

# FRIENDS OF LATVIA

Volume 3; Issue 1

June 2011

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.

## Eight Latvian Pastors Visit United States

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

**Page 2**

Chair Chat  
New Officers

**Page 3**

Latvia in Mission

**Page 4**

Hope Center

**Page 5**

Wesley Camp Schedule

**Page 6**

Greetings from Gita

**Page 7**

Cesis Building Update

**Page 10**

The Last Page



Attending the Friends of Latvia Gathering in Maryville Tennessee were Latvia pastors:

Back row: Ilzite Ozola, pastor at Liepa Latvian and Sarkani congregations, Gita Mednis, pastor at Riga 1st and District Superintendent, Vera Titovica, pastor at Liepa Russian, Vivita Barenite, associate pastor at Kuldiga, Gunta Grina, pastor at Kuldiga and associate pastor in Liepaja.

Front row: Janis Grunte, pastor at Cesis, Ansis Paukse, pastor at Riga Russian, Edgars Sneider, pastor at Matras and Tasi.

### Friends of Latvia 2011-2013 Officers

**Chair:**

**Randy Tolleson**  
rstolleson@att.net

**Co-Chair:**

**Pam Eisert**  
PSeisert@yahoo.com

**Secretary:**

**Dana Nance**  
djnance@sbcglobal.net

**Treasurer:**

**Jim Hayes**  
jrhayes46@bellsouth.net

## Thank you, Maryville UMC!

Thank you to Rev. Brenda Carroll, First UMC, Maryville and all who helped her in hosting the 2011 Friends of Latvia Gathering.



## Face Time

Because Jesus stressed the importance of our relationships with God and with each other, it's pretty certain that face time with our brothers and sisters in Christ is important. That's why, in addition to the time we spend together, new technologies that multiply this face time can offer us efficient ways to plan our work and to grow in faith together despite distances. For the technophobes, here are the straight facts on these technologies.

Synchronous communications require people to meet at the same time. Examples are live conversations, telephone calls, conference calls, instant messaging (IM). Skype is a free service on the internet that enables free synchronous voice communications and, with a webcam, video phone calls. (Smile!!) People who use Skype a lot like to use inexpensive headsets with a microphone. Download Skype at [Skype.com](http://Skype.com). The discussion on the Skype website about payment options is if you want to call someone's regular phone using skype. If you call via internet Skype to Skype then it's free.

Asynchronous communication is when people meet but not at the same time. Examples are voicemail, websites, weblogs (AKA blogs). With asynchronous communications you post

information and others read it later and they might even post a response. This allows posting of reference materials or photos for future retrieval. Facebook uses this method and it has become a tool for communicating and planning.

You can visit Friends of Latvia on Facebook and sign up at:  
<http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=500800081#!/pages/Friends-of-Latvia/76939152110>

This is proving to be a powerful tool for spreading the Word. When you log on go ahead and post some of your Latvia photos and catch up on what's happening.

If Paul were alive today, he'd be all over this internet making disciples of Jesus Christ.

Randy Tolleson  
[rstolleson@att.net](mailto:rstolleson@att.net)



## 2011-2013 FRIENDS OF LATVIA OFFICERS & COMMITTEE CHAIRS ELECTED

The following have been elected to serve as Officers and Committee Chairs for the Friends of Latvia 2011-2013.

### OFFICERS:

Chair - Randy Tolleson  
Co-Chair - Pam Eisert  
Secretary - Dana Nance  
Treasurer - Jim Hayes

### COMMITTEE CHAIRS:

Communication - Dana Nance  
Discipleship - Susan Beck  
Hope Center - Jim Nance  
Pastor's Salary - Rev. Lisa Neslony  
Wesley Camp - Joe Acker

Please feel free to share you thoughts and ideas with these individuals as we serve together as Friends of Latvia.

The 2012 Gathering will be the last week-end in October. Pittsburg was suggested as one option.



Thank you Jim Hayes for serving as Friends of Latvia Chair for 2009-2011.

Dear friends and supporters of the Latvian ministry, the entire Latvia IMT team and the district would like to say thank you for your undying support. Without your commitment, your prayers, your resources and your participation it would have been impossible to accomplish the task of bringing the Latvian pastors to the Maryville District for pastor training. What an incredible opportunity it was for us and for them.

On Friday and Saturday, April 29-30, the pastors attended the Friends of Latvia at Maryville 1st UMC. Connecting congregations found it a blessing to have their pastor here in Maryville, some for the very first time, and it also allowed the pastors to visit local and connecting congregations.

On Sunday, May 1st, the pastors attended Sunday services throughout the district. The evening was spent having dinner provided by Alcoa 1st UMC followed by worship, testimony and celebration as many from the district attended. Each Latvian pastor also took the opportunity to speak about their congregation and how Christ has been revealed to them in their walk with him. After each pastor spoke, a Maryville district pastor would lead prayer for the Latvian pastor, their church and their ministries.

The week at Camp Wesley Woods was filled with training, case studies, worship, reflection, visits to local ministries, visits to our smaller churches, shopping and fellowship. We learned so much about the needs and challenges of our Latvian family; and they also learned that we have the same challenges. The main focus during training was to provide them with material and life examples of dealing with spiritual, social and economic issues within the life of the church and the people in their communities.

Latvia is not any different than here in America. The issues and challenges that we face with children, family, spouses, work, health, finances and our spiritual life here in America are just as difficult in Latvia. It would be impossible to put into words the partnership benefit that exists between the Maryville District and Latvia. But suffice it to say, the benefit is not one-sided. The partnership is about sharing the love of Christ in all things. It's about encouraging our brothers and sisters in Christ and giving each other hope. Now there is something that we can learn from our Latvian family.

I found myself reflecting on the story of our Latvian family and how hard it must have been through the occupation, but then I remember how full of encouragement that they are to us. They desired to move forward and not to dwell on the past, but use the past as a springboard to the future.

Most of you know one of our retiring pastors, Ken Abbott, and the wonderful spirit he has for sharing Christ. Ken came to lead one of the sessions and he brought such a spirit of hope and encouragement. The Latvian pastors were so encouraged by Ken's gift of both humor and love of Christ.

There are many, many stories I could share about the week. From Jeff Wadley and his river rocks and puzzle pieces to Jane Taylor and Christian conferencing but there aren't enough words and ink to do justice to the work that Christ has done in and for the pastors and for the team that lead this week.

Many thanks go out to the churches that hosted the pastors in their Sunday morning services. Many thanks go out to the churches and individuals that provided food, goodie bags, bed linens, towels, transportation, computers, financial assistance, prayers, time, teaching, worship, facilities and on and on. There is just so much to be thankful for and Maryville District, it is because of your generosity, your love and gifts and your love of Christ that we were able to host this week.

One gift that we were able to provide to the Latvian pastors was a trip to Cokesbury bookstore. As you can imagine, there are not a lot of resources available in Latvia to assist them in further education and study. Through your financial gifts, they were able to purchase resource material to take back with them and to share with their fellow pastors who could not make the trip. One resource that they lacked was a common lectionary volume of books called "Feasting on the Word". The set costs about \$400 and, as a gift, we were able to purchase a set for them to take back to the district. With Latvia about the size of Virginia, it would be difficult for 12 pastors to benefit from a single resource. On faith, we decided to purchase two sets so that the texts could be more accessible. If you or your congregation would like to assist in the purchase of the second set please send your donation to the Maryville District office and on the memo line put "Latvia - Feasting on the Word". We will be shipping these books along with other materials in the coming weeks.

We are so thankful for all you have done in the name of Christ to make this journey possible. We will continue to be active in our support of Latvia and the pastors in the future and we hope and pray that you will decide to become more involved as well. There will be a group coming from the Kuldiga congregation in June to the Maryville District, as well as groups to Latvia in the near future. If you are interested in joining a group to Latvia, please feel free to contact me at me at [allengarrett1651@gmail.com](mailto:allengarrett1651@gmail.com) or you may contact the Maryville District office (865) 982-1427 or email ([madist@holston.org](mailto:madist@holston.org)). The district office hours are: Monday-Thursday, 8:30 a.m. till 4:30 p.m. and Friday, 8:30 a.m. till noon.

Thank you again for your gifts and support for our Latvian family.

In Christ,

Allen Garrett  
Chair Maryville District Latvia Team

It is apparent from the report presented at the Friends of Latvia Gathering that prayer has been a powerful factor in the continued health and wellbeing of the ministry. As with all of the ministries ongoing in Latvia, the Hope Center needs financial support but most importantly, your undergirding in prayer is critical.

I will not attempt to repeat the presented report in this article but it is very important for you who have a heart for this ministry to read it in its entirety. (PLEASE NOTE: A link to the FOL Gathering Reports will be provided when a digital copy is received.) The young ladies are growing and developing outward hearts of mission as well as learning skills for life and family. It is so gratifying to witness.

Hearts for ministering to these young women reside all over the world and as Chair of the committee, I know I am not alone and I invite your sharing of experiences and your joining with me to support this effort with your prayers and your gifting. As a part of the quarterly FOL newsletter, I would like to include activities planned and carried out associated with the Hope Center for others to be encouraged and moved by God's Spirit to engage and participate. Will you join with me in this? Sometimes the need is daunting but small things can make a difference. As an example, my home church of Meadowbrook UMC (Fort Worth, TX) conducted a Bake-less Bake Sale to further offset the Cesis Building note

and plan other events in the next several months specifically targeting the Hope Center and its financial needs for the remainder of this year.

As with all things, it seems the needs are always great. How do I decide "what God wants me to do?" If you are reading this, then somehow, some way, God's Holy Spirit is speaking to you to become a part. As I share with my church congregation and others that I speak with, God has called each of us to a ministry. I don't know the one(s) He has called you to and you don't know the ones He has called me to. But I do know, He has called each of us to ministry and whether it is near to home or far away, His calling is certain. Follow His lead and if we cross paths in serving young ladies in Latvia, Praise the Lord!

If you desire to communicate directly, email me at [nancejl@sbcglobal.net](mailto:nancejl@sbcglobal.net) or you can connect through the secretary of FOL who just happens to live at my house. I look forward to the blessings that God will shower on you and the young ladies as we engage in this work together.

Paldias,  
Jim Nance  
Hope Center Chair  
[nancejl@sbcglobal.net](mailto:nancejl@sbcglobal.net)



### God Calls Young Women to Ministry in Latvia

An Interview by Üllas Tankler

Vivita Barenite, 24, and Gunta Grina, 23, are pastors of a United Methodist congregation in Kuldīga, Latvia—a town of approximately 20,000 citizens. Read the full interview here:

(highlight, copy and paste)

[http://gbgm-umc.org/global\\_news/full\\_article.cfm?articleid=5985](http://gbgm-umc.org/global_news/full_article.cfm?articleid=5985)

Current plans call for a small team to travel to Wesley Camp for Wesley Days. We hope to arrive in Latvia on June 22 and to depart on July 4. Christ Harbor UMC in Northport, AL has agreed to provide the funds to build a tent platform at Wesley Camp. We also expect to help in preparing the grounds for the summer camps.

### 2011 Wesley Camp Schedule

Wesley Days - June 27-July 3

Shepherd's training - July 8 - 10

Children's Camp July 11 - 16

Youth Camp July 18 - 23

Europe Youth Council July 31- August 6

Wesley Camp Board of Directors meeting  
at Wesley Camp August 24

Latvia Annual Conference at Wesley Camp  
August 25-28

Possible Laity Camp - July 25 - 29  
(dates may vary)

Please be in prayer for the leadership teams  
of each event and for the events themselves.



Rev. Brenda Carroll  
First United Methodist Church, Maryville



Rev. Carol Wilson  
Maryville District Superintendent



Rev. Josh Kilbourne  
Middlepike UMC



Patrick Friday  
Director of In Mission Together



Maryville Men



Dear Friends,

It was so wonderful to be with you again! This was truly a special time. We were 8 from Latvia!! I was so happy that my fellow pastors had this wonderful opportunity to meet with you.

The meeting was nestled between the tornadoes that devastated so many lives and the flooding of the Mississippi. We continue to hold those who suffered and the

many churches groups reaching out to them in our prayers.

This was the first time in many years that our gathering was focused just on Latvia and the ministries there. It was wonderful that many of our connecting congregations had sent representatives and they could meet with the pastor of their connecting church.

In the months to come, I plan to share with you the implementation of some of the ideas which arose during our meeting.

I want to thank Jim Hayes and the prior board for all of their hard work, commitment and prayers and welcome the new board. We missed Joe and Linda Acker at our meeting this year as well as several friends who had faithfully attended prior meetings but were unable to be with us.

It was wonderful to experience the energy and enthusiasm of the group and the eagerness to serve.

I wish to share a few comments from our pastors upon their return from the US.

### ***One wrote the following:***

Because of our background, deep in my mind there was a fear and distrust of America. When I met Americans in Latvia, I saw how secure and open they were and my distrust and fear of them completely disappeared. But, how about the

rest?? I would often think how it would be to live in the US – would I feel so secure and safe?

Now my thinking has changed 180 degrees! I experienced a wonderful country and wonderful people.

I saw many beautiful things – the mountains, the many churches in each town. I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to experience the beauty of the country and its people.

I was very moved at the love and welcome I received. This led me to think how I could be more open, more welcoming, more friendly and more loving to others.

In Latvia, we often leave planning to the last minute. I saw how organized and how far ahead all of the planning had been done. This leaves time to do more thoughtful things. I have decided to try and practice this.

May God bless our dear brothers and sisters in Christ who gave their time, finances, God given wisdom and overflowing love to us.

Another shared and echoed all of our sentiments. "I gained so many very important new ideas and practical applications of the ideas! I have returned with my spirit renewed, rejuvenated, inspired anew to help our congregations grow in faith. Thank you!"

Dear friends, what you gave us was a priceless gift! Thank you. May God watch over you and your families during these relaxed months of summer.

We look forward to seeing many of you here with us! Those not coming this summer, we look forward to your visit next year.

Gita  
GitaMednis@aol.com

## Greetings from Kristine

## Kristine Vainovska

Dear Friends,

Allow me to share pictures and send greetings from Riga 2nd congregation! We as a congregation celebrated Maundy Thursday with Passover and then of course Easter Sunday! Christ was dead, Christ is risen and Christ will come again! We took some family pictures! We love you all and miss you very much! Our great news is that the Sunday school is growing and we have started to work with children's parents! Keep our ministry in prayers as we do the same with you! Blessings and hugs from Riga 2nd!

Kristine Vainovska  
kristine.vainovska@gmail.com



## CESIS BUILDING FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Conference headquarters is snowed under at present. It is serving as the disaster center for tornado relief and the process is overwhelming to say the least. In addition, Annual Conference is June 2-3.

The status of the account as of 5/30/2011.

The initial loan was for	\$35,000.00
Balance 5/15/2011	\$16,066.00
Payment 5/26/2011	\$15,000.00
Balance in account	
5/30/2011	\$ 1,066.00
Balance on loan	\$20,000.00
Amount needed	\$18,934.00

A report on the funds sent after the FOL meeting will be given after Annual Conference.

Thank you for your support in helping to repay the loan.



Randy Tolleson, Cesis Pastor Janis Grunte, Randy Lawson and Pastor Lisa Neslony (Smithfield UMC, TX) at the Friends of Latvia Gathering in Maryville TN.



### 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

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Your name and address  
*(receipt mailed to your address)*

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In a joint meeting with the Latvian and Russian speaking congregation pastors, Ilzite Ozola and Vera Titovica from Liepa, Latvia, we discussed their congregations, current needs, vision for the future, and how supporting churches could help.

Both pastors were very appreciative of having a new sanctuary in Liepa and felt that it would help increase attendance

and membership at the church.

Pastor Ozola reported on her ministry at Sarkani, an extremely poor, government housing sector in Liepa. It is felt that the alcoholic rate at Sarkani is 100% for men and 90% for women. These people, especially the children, need help. Pastor Ozola is receiving financial support from the Trussville, AL church presently and feels that the money is sufficient for the ministry at Sarkani at this time. However, if the money decreases or disappears, she will not be able to supply food for these families. (See supplemental information in Section 14 of the LAMB Reports 2010-2011).

Pastor Ozola asked for support for training youth of the community by funding them for youth camp. This past summer, money was raised to send a number of youth from Liepa to JOSIAHVENTURE ([www.josiahventure.com](http://www.josiahventure.com)) camp for a week. The report from the camp stated that 17 youth accepted Christ during the week. A number of youth from Liepa are now meeting weekly at the church in Liepa for Bible studies and fellowship. Recently, Josiahventure was given 6 acres of land in Latvia to expand their operation and to hopefully build

a permanent youth camp facility in the future. (See supplemental information in Section 16 of the LAMB Reports 2010-2011)

Pastor Titovica reported on the After-school program that she conducts in Liepa. She stated that daily attendance is 12-14 children. The children play games, do their homework and hear a Bible story. The children are given hot soup and a jelly sandwich before going home. Pastor Titovica said that there are no needs at this time and that she has been able to support this ministry from donations, and hopes that the financial contributions will continue. She plans to continue this project in the future. (See supplemental information in Section 7 of the LAMB Reports 2010-2011).

Pastor Titovica talked briefly about the Russian congregation at the church in Liepa. She hopes to increase attendance and involvement by developing and improving the work of Sunday school, develop a youth ministry program, and seek ways to get more people involved in church activities. Her current needs for the church are a projector, computer, screen and especially musical instruments of any kind. She feels that with music instruments, more youth will become involved in church activities and may result in the development of a praise band/worship type service. (See supplemental information in Section 5 of the LAMB Reports 2010-2011).

It appears that both pastors, Ozola and Titovica, are doing a great job with the church as well as outreach ministries. It is our hope, as a support committee, to continue to help the Liepa church and community with our prayers and financial support.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Holt Cason



Kristine and friends

- Used, Broken or Unwanted Gold Jewelry
- Cell Phones
- Ink Jet Printer Cartridges
- Laptop & Netbook Computers
- iPads & Tablets
- Apple iPods & MP3 Players
- Digital Cameras
- Digital SLR Cameras and Lenses
- Digital Video Cameras
- GPS Devices
- Radar Detectors
- Kindle & Sony Book Readers
- Handheld Game Systems
- Game Consoles (Wii, PS3, Xbox) and Video Games
- Range Finders and SkyCaddies
- Mobile Hotspots, 4G USB Air Cards and MiFi Devices
- Graphing Calculators



Latvia United Methodist Churches  
and their Connecting Congregations

LATVIA UMC	SISTER CONGREGATION	CITY, STATE	CONTACT PERSON
Cesis	Sweetwater UMC	Sweetwater, TN	Randy Lawson
Cesis	Smithfield UMC	N. Richland Hills, TX	Randy Tolleson
Jelgava	Middlebrook Pike UMC	Knoxville, TN	Susan Beck
Kuldīga	Norris UMC	Norris, TN	Jim Hayes
Kuldīga	Sinking Springs UMC	Clinton, TN	
Kuldīga	Wears Valley UMC	Wears Valley, TN	Cindy Miller
Kuldīga	Maryville First UMC	Maryville, TN	Suzanne Stratton
Liepāja	Metropolitan UMC	Detroit, MI	
Liepa's Latvian	First Tullahoma UMC	Tullahoma, TN	Holt Cason
Liepa's Russian	State Street UMC	Bowling Green, KY	Pam Eisert
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	Chuck Gildrie
Riga Russian	Williamsburg UMC	Williamsburg, VA	Charlie & Pat Clark
Sarkaņi	First UMC	Trussville, AL	Les Riddle
Tāši	Lakeland District	Enniskillen, Northern Ireland	

If you are not the contact person, please send name/e-mail for the person who is to:  
Dana Nance [djnance@sbcglobal.net](mailto:djnance@sbcglobal.net).

Green School Recycling Fundraiser

Here is an e-mail Gita received in her inbox recently. I've not looked into it yet, but maybe someone would like to do that and report back for the next newsletter.

Dear Fundraising Planner:

Looking for a great way to raise thousands of dollars for your school, church or club and help protect the environment? With EcoPhones' Recycling Fundraiser for Consumer Electronics & Metal Jewelry there's no limit to how much you can earn. There's nothing to buy and nothing to sell. Simply ask parents, neighbors, co-workers and local businesses to donate and recycle their used consumer electronics and any unwanted, tangled or broken metal jewelry.

We pay the highest dollar amount for used jewelry and up to \$500.00 per used consumer electronics item. Recycling Fundraiser also accepts the widest variety of used consumer electronics (listed on page 8) which means even more opportunities for your organization to raise much needed funds!

Earn cash for every item guaranteed! We even pay for damaged, non-working and non-listed models. In addition,

Recycling Fundraiser provides FREE customizable marketing materials and free shipping from anywhere in the U.S. including Alaska. There's no cost and no obligation - get started today. For more information, you may register online at:

<http://www.GreenSchoolRecyclingFundraiser.org>  
or call (888) 326-7466.

Register online and receive our complimentary 'Quick Start' Materials and download and customize your own promotional materials right from our website including a guide to running a successful recycling fundraiser, posters, price lists, pre-paid shipping labels and everything else you'll need to get started.

Regards,  
Jennifer Parra  
Fundraising Associate  
Recycling Fundraiser™  
Toll Free (888) 326-7466  
[Jennifer@GreenSchoolRecyclingFundraiser.org](mailto:Jennifer@GreenSchoolRecyclingFundraiser.org)  
2828 Anode Lane, Dallas, Texas 75220



Maybe it's because I'm a grandmother now, but I have witnessed the passing of the mantle in several situations this last month.

First it was at the Friends of Latvia gathering., when several of our "seasoned saints" were not able to attend. What a joy to see the young pastors stepping up to take part in leadership and prayer. I saw it again when we celebrated Jim's parents 60th wedding anniversary last month. I "let" my niece take pictures which is a role I would have played in the past. And then several days later I attended a luncheon for my former Bible Study Fellowship Teaching Leader as she steps aside and we watch as another godly young woman begins a new chapter in her life..

Maybe you are starting to see it too. It is exciting to watch God call and equip the next generation to serve Him. We have the privilege of offering words of encouragement as we travel this journey together. We can quietly teach by example as we continue to deny ourselves and provide for others through the finances God has entrusted to us. The churches in Latvia want to make a difference in their communities just like we do – let's help them as they reach out to others.



*Mannah 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.

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

The Winter Newsletter didn't get published in March, but this is the Spring Newsletter.....ENJOY!

## When You Return Home

When you return from your time in Latvia, please provide us with a brief report of your trip including several pictures with names of participants. Send your follow-up report to: [djnance@sbcglobal.net](mailto:djnance@sbcglobal.net).

## Here's Who's Going to Latvia in 2011

June 7-13 - Jim & Dana Nance, Bedford TX to Riga 1st  
 June 9-14 – Smithfield UMC, N. Richland Hills TX to Cesis  
 June 22-July 4 - Joe Acker + 8 to Wesley Camp  
 July (end of) - Kristin Pierce, Omaha NE to Hope Center

### Ways to give.....

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

#### Hope Center

Project Number: 3020447

#### Latvia Mission Initiative

Project Number: 00235A

#### Pastors' Salary Fund

Advance project: 14706A

#### Wesley Camp

Project Number: 15160N

"the world is our parish."

-- John Wesley

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