly donations totaling \$600.00. We are looking for approximately another \$400.00 in monthly commitments.

Contact: Chuck Gildrie gildriec@gmail.com for more information or send your support to

Samaritan Hands
c/o Fairview United Methodist Church
2508 Old Niles Ferry Road
Maryville, TN 37803

In the memo section put Kristine’s name.

Thank you!

LATVIA ANNUAL CONFERENCE AUGUST 2010



Praise groups leading the singing at the conference.



Northern Europe and Baltics' Episcopal Area Bishop Christian Alsted and Latvia DS Gita Mednis.

Latvia United Methodist Churches
and their Connecting Congregations

LATVIA UMC	SISTER CONGREGATION	CITY, STATE	CONTACT PERSON
Cesis	Sweetwater UMC	Sweetwater, TN	Rev. Carl Oaks, pastor
Cesis	Smithfield UMC	N. Richland Hills, TX	Randy Tolleson
Jelgava	Middlebrook Pike UMC	Knoxville, TN	
Kuldīga	Norris UMC	Norris, TN	Jim Hayes
Kuldīga	Sinking Springs UMC	Clinton, TN	
Kuldīga	Wears Valley UMC	Wears Valley, TN	
Kuldīga	Maryville First UMC	Maryville, TN	
Liepāja	Metropolitan UMC	Detroit, MI	
Liepa's Latvian	First Tullahoma UMC	Tullahoma, TN	
Liepa's Russian	State Street UMC	Bowling Green, KY	
Mātrās	Joy SS Class	Hermitage, TN	
Paplaka	Canton UMC	Canton, GA	Danny & Vickie Lindsey
Riga 1st	Martin UMC	Bedford, TX	Ross & Mary Carnes
Riga 2nd	Fairview UMC	Maryville, TN	
Riga Russian	Williamsburg UMC	Williamsburg, VA	has donated support for 2011
Sarkaņi	First UMC	Trussville, AL	
Tāši	Lakeland District	Enniskillen, Northern Ireland	

Please send name/e-mail for contact person to Dana Nance djnance@sbcglobal.net.



Bishop Alsted (left) and DS Gita Mednis (right) have congratulated the graduates of theological studies (from left to right: Ansis Paukshis (Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary in Tallinn, Estonia), Vivita Barenite and Gunta Grina (University of Latvia, theological faculty in Riga)).



It's been an interesting year for our family. I began the year dealing with depression like I've never known before, but GOD, in His faithfulness walked me through to the other side.

This summer Jim and I were privileged to help my 47 year old brother (who was diagnosed with Glioblastoma in August 2009) transition from independent living in Houston, to our home in Bedford for 6 weeks then back to Enid, Oklahoma for 6 weeks before, Jesus called him home on Tuesday, September 28.

A week ago on Monday, December 6, our first grandchild was welcomed into our hearts and our lives. Hannah Elizabeth Nance weighed 7 lb. 2 oz. and is 20.5 inches long.

Throughout this year, God has proved Himself to be my faithful provider and for that I give Him praise.

Recently I was sent an e-mail with the subject line "What Christmas is REALLY about." It included a youtube video www.youtube.com/watch?v=W3Wllpq0wBU that you might enjoy. It reminded me once again that giving to those with REAL needs is how we bless and honor God. Blessings to all!



*Hannah Elizabeth Nance
Child of God*

Reminders

When you send pictures, please include the names of those in the picture, whether from your church group or one of the congregations in Latvia.

I would still like to make a "Friends of Latvia Photo Album"

Send a picture with your name, church, city/state, & connection in Latvia.

Thank you to all who submitted articles, reports, and information for this edition of the Friends of Latvia Newsletter.

The Winter Newsletter will be published in March.



Steve Elliott
Director of
Youth Ministries
Latham UMC
Huntsville, AL
Wesley Camp

Who's going to Latvia in 2011?

If you are leading a team to Latvia, please send an e-mail with the dates of your trip, where you are going, and your trip objectives.

June -- Smithfield UMC, N. Richland Hills TX

Ways to give.....

<http://new.gbgn-umc.org/advance/>

Camp Wesley

Project Number: 15160N

Hope Center

Project Number: 3020447

Latvia Mission Initiative

Project Number: 00235A

Pastors' Salary Fund

Advance project: 14706A

"the world is our parish."

-- John Wesley

Cookbook Fundraiser Anyone?

Is anyone interested in submitting recipes (from Latvia & the US) for a cookbook and then selling them to raise funds for Ministries in Latvia?

I am willing to take on the project if there are enough recipes to make a nice book and there are churches who are willing to sell them.

Please e-mail me at djnance@sbcglobal.net if you are interested in participating

"In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity." -- John Wesley