

FRIENDS OF LATVIA

Volume 1; Issue 1

May 2009

FRIENDS OF LATVIA IN COVENANT RELATIONSHIP SINCE 1991

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

FOR YOUR CALENDAR

APRIL 23-24, 2010

FRIENDS OF LATVIA
MEETING
FIRST UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH
LANCASTER OH
AND
WORSHIP
SUNDAY, APRIL 26

Ways to give.....

[new.gb-gm-umc.org/
work/initiatives/latvia/](http://new.gb-gm-umc.org/work/initiatives/latvia/)

Hope Center

Project Number: 3020447

Latvia Mission Initiative

Project Number: 00235A

Pastors' Salary Fund

Advance project: 14706A

Youth Mission and Camping Support

Project Number: 14046A

Friends of Latvia 2009-2011 Officers

Chair: Jim Hayes
Co-Chair: Randy Tolleson
Secretary: Dana & Jim Nance
Treasurer: Julie Payne

Paldies, Fairview UMC!



2009 Latvia - Lithuania Mission Initiative Held in at Fairview UMC in Maryville, Tennessee

On Friday, Saturday & Sunday, April 24-26, 2009, Fairview United Methodist Church in Maryville, Tennessee hosted the Annual Latvia-Lithuania Missions Initiative Conference. United Methodist Church representatives from the General Board of Global Ministries in New York (Partner Churches) and the Board of Evangelism in Nashville (Connecting Congregations), were among the 70 persons from 17 states as well as Latvia, Lithuania, and Denmark who made up the members of the Consultation.

This was the 11th Latvia event and the 13th for Lithuania . . . counting the first meeting in a JFK Airport gathering in NYC at which time partners from West End in Nashville, (continued on page 4)

Thank you, Mary Quick, for always having a camera ready to capture the moment.



You are involved in the Friends of Latvia for a very special reason: God has placed the emerging Methodist Church in Latvia in your heart. And like most messages that God has given you, the opportunity to accept or reject His calling is always there. You did not ignore His message to you.

Marianne Williamson is a very insightful Christian author and I wish to give you a passage from ILLUMINATA that is part of Prayers for Work and Creativity. She writes,

“God doesn’t love anyone over anyone else. There is no atom in the universe more blessed than any other. No one has more potential for greatness than anyone else. The ultimate success of your career will not be determined by credentials, backing, or marketing techniques. It will be determined by your ability to access the spiritual gulf stream. Prayer makes that happen. Prayer is our way of signing up with the army of light and receiving its reinforcements on a regular basis. The light is a realm of consciousness rising up around us, altering the dominant mental paradigm of our age. Its function is to replace the energies of selfishness with compassion, and competition with service, that we might cast out fear through the power of love. We pray that our talents and intelligence serve a higher cause than the fulfillment of our self-centered goals. Thus we access the purification process, a recovery from past mistakes that aligns us with integrity and delivers us to excellence.

Our prayer is that our excellence might come forth and serve the world. That is power. That is success.”

I heartily agree with Marianne Williamson about prayer. God has called you and me to serve Him in Latvia and He has promised that He will equip us with everything we need. Through prayer we can “access the spiritual gulf stream” that we need to be successful.

How can you help? During our 2009 meeting of the Friends of Latvia at Fairview United Methodist Church we identified several priorities for our future direction. The highest priority we established is to increase pastor’s salaries in the Latvian Methodist Church. Danny Lindsey is the chair of this committee. Jim Nance has accepted the chair of the Hope Center Committee, and Joe Acker is the chair of the Wesley Camp committee. Please pray for Danny, Jim and Joe and be ready for their call for help.

An area dear to my heart is being a connecting congregation with a church in Latvia. A connecting congregation provides money for pastors salaries and congregation operations and an opportunity to build a personal relationship with the people of Latvia. Becoming a connecting congregation with a Latvian church both increases pastor’s salaries and broadens the base of support for the Latvian Methodist Church. I would encourage every current connecting congregation to share their story with United Methodist Churches in their area to encourage them to connect with a Latvian Congregation. In fact, there is no reason why they cannot join your church and form a partnership to support your current congregation in Latvia.

I am honored that you have asked me to serve as the chair of Friends of Latvia during the next two years. With your help and prayers we can make a difference.

Paldies,
Jim Hayes



Altar piece of children’s hands.

The 9th Annual Friends of Latvia consultation was hosted April 24th and 25th by Fairview UMC in Maryville, Tennessee in conjunction with the Friends of Lithuania. On Friday evening, both organizations joined the Friends of Estonia in worship at Sieverville UMC in the first-ever gathering of all three Baltic Friends organizations.

The meeting was hosted by Dr. Bill Quick and UMC General Board of Global Ministries and was facilitated by outgoing Friends of Latvia Chair, Randy Tolleson. Nine of the twelve connecting US congregations were represented. During the proceedings, action groups were established to devise immediate plans and funding solutions to Hope Center and Pastor Salary Support concerns stemming from the current economic difficulties.

Hope Center is a UMC-developed temporary home for pregnant young women who have no where to go and who may see abortion as their only option. The Hope Center offers these young women, often suffering from abuse, a chance to keep their baby and to reside in a safe, family environment based on Christian love. While at the Hope Center, these young women are given the chance to bond with their babies, are taught parenting and financial skills.

Earnie Breeding was honored for his loyal service to his friends in Latvia and to the UMC movement there. Earnie's efforts continue to have an impact even after losing his battle with cancer February 27, 2009.



During the meeting new officers were elected and by-laws adopted.

District Superintendent, Rev. Gita Mednis, provided updates from the Latvian congregations. Rev. Mednis confirmed reports that the UMC congregations in Latvia are gradually increasing offerings each Sunday and that self-sustained outreach programs are beginning to emerge. This is a powerful indicator that the darkness of the post-soviet era is lifting and the members of the UMC in Latvia are driven by an ever-deepening faith and concern for their fellow man.



Stick Presentation by Fish Sticks.



Rev. Kim Isley, Kristine Vainovska, and Rev. Bill Beard.



The Faithful Men led in Worship Saturday evening.

The Fairview Experience

Mary Quick

(Continued from page 1)

TN and Centenary in Winston-Salem, NC were present as the first representatives of Partner Churches.

Maryville 'pulled out all the stops'. Gary Fowler, Wesley Rouse and the mission team and other volunteers made it happen! We are deeply indebted for their leadership and guiding hand.

All who shared the FAIRVIEW EXPERIENCE will long remember these days together. This was the first such event where our Latvia-Lithuania group joined with the Friends of Estonia for an evening worship event at the UMC in Sevierville, TN where everyone heard a great sermon by Bishop James E. Swanson, Sr, of the Holston Conference. We also had the special honor of meeting the newly elected Bishop of the Northern Europe (Baltic and Nordic countries), Bishop Christian Alsted.



The Lord's Prayer prayed in five languages..... Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Russian, and English.



Dr. Bill Quick with Bishop Christian Alsted.



Bishop James E. Swanson, Sr, (Holston Conference).



Holt Cason and Joe Acker "On the way to the nursing home..."



Bill Quick with Carlton "Sam" Young

Dear Friends:

An added word of thanks.....

How grateful I am for your presence and participation in the Latvia-Lithuania Mission event at Maryville, TN.

Folks like you make it happen and this event was one of the truly remarkable gatherings of the past decade.

This was my 11th Latvia event: two years before we began to meet together, I attended two gatherings at Wm. C. Martin Church in Bedford, Texas.

The gathering was the 13th for Lithuania...counting the first meeting in a JFK Airport gathering in NYC at which time partners from West End in Nashville, TN and Centenary in Winston-Salem, NC were the first Partners present.

Maryville 'pulled out all the stops.' Gary Fowler, Wesley Rouse and the mission team and other volunteers made it happen! I am deeply indebted for their leadership and guiding hand. None of us who shared the FAIRVIEW

EXPERIENCE can ever forget our days together.

Just think: WE likewise shared the first opportunity to meet with the Friends of Estonia...AND...our new Bishop was present to share it all with us.

Please accept my personal thanks for your Prayers and may I request you continue to pray...not only for me, for Mary, for one another...but especially for the pastors, leaders and church families in Lithuania and Latvia.

We LOOK FORWARD TO BEING at.....
FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
IN LANCASTER, OHIO...

**FRIDAY-SATURDAY - APRIL 23-24, 2010
and Worship on SUNDAY, April 25.
Please calendar these dates now.**

God bless each of you.

Dr. William K. Quick



Sue and Gary Fowler



Patrick Friday and Bill Quick

Commentary

Friends of Estonia and Latvia meet in Maryville District

By Charles Harrison

(Published in "The Call" Holston Conference of the United Methodist Church)

On April 25, history was made in Sevierville, Tenn. The Friends of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania came together for a worship service. It was an evening filled with the power and presence of God. What we shared is that God is alive and well around the world and is still moving in The United Methodist Church everywhere. During the service we heard the Lord's Prayer prayed in Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, and Russian and English, all of the languages present at this worship service.

Bishop James Swanson preached from Acts 16:9-10. Bishop Swanson reminded us that we all need each other. No one can make it alone. All the people represented in that service need each other.

Friends, let's remember: "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit -- just as you were called to one hope when you were called --one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." (Ephesians 4:2-6)

We all agreed that night: Bishop Swanson is right. We do need each other.

The Rev. Harrison is senior pastor at First Sevierville UMC, Maryville District.



Rev. Gita Mednis



PICTURED ABOVE, left to right: Bishop Christian Alsted, Nordic and Baltic episcopal area; Rev. Eddie Fox, director of World Evangelism; Rev. Gita Mednis, Latvia superintendent; Rev. Taavi Hollman, Estonia superindendent; Bishop James Swanson, resident bishop of Holston Annual Conference; Rev. Charles Harrison, First Sevierville UMC.

Report Card

Progress in Latvia subject of Methodist Conference

By Melanie Tucker of The Daily Times Staff

Originally published at thedailytimes.com on April 25, 2009

Latvia: A North European Baltic country bordered by Estonia, Lithuania, Belarus and Russia.

Population: 2.2 million.

Number of Methodists: Growing every year.

That's great news to churches like Fairview United Methodist in Maryville, a member of the Maryville District of the Holtson Conference of the United Methodist Church. This church, led by Senior Pastor Dr. Jerry Russell, has a connection with the tiny republic that dates back to 1991, the year Latvia regained its independence from the Soviet Union and began the movement to reopen the Methodist Church there.

"I made a trip to Latvia in 1991 not long after the fall of the wall," Russell said. He met with a Lutheran pastor there interested in doing just that. "She was the matriarch of the reopening of the Methodist Church and the Methodist movement in Latvia," Russell explained.

That woman is the grandmother of Kristine Vainovska, a Latvian who is in town this week for the Friends of Latvia/Lithuania Conference that will include meetings at Fairview and a sermon Sunday by Bishop Christian Alsted, at 7:45 a.m., 9:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. Vainovska will share her story at an informal gathering from 3 to 5 p.m. Sunday. Also present will be Gita Mednis, the district superintendent from Latvia.

Vainovska was just 9 years old back in 1991 when Russell visited her grandmother. But this 26-year-old has kept ties with this local congregation and is forever grateful for the work being done in her native country by mission teams and others she has met here.

She actually came to Maryville as an 18-year-old and worked one summer at Fairview with the children's ministry. Two years later she came back to attend Hiwassee College in Madisonville and then went on to graduate with a degree in theater from Maryville College. She resides in Latvia and is the district superintendent's assistant for the United Methodist Church, based in the capital city of Riga.

Russell said it was Fairview's hope that Vainovska



**Kristine
Vainovska**

would take her summer experience here and become inspired and encouraged when she returned home to work in ministry there.

"It happened," Vainovska said. "I came away from that experience looking at children's ministry in a new way. "I saw how I could involve games, music and theater for more fun."

The Faithful Men, a singing ensemble at Fairview, adopted this ministry in Latvia years ago and visits every two years. The group is led by Wesley Rouse, minister of music.

Their visits have helped bring more men into the Methodist congregation, Vainovska said. She said in her country, more older people and women and children make up the majority of the church population. The Faithful Men came, gave their testimonies and shared their love of Christ. Those visits are important for growth, Vainovska said.

Ironically, as the Friends of Latvia/Lithuania meet this weekend, so too are the Friends of Estonia. First United Methodist in Sevierville is the primary location for this gathering. The Estonian District Superintendent, Taavi Holman, will be at Broadway United Methodist in Maryville on Sunday. Russell and Vainovska both said they have seen firsthand the steady growth

(continued on page 8)

Blessing from the Bishop

by Christian Alsted

Dear friends,

Thank you for your love and support of the ministry in Latvia and Lithuania. It was a great pleasure and encouragement to meet all of you in Maryville - I deeply appreciate your commitment to the United Methodist Church in the Baltic region. I especially want to thank the Fairview congregation and pastor Jerry Russell for being such wonderful host for the event.

May God bless your lives and ministries in every possible way

Christian Alsted



Bishop Christian Alsted
The United Methodist Church
The Nordic and Baltic Episcopal Area



Top photo: Gary Fowler & Dr. Bill Quick
Bottom photo: Julie Payne & Vickie Lindsey



(continued from page 7)

of the Methodist population in Latvia. Vainovska said they needed at least 10 congregations with at least 10 members in each in order to restart the movement after independence was regained.

“We now have 13 congregations,” she said. “Two of them are Russian speaking. The largest congregation has 250. Most have between 30 and 70 church members.”

Part of the purpose of the Friends of Latvia/Lithuania Conference is to provide a report to supporters on what has been accomplished in these two countries. Russell said it is an opportunity for others to step up and join the effort.

It has not been easy bringing up what was a congregation of less than 10 people, but there are those committed to the task. In hard economic times people sometimes become more focused on situations closer to home, but Russell said this is one project that hasn't suffered.

“In economic times like this, you cut out what you consider luxuries, but you do not cut what you consider necessities,” the pastor said. “The people going to Latvia feel like this is a necessity in terms of their spirituality. There are lots of exciting things going to happen over the summer. Lots of people are coming. It will be a busy time.”

Creative ways to raise money

- o Benefit Concert with local praise bands
- o Best of Latvian Cuisine Cookbook
- o Bring handmade items to sell at the next Latvia Consultation
- o Garage Sale
- o Make & sell bird houses
- o Note card from children's art work
- o Prayer
- o Purchase foreclosed properties: use for parsonage/ rental
- o Recorded music - sell CD's
- o Reward Programs at grocery stores/dry cleaners % of purchases can be used to fund a monthly amount.
- o Send acrylics & wools for UMW to make socks/ scarves to sell here
- o Valentine Day Dinner

Send fund raising ideas to djance@sbcglobal.net to be shared in future newsletters.

"We are not alone."

Bishop James Swanson, Sr.



Bill and Mary Quick with Jim Hayes

Currently planned trips to Latvia

- o Norris/Sinking Springs UMC - June 13-23, '09
- o Maryville District - June 25-July 3
- o Canton UMC – Paplaka
- o Fayette UMC – Hope Center
- o First Church Tullahoma – Liepa
- o Fairview UMC – 2nd Riga
- o Norris UMC – Kuldiga
- o Participating in Holston Conference VBS
- o North TX FOL Charter Members-Martin UMC Riga 1st
- o State St UMC – Liepa Russian
- o Tullahoma FUMC – VIM Teams
- o Trussville FUMC – Sarkani

Please assign one team member to e-mail follow up report to djance@sbcglobal.net within one month of returning from trip.



Receiving blankets made by The Piecemakers Quilting Group in Bedford, TX.....handed off in Tennessee.....making their way to the Hope Center in Latvia!

Ways to give.....

new.gbgm-umc.org/work/initiatives/latvia/

Hope Center
Project Number: 3020447

Pastors' Salary Fund
Advance project: 14706A

Latvia Mission Initiative
Project Number: 00235A

Youth Mission and Camping Support
Project Number: 14046A

North Texas Friends of Latvia

North Texas was honored to have Gita Mednis spend three days with us before attending the Latvia-Lithuania Consultation in Tennessee. She was able to visit with members of three United Methodist Churches as well as fellowship with friends at the first “unofficial meeting” of the North Texas Friends of Latvia as related by Dana McCarty.

“The first unofficial meeting of the North Texas Friends of Latvia met in North Richland Hills, in the home of Jack and Dana McCarty on Monday evening, April 20, 2009. Our honored guest was Rev. Gita Mednis, pastor of Riga 1st and District Superintendent of Latvia. Gita gave updates on the churches, Hope Center, many of our friends in Latvia and the general status of the country. It was a wonderful time of fellowship, renewing of friendships and eating too much dessert.

There was excitement in the air and a desire to make plans to form a more organized, structured group. Watch your inbox for information on how you can join us in helping our Latvian brothers and sisters in Christ.”

On Tuesday and Wednesday, Gita was able to plant Friends of Latvia seeds at White’s Chapel United Methodist Church in Southlake. Gita attended Bible study with Julie Payne and had a divine appointment with Marilyn Zemba for lunch.



Gita presents a prayer shawl to Robert Nimocks for his wife, Mimi. Mimi designed the paraments for the Riga 1st sanctuary.

On Tuesday evening, Gita was the guest of honor in the home of Ross and Mary Carnes, as she met with Rev. Bayard Pratt and members of the Riga 1st covenant church, Martin United Methodist.

Gita was invited to speak about the Hope Center at Meadowbrook United Methodist following the weekly Bistro meal. The following article was written by Diane Griffin, SPR Chair, for the Meadowbrook Messenger:

On Wednesday, April 22, Rev. Gita Mednis was a featured speaker following our Bistro meal in the Fellowship Hall. This delightful woman inspired us with stories of the Christian ministries of which she is a part in Latvia. She shared with us slides of the children and young women served by the Hope Center, and told us several stories of the ways lives were being touched and changed through the compassionate caring of people like you and me. I am always fascinated by how God introduces people into our lives who raise our awareness of the many ways our Christian brothers and sisters are serving Christ. I am comforted by (and grateful for) the positive impact the Methodist Church has not only here at home, but all around the world. Thanks be to God!

Our prayer is that the seeds that have been planted in the hearts of North Texas will continue to grow & multiply as we share all that we have with our Friends in Latvia.



Gita is presented with a prayer shawl from several of the women in the Prayer Shawl Ministry at Meadowbrook.

North Texas Pictures



On the left is Rebecca McCartney with Cynthia Lee on the right is Gita with Sara McCartney.



Gita with Theresa Booth, Director of Children & Youth and Jim Chandler, Sr. Pastor at Meadowbrook UMC.



Tim Dougherty, Larry Mick, Joyce Mick, Gita Mednis, Roxane Dougherty, Randy Tolleson, Ansley Dougherty, Rebecca McCartney, Dana McCartney, Jean Stackfleth, Sandy Gilliland, Ron Lee, Dana Nance. Seated is Dean Stackfleth. Kneeling: Julie Payne, Sara McCartney, Cynthia Lee, Jim Nance. Not pictured: Jack McCartney (photographer and Richard Payne



Dana McCartney, Gita Mednis, and Julie Payne



Richard Payne with Ron and Cynthia Lee



Joyce Mick, Sandy Gilliland, Gita Mednis



Larry Mick, Jack McCartney and Jim Nance



Roxane Dougherty, Julie Payne, and Gita Mednis.

Bulletin Board at Meadowbrook UMC featuring local missions and the Hope Center in Latvia.



The Last Page

Kristine Vainovska receives Citation of Merit



Hiwassee College has awarded the 2009 Citation of Merit to Kristine Vainovska, a 2005 alumnae of the college.

Born in Eastern Europe, Kristine Vainovska is a resident of Riga, the capitol of Latvia. Upon graduation from Hiwassee College, she continued her education at Maryville College.

Ms. Vainovska is currently assistant to The Reverend Gita Mednis, district superintendent for the United Methodists of Latvia. In this role, she has significant responsibility for youth and young adult ministries, giving key support to other developing United Methodist ministries in the region. She is also a member of the Committee on Resolutions and Public Relations of the United Methodist Northern Europe Central Conference.

Because of Kristine's commitment to Christ and furthering the United Methodist mission in Latvia and Northern Europe, Hiwassee College honored her with the 2009 Citation of Merit—the college's highest non-academic award. Noseworthy said, "Usually the Citation of Merit is presented to an individual with more years of experience. However, Kristine has made such a significant contribution to the ministry of the church in such a brief time."

Published in the Hiwassee College online Newsletter, May 2009 hiwasseecollege.org/ia/newsletter/090506/index.html

Several years ago, Jim and I went to Colorado Springs for a Focus over Fifty Summit at Focus on the Family. (Of course, I was barely old enough to attend!) We were encouraged to continue sharing our gifts and talents in this new season of our lives.



Dana Nance
newsletter editor

Having "grown up" in Bible Study Fellowship and being encouraged often to participate in missions, you would have thought I would have responded to the call easily.

With the nest now empty, I've asked myself and God, "Where would you have me serve? Is it as a Focus on the Family Rep, in the church office, once a month at Parc Place Retirement?" Even after I returned from my 1st ever mission trip - to Latvia - last summer, I was still asking "Why Latvia?"

A few days following the Latvia - Lithuania Consultation as I continued my devotional time with Beth Moore's "John - 90 days with the Beloved Disciple" God answered that question for me.

Jesus asked Peter/Dana, "Do you love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord, you know that I love you"
Feed my lambs" (teach your children (30 years as a mom) to love Jesus).

Again He asked, "Do you truly love me?"

"Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."
"Take care of my sheep" (17 years in BSF)

"Dana, do you love me? Feed my sheep, in Latvia."

I learned many years ago in BSF that I am not to ask, "What about him?" It is not for me to question how to convince others to give and go, it is my responsibility to be obedient to the call God has put on my heart and life.