

FRIENDS OF LATVIA

Volume 5; Issue 2

November 2013

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.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Page 2

Words from the Chair

Page 4

Board of Global
Ministries Volunteer

Page 5

Latvia Hymnal Update

Page 6

Greetings from Gita

Page 8

Kuldiga Partnership

Page 9

Vitamins

Page 10

57 Degrees
North Latitude

Page 12

Giving Tuesday

District Conference in Kuldiga, Latvia

John 15:16



The theme of the 2013 District Conference in Latvia was John 15:16. Bishop Christian Alsted taught on what it means to be rooted: grow up and grow deep.

The conference was held at a beautiful ecological farm, belonging to one of the church members, nearby Kuldiga.

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



Ways to give.....

<http://new.gbgbm-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

Did You See That?

One of my prayers is that each of us will continue to be amazed when God faithfully pulls together the “coincidences” He so often does on matters pertaining to Latvia. Whether it’s a welcoming rainbow as our team arrives at Straupe House in July after that long journey from Texas, or the UMC church organist surprised to see the tired Texans dealing with the refused entry into the boys prison as she popped out of the prison entrance; she had us inside in less than five minutes. Countless other perfectly-timed God sightings can be described by friends of Latvia reading these words. Those stories are offered with full understanding that the real miracles are in the Holy Spirit that leaps from the smiles of fellow Christians halfway around the world when they hear the words “Jesus” or “Christ” and their joyous eyes meet yours. Brothers and sisters since our rebirth in Christ can spot each other a mile away and nobody else can hug you like a Latvian can hug you.



In its simplest form, your witness is your description of what you have seen; what you have seen in Latvia can’t be hidden under a basket. You have seen important things that need to be shared with others. Most of those things are as simple as a glance or a smile. We are all ambassadors charged with generating interest in and support for the work in Latvia as they make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. It’s a wonderful charge and there’s good news to tell. Enjoy the stories in this newsletter, and get busy writing the one you hold in your heart.

Randy Tolleson
rstolleson@att.net
Smithfield UMC
N. Richland Hills TX



In and Around Cesis July 2013

Stick drama to music was very moving. Learn it on Youtube Same goes for Bible skits.



Prayer Circle with the Sinners Prayer after witness and devotional.

Deutsche und Amerikaner aus dem Wort!!

Did you know

. . .that the United Methodist Church in Germany has an evangelism bus and revival tent (seating up to 1000!) teams that travel throughout Europe in the summer. The Smithfield UMC team was blessed to meet up with them in Cesis for 3 days of street evangelism, crafts for the kids, and entertainment.



. . . that if you hand someone a free slice of pizza as they walk along the sidewalk they can't believe it?

...and that sets up the perfect conversation about salvation and how its free for the asking.



View Randy's video report on facebook.
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Friends-of-Latvia/76939152110>

My name is Clarence Harms and I served as an individual volunteer in Latvia for the District through the Board of Global Ministries for 4 months (April 15 through August 10, 2013). Gita Mednis asked me to write to you about my “experience and insights” while there.

There were basically 3 different phases of my work. They were: (1) Evaluate and make recommendations on building problems at all of the Methodist churches in Latvia. (2) Work on building improvement projects as funds for materials became available. (3) Work at Wesley Camp on maintenance and camp improvement projects that didn’t require funds for materials.

Kevin Hein from Minnesota worked with me during the first 2 months of the activities before returning home. His insight and ideas were especially valuable during the building problem evaluation phase. Kevin and I prepared a lengthy computer Excel spread sheet with accompanying photos as a report for that phase. I will not go into detail on the recommendations or the accompanying letter here. Copies were given to Gita Mednis, Kristine Vainovka Rozefelde, and Rihards Germans for their use. Contact them for their view of those recommendations. Special attention was given to self-sustainability of the congregations and District, especially regarding ongoing maintenance and heating costs. I will only mention that almost all of the buildings had problems regarding heating and keeping warm during the winter months. I know most of the sister congregations in the U.S.A. are from the southern part of the U.S.A. and heating issues may not seem serious. Kevin and I are from Minnesota and Wisconsin. Heating issues are serious in Latvia! I heard stories of coming to worship service on Sunday morning with heavy coats kept on and seeing their breath vaporize during that time. I believe them! Almost all of the buildings are of thick masonry wall construction which provides a huge heat sink that must be heated before the air can feel warm inside. It takes time and money to heat those walls. Most have little or no insulation but need it badly.

My talent is only in the area of Engineering, building, and construction, not directly in making disciples for God. However, I firmly believe that great and beautiful buildings should not be the focus of the Methodist congregations in Latvia as it seems to be for many denominations there when I visited their buildings. I believe God wants to be

among his people and not high and regal within some buildings constructed by human hands to show how great mankind is and what we can do for God. On the other hand, if we are to be successful in increasing the faith of members and bringing others to know the love of God through Christ, they must be fairly comfortable while in fellowship and while learning with us. That’s where our recommendations were directed.

Some sister congregations in the U.S.A. might be offended by our recommendations because they put a lot of volunteer time and money into some of the buildings or did not do things in their effort that we recommend. I’m sorry for that. We tried to look at the over-all picture and what is best for the District. My recommendation is that sister congregations be careful and consult with the District office, not only the Latvian pastor, when it comes to establishing and funding projects. It might be wise for two or more congregations in the U.S.A to be sisters of one congregation in Latvia.

Kevin and I worked with Rihards at Riga 1st to level and install new flooring in the 3rd floor Sunday School room and in the 2nd floor fellowship room. We also did some painting and remodeling of the walls in those rooms and in the hall. I have a lot of respect for Rihards and his knowledge and attention to detail on these kinds of projects. He seems to know well what needs to be done, where to get the materials, and how to do it. We did a few other small things there that I won’t mention here.

I also worked at the church in Kuldiga for a few days to help remodel a room shortly before I came home. They had received a grant from the Kuldiga municipality “Let’s Do it Ourselves” for the materials.

I would like to stress that funds for materials seems to be the biggest problem for the church buildings in general. I’m convinced that the congregations have talent that could get a lot of the work done by themselves if they had funds to buy the materials. U.S.A. teams working with the local talent is a good idea.

My time at Wesley Camp was especially rewarding to me in that I was able to meet and work with a lot of different people and learn the culture. Many of the people were even from other countries. I don’t know how many of the tasks I did were handled in the past but I know it

would be difficult for young inexperienced people or women to do many of the things I did. Just solving little maintenance problems like fixing locks on doors, putting a new battery in the tractor/mower, finding a better way to fix numerous broken stools, and killing a bunch of bees in the barn would not be easy for them. Of course, I did a lot of work on various improvement projects too. Many of the improvement projects were of my own choosing but I had a pretty good idea of what could be done without money to buy materials or pay for hauling.

The camp needs more permanent housing with some definite plans on how to do it. Wood storage and a plan for it is needed. Better parking for cars and busses and a plan for it is needed. Some thought should be given to extending the camping season by providing some heat in facilities. I got the feeling that the camp has no definite

plans or thoughts for the future. Yet, many said it has been a great place to interest youth and adults in knowing the love of God and finding ways for them to serve Him. The camp probably will never be self-sustaining but all of the congregations should help support it because it feeds their future.

This is probably longer than you want for the newsletter. Use what you can. I felt the work was a great experience for me. While my talent is not directly involved with making disciples for God, I think everyone's talent can be helpful. I hope mine was!

Clarence Harms

8/23/13

Latvia United Methodist Hymnal to be Published in 2014

Carlton R. Young and I continue to work with the Latvia United Methodist Hymnal Committee preparing the new United Methodist Hymnal for Latvia. We are approaching completion of the manuscript of over 300 hymns and songs. The hymnal will include also all of the regular and occasional worship services of the UMC. There is still a lot of work to be done. All of the copyrighted hymns and songs must be licensed, which is being processed and funded by the General Board of Global Ministries. Thereafter the hymnal must be formatted and designed and then be processed and published in Latvia.

The schedule for finalization and publication is as follows:

- 1) completion of the manuscript and all copyright licenses by June 1, 2013;
- 2) completion of page design and formatting of the entire book by November 15, 2013;
- 3) December 1 manuscript sent to printer for processing and production;
- 3) publication of the hymnal by March 1, 2014;
- 4) presentation and dedication of the hymnal at Easter, April 20, 2014.

The General Board of Discipleship, The Fred Pratt Green Trust, and a number of individuals made very significant contributions to begin and sustain the editorial process ca. four years ago. However, we will need to raise an additional

\$10,000 for the publication of the hymnal in Latvia. Contributions to the fund for the hymnal made be made as follows:

Bank of New York Mellon
One Wall Street
New York, NY 10286
Swift No.: IRVTUS3N
ABA No.: 021000018
Account Name: General Board of Global Ministries - UMC
Account No.: 1096086020
475 Riverside Drive, Room 1417
New York, NY 10115
Attn.: Xenon Antone

Details: Please designate the use of the funds in a wire transfer or on a check or money order as follows:

LATVIA UNITED METHODIST HYMNAL.

Thank you for including this information in the next newsletter.

Cordially,
S T Kimbrough, Jr. & Carlton R. Young
Editorial Consultants to the Latvia United Methodist Hymnal Committee

Dearest Friends,

Fall is upon us, a time of renewed energy and focus! This has been an interesting year to date. We have missed being with many of our friends and enjoyed those we did have the privilege of seeing or meeting for the first time.

Many of the pastors are just finishing up their vacation time. It is late in the summer for that relaxation but it means we will all be starting the new season refreshed in body and spirit!

We will be sending out the pastors reports that were submitted for our Annual District Conference which was held in the middle of August.

You can read my report on the activities of the Church since last Conference as well as the individual congregations.

Our Annual District Conference was held in Kuldiga. God blessed us with wonderful weather and hospitality. Many new members had been chosen as delegates to the Conference and it was very encouraging to see their enthusiasm for the business portion of the Conference as well as the social. Our church can only grow and mature in proportion to the enthusiasm and participation of lay members. It was very heartening to have such interested and active lay discussing the issues confronting the Church and beginning to dialogue about possible solutions not totally reliant on the pastors involvement or leadership.

It truly felt as though we all are truly becoming Church. It is one thing to say and sing those words, another to begin to internalize and live them.

At the Conference, we prayed for Linda and Joe Acker, thanked God for them and their great investment in Camp Wesley, LAMB and its ministries. We rejoice that Linda has finished her chemo treatments, and that God continues to uphold both her and Joe. We continue to lift them both up in our prayers and long for their return to visit with us again.

The Board of Camp Wesley voted to elect Richard Payne as their new chair. We thank Richard for accepting this ministry and pray that God continues to give him His wisdom, discernment, peace and joy in serving in this capacity.

The camping programs each year seem to get better and better at spiritually feeding our children and teens. The shepherd program has become a very valuable training tool for our young people as well as the staff program.

I was thrilled to hear some of the stories from the shepherds of how, through their insistence that their charges remember that they are in a holy setting where uncharitable words, actions and thoughts are not appropriate, noticeably changed the attitudes of some of the offending campers. It was great to see them take a serious stance instead of letting hurtful words and actions be tolerated .

We are incredibly blessed to have so many of you praying for us, supporting our ministries and our pastors. Thank you for sharing yourselves with us.

It is difficult in this age of instant gratification to understand and accept that real and lasting foundations can not be lain long distance, can not be lain by the leadership

alone but rather together with the leaders and the lay.

Seeing what is dawning and happening in our congregations, seeing the lay begin to truly understand that they are the Church, hearing the desire for more spiritual food, seeing the groundwork being laid for a lasting church is incredibly exciting and it could not have happened without you and God.

This has not been a fast process but rather a steady growth in comprehension, desire and faith in both the clergy and the lay.

Thank you for your faithfulness!

Some of our young people had the opportunity to visit some of the Methodist congregations in the US this summer. What a wonderful experience for them to meet so many Methodists and experience different worship styles. They have returned ready to more fully experience their walk with Christ. Their horizons have expanded and their experiences will enrich us all.

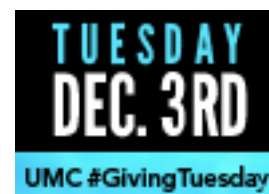
We have a new addition to our worldwide family! A team from Grapevine UMC, Texas, led by senior pastor John Mollet visited us. They visited 10 of the 12 active congregations and joined us for our annual Apple Festival at Camp Wesley. The last day of their visit, we all worshipped together at Riga 1st. What a fitting ending to our time together. Methodists from Latvia and US, raising their voices as one to praise the One who unites us all in love and fellowship!

GOD IS SO INCREDIBLY GOOD!

This fall, several of our congregations will be holding seminars on what it means to be a Methodist – who are we? What do we have to offer to others that is unique to us? We hope that this will not just be a lecture series but rather an interactive learning process that will lead to a stronger understanding and commitment of our individual and collective roles in our communities.

May God bless you, your family and the ministry God has called you to be involved in to transform your life as well as our world.

Gita Medne, DS





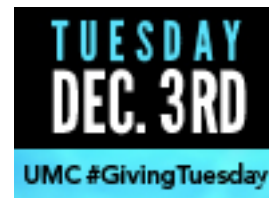
The theme of the conference was John 15:16. Bishop Christian Alsted giving a teaching lesson on what it means to be rooted: grow up and grow deep



Pastors' groups preparing to introduce themselves in a creative way



Performance to introduce the pastors



Panel discussion with lay delegates about the needs of the UMC in Latvia (facilitator: pastor Astra Dannenfelte from Riga 1st)

Photos taken at Kuldiga UMC, courtesy of Dr. Üllas Tankler.

ERVINS FUND LAUNCHED

The four churches that make up the Kuldiga UMC Partnership have begun a fund at the Holston Conference Foundation that will be used by the Kuldiga church for the future purchase of apartments in their church building. The money will be collected over time and accumulate until one or more apartments in the same building with the Kuldiga UMC become available for purchase. The apartments will be owned by the Kuldiga United Methodist Church and available to them for income and/or housing for the Kuldiga minister.

The four churches that make up the Kuldiga Partnership are Norris, Sinking Springs, Wears Valley and Maryville United Methodist Churches. The partner churches plan to contribute to the Ervins Fund each year. The Fund is named for Ervins Caibeli, the much loved Lay Leader of Kuldiga United Methodist Church who died recently.



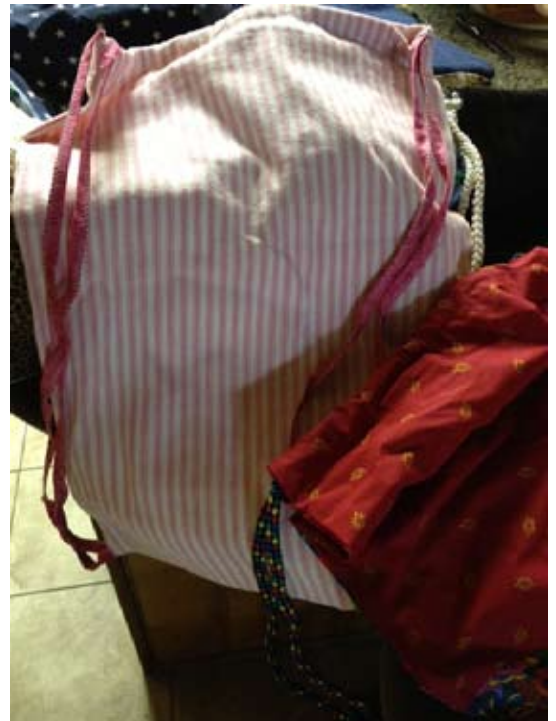
Cindy, Ieva, Ralphs, and Sandy stop at the springs to fill up water bottles to take back to Cesis. Ieva and Ralphs are just two of the many friends we made in Latvia. Making friends with the folks at Cesis Methodist Church was one of the great experiences we had on our trip to Latvia.

Peacemakers Quilt Group

Carol Fisher



Thank you to the Peacemakers Quilt Group from Martin United Methodist Church in Bedord, TX for the colorful bags that were made for our Friends in Latvia. They will be on their way to Latvia in September with Richard and Julie Payne and their group from Grapevine UMC.



Planning ahead for Christmas 2013

The text below is designed to be read aloud during a Mission Moment, to a group, or printed in a newsletter after designating where the gifts will be collected and the gift slips will be distributed.

To send your collected gift funds via The Advance, use the attached Gift Transmittal mailed to arrive at GBGM by December 15, 2013.

To: Missions Coordinator, Senior Pastor, Body of Christ
From: Friends of Latvia

Harsh economic conditions in post-soviet Latvia (on the Baltic Sea) result in many citizens there surviving the difficult winters on a diet of only potatoes. Many nutrition-related illnesses emerge in late winter as a result with the young and the elderly particularly at risk.

In recent years generous Methodists have provided a winter regimen of vitamins to people in need in Latvia. Health officials there are singing the praises of the improved health of the people fortunate enough to receive such a gift and of a connected body of people so willing to help.

Have you ever had trouble purchasing a gift for that person who has everything? This Christmas for \$25 you may purchase a gift on behalf of someone you know to provide this winter vitamin regimen for a person needing them in Latvia this winter.

You may purchase the gift at _____ and you will receive a printed gift plate to be included in a Christmas card for the person honored.

You may have just completed your Christmas shopping.

Remember as you plan your second-mile giving to support the Latvia Pastor Salary Advance Special. It matters.

Christmas 2013

On your behalf a

Winter Regimen of

Vitamins

has been given to a resident of Latvia.

Difficult economic conditions result in many Latvians surviving on potatoes during the winter months. Your gift is a contribution to the river of living water spreading the good news of a risen Savior helping the citizens of Latvia.

Viņš Dzīvo!
(He Lives !)



United Methodist Church
Friends of Latvia

DOUBLE YOUR IMPACT!



December 3rd

YOUR GIFT TO MISSION THAT IS MADE ONLINE THROUGH THE ADVANCE ON

UMC #GivingTuesday

WILL BE MATCHED DOLLAR FOR DOLLAR!*



www.umcmision.org/give

* Up to \$500,000. Some restrictions apply.

57 degrees North Latitude 25 degrees East Longitude

I don't even know where to start this story, the sites, the countryside, the people, the feelings, the emotions, the fear, the excitement. I was so excited to be doing this awesome thing and I had no idea how awesome it was going to be. I wasn't even sure why I was there but God knew. He has a plan for us all and He doesn't always tell us what it is.

Fourteen Texans traveled 5377 miles to plant a seed. It felt like we went back to a much simpler time with few worries and even fewer amenities. We were in a foreign land that looked just like northern Minnesota and felt like early fall with cool temperatures, scattered showers and early evening fog that blanketed the meadows. We flew through the night arriving in Riga, Latvia in the early afternoon. Upon our arrival we headed off to have a late lunch and meet with Gita Mednis at 1st UMC in Riga. We arrived at Straupe very late but the women of Cesis UMC had a meal ready and a table set for us to eat dinner when we arrived.

We were living in the country next door to a farmer who supplied us with fresh milk and eggs. He brought us the reddest tomatoes I had seen in a very long time fresh from his garden. I managed to make my way to the barn one morning to get the milk and eggs. It took me back to my childhood, hanging out in the cow barn with my Grandfather.



Our first Sunday we worshiped at Cesis UMC. I read scripture during service and I felt honored to be part of the service. After the service we sat in the fellowship room and had tea and snacks. Later we visited Cesis Castle and May Park. From the park we walked to St. John's Lutheran Church, which was built in the 13th century. It was consecrated in 1284 and named after St. John the Baptist. What a beautiful church - it took my breath away.

On Monday we visited Saulriti, a teen rehab center. I knew there would be many surprises and this was certainly one. Before we left I was shaking hands and hugging these kids.

It was very difficult to see children in a center for drug and alcohol abuse. The success rates for this rehab center are very high which left me with a real sense of hope for them.

With our first day of evangelism under our belt there was a different feeling about why we were there. With God's help we would overcome our fears and our doubt.



We visited several families of Cesis UMC, breaking into small groups and going from home to home. When we would leave one house and go to the next the food would travel with us so the feast kept growing. Every family told about themselves and wanted to know about us. It was great fun sharing and laughing.

It was amazing that Janis had planned the entire schedule, gathering Pastors from six churches and bringing them together for a public forum. I watched and listened not knowing what was said but the reactions of people was amazing and I knew that whatever was said had impact.

We served at the Mission bus in Cesis for three days sharing our time and our faith with the drunks and the homeless. I felt the challenge of the language barrier. Ieva translated for us in most cases, but when she wasn't always available I could call on another member of Cesis UMC.

The energy of Smithfield's young adults was amazing! I spent every day with them in the "Fun Van." My friends know I have a very low tolerance for kids and young people. I was pleasantly surprised. I had such a good time with these kids. Maybe that is why I was there, who knows? God knows and I know that I was blessed.



The Saturday night concert performed by the Baptist Bell Choir was amazing. Words cannot describe what I felt and I wasn't the only one that felt the presence of the Holy Spirit. What an awesome, amazing feeling! There were so many amazing moments, filled with emotion, sadness, laughter and tears all intermixed. Unforgettable and spirit filled, a family, made up of fourteen disciples of Christ.

Matthew 10: 20

For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

Marilyn Schorr
mlschorr@sbcglobal.net
Smithfield UMC
N. Richland Hills TX





TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3RD

YOUR GIFT TO MISSION THAT IS MADE ONLINE THROUGH THE ADVANCE ON
UMC #GIVINGTUESDAY WILL BE MATCHED DOLLAR FOR DOLLAR!



Dear Friend,

As you know, Global Ministries is participating in UMC #GivingTuesday on December 3, 2013. Gifts made online through The Advance on UMC #GivingTuesday will be matched dollar for dollar, meaning that 200 percent of every donation through your Advance number on December 3 will directly impact your ministry. This is a great opportunity for you to reach out through your networks and let them know about this one-day event and how it can support your work. Here are some suggestions for how you can maximize this event to support your ministry.

Website

Please post the UMC #GivingTuesday banner <http://www.umcmmission.org/Giving-Tuesday/Giving-Tuesday> prominently on your conference's home page with a description:

Multiply impact! Your gift to any Advance project on December 3 UMC #GivingTuesday will be matched. *

Email

Create a custom signature line that includes information about UMC #GivingTuesday and link it to your Advance page. Adding this line to every email you send out will help share information in a way that requires minimal effort.

When you make an online donation to [Organization/Project (link)] on December 3 your gift will multiply! For one day only, on December 3, 2013 as part of UMC #GivingTuesday, gifts made online through The Advance to any project or missionary will be matched. *

Social Media

You are also invited to raise awareness about UMC #GivingTuesday through your social media networks. Do you have a Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram account? Help promote the event: Multiply impact! Your gift to ORGANIZATION on 12/3 UMC #GivingTuesday will be matched. www.umcmmission.org/give Make a gift to support [Project Name (url to Advance Project page)] on Dec. 3 UMC #GivingTuesday & your gift will be matched. *

Sample Messaging

Encourage supporters to get involved in UMC #GivingTuesday by using one of the alternative-giving models below, or send an email like this one customizing it to fit the context:

Dear Friend,

When you make an online donation on December 3 your gift will multiply! For one day only, on December 3, 2013 as part of UMC #GivingTuesday, gifts made to [our project/missionary] through Advance #[12345 (link)] will be matched*. As always, when you give to us through The Advance, 100 percent of your gift directly supports our ministry; overhead costs are covered through other channels. Thank you so much for your faithful support and for doubling your impact by making a generous gift on December 3.

Grace and peace,

[Signed by Organization Representative or Missionary]

Alternative Giving

· Ask supporters to request that Christmas gifts be made as a donation in their name to your Advance project, and encourage them to make the gift on December 3 to double the impact.

· Ask supporters to make Christmas gifts in honor of their friends and family on December 3. Do they still want to present a wrapped gift? Suggest that they:

Accompany the notification with a token representation of the project (a framed map of the region, a water bottle for a water project, a hammer for a construction project, etc.).

Design or purchase a card that reflects the project theme.

We would love to hear about creative ways that you are raising money for your ministry—especially what you are planning for UMC #GivingTuesday. Thank you for your passion as we live out God's mission together. Should you have any questions or suggestions about UMC #GivingTuesday, please contact advance@umcmmission.org.

Blessings,

Ellen K. Knudsen

Director of Advance Projects, The Advance and Development

<http://www.umcmmission.org>

* Global Ministries will allocate the "matching funds" dollar for dollar up to the first \$500,000 in gifts to Advance projects received online on December 3, 2013, between 12:00 a.m. EST and 11:59 p.m. A maximum of \$10,000 per individual gift to a project will be dispersed as matching funds. A project may receive a maximum of \$50,000 in matching funds.