

FRIENDS OF LATVIA

Volume 4; Issue 1

February 2012

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 3

Kuldiga Partnership

Page 4-5

Gita Sightings: Texas

Page 6

Alabama

Wesley Camp VIM Team

Page 7

Cesis Building Update

Page 8

The Last Page

2012 Wesley Camp Schedule

The tentative schedule for Wesley Camp this summer is as follows:

June 18-21 – VIM Team from Tennessee (led by Suzanne Stratton)

June 25-July 1 – Wesley Days: Prepare camp for campers

July 3-5 – Shepherds Training: Training for staff (led by Kristine and Vivita)

July 5-11 – Children's Camp: Camp for Sunday School children (led by Vivita)

July 12-15 – Children's Camp for non-Sunday School Children (led by Vivita)

July 16-21 – Youth Camp (led by Kristine)

July 30-August 9 – VIM team (led by Joe Acker and Holt Cason)

There will be at least one other VIM team at Camp this summer working with the children's camp. This team will be from Texas.

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

Future Campers



Other Summer Dates

June 9-10 – Youth Hope Festival with Franklin Graham

June 18-25 (or June 14 - 21) – Youth Camp in Araisi for Liepa UMC

July 10 - 24 – Liepa Russian congregation

Mid-July – Jelgava's congregation

Dear Friends of Latvia,

As we prayerfully consider our journeys, both spiritual and literal, with our brothers and sisters in Latvia it's important to be good stewards of the resources we manage. These resources are not limited to money but also include even more precious resources of time and our response to the call we hear. With that in mind, I offer these points and request these considerations:

1. Discussions continue to finalize the date and venue of our next US FOL Gathering. The dates will be in October 2012 but are yet to exactly settle as we work to align with Bishop Alsted's squirmy itinerary so that he might participate. Pencil in the last two weekends in October because it will likely be one of those two. The locations graciously offered include Pittsburg and Maryville TN so your preference feedback to me is helpful as the final decision is made between two perfect locations.

2. Missions, projects, and programs tend to succeed when a prayerful, committed member of the Body is on fire about something and steps up to serve as the leader of the effort. If you are sensing a strong call to drive an existing FOL initiative or to start a new one then let me know. I commit to you that the FOL organization will help you organize your thoughts, resources, and communications to give your idea a chance at moving forward. That guidance will be prayerfully offered with discernment of the Spirit at the core. (A great start is to study the excellent Bible course in prayerful project management in Nehemiah).

- * Prayerfully consider a leadership role on any projects or program
- * Make it known what spiritual gifts you want to use. All members of the Body are essential and photographers, chatters, readers ... many seemingly simple activities are where the Spirit moves.
- * The FOL leadership team is looking for your ideas on programs or projects of emphasis for the FOL group as a whole for 2012 with results reported at the FOL meeting. Send ideas.
- * If you have led or participated in the foundations of an idea (think Wesley Camp tent platforms) that can influence decisions and planning for 2012 Latvia trips then NOW is the time to pen an article on that to Dana for the newsletter with information useful to folks firming those 2012 trips in the next 3 months.

3. I accidentally pick up on some excellent communications materials related to Latvia that many of you have authored. Please let me or Dana know if you any materials that can be used as is or modified for use by FOL members as we plan, visit, communicate (e.g. newsletter articles, Worship Guide

announcement, press releases, newspaper or magazine articles, Bible studies, Latvian language materials etc). These can easily be posted to the GBGM website for all to see. A particular challenge we have because of the sensitivity of the communication is how to encourage monthly second-mile giving for Pastor Salary or Partner Church covenants (for all the positive reasons that's a good idea) without discouraging those who prefer to give in lump sums. Ideas or articles on this are very sorely needed.



4. Your accolades to Dana Nance for her wonderful work preparing our FOL newsletters are well-founded. Dana represents a perfect example of a committed Christian joyfully applying her spiritual gifts to make disciples of Jesus Christ. There are some things you can do to further build the Body of Christ by helping her. Your input for newsletter material is essential to the proper function of the Body. There's no need to await her reminder to give her material for the newsletter. Please send

- * photos (identify who is in them or provide a legend/date) old ones and new ones
- * prayer or a quote that made you think of Latvia
- * questions that can be posed to the group at large
- * thoughts about a special person you have met in Latvia
- * thoughts about the approach to the work in Latvia
- * reports on projects planned or completed
- * ideas related to Latvia if you would like feedback or seek volunteers
- * hyperlinks to applicable information, videos, photos etc.
- * anything else the Spirit guides you to include

There are days that I must pinch myself to believe how blessed we are to serve together in this Latvia connection. I'm honored to witness the Spirit at work in each of you as you respond to the call of Christ: to love one another.

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

Six members from the Kuldiga Partnership (Norris UMC, Sinking Springs UMC, Wears Valley UMC and FUMC Maryville) will be taking a mission trip to Latvia from June 15-25. We will be fellowshipping with the members of our sister church (Kuldiga UMC) while building a bunkhouse platform at Latvia's Camp Wesley. The congregations have been asked to collect yarn to take to the Kuldiga UMC to assist them with furthering their fundraising efforts. Our hope is to further our connection through Christ individually, as congregations and as global United Methodist partners.

If you would like more information about our mission to Kuldiga, Latvia, contact one of our team members: Suzanne Stratton, Ron or Carol Werker, Cathy Finney, Larry Carroll, or Ginny West Case.

Suzanne Stratton
Norris UMC, Tennessee
suzanne@jondale.net



Bambi Room Children

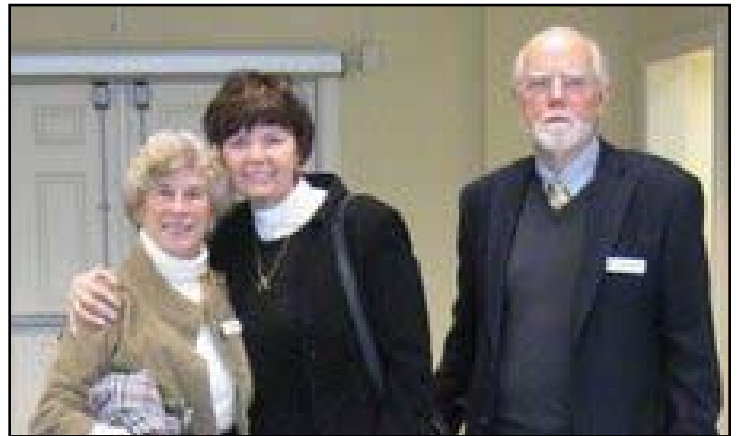
“Gita Sightings” Williamsburg, Virginia

Richard Soulen

Gita made a quick visit to Williamsburg, Virginia, on January 14-15, addressing both services of worship and a joint Sunday School class of 200. As always, she made a deep impression on all who heard her. A love offering of over \$2,100.00 was raised following her presentation. Her spiritual presence is palpable, and we are blessed to have her as a representative of Christ in Latvia on our behalf.

The chair of our Global Outreach committee would like to team up with a group going to Latvia and is wondering if any is planned for June (her vacation time).

Richard N. Soulen
Williamsburg, VA
soulrn@aol.com



Pictured are Gita with Peggy and Richard Soulen. Dick was the group leader in August 2006 when 11 church members went to Latvia to work on the Straupe building which at that time was to be the Hope Center.



The week that Latvia District Superintendent Gita Mednis was in North Texas was an opportunity to reach out and touch new people and new churches with the story of the reemergence of the UMC in Latvia. One of those churches was 1st United Methodist Church of Colleyville, TX. The pastor, Mike Dawson, and the Associate, Kaiya Kershaw, graciously allowed time after their Wesley Meal for Gita to share some of the history and mission opportunities in Latvia. Several folks expressed interest in hearing more of what this mission work is all about.

Keep your eyes open for opportunities to share how God is working in Latvia and how others may participate. Just as we are not to be shy about sharing the gospel and give defense as needed, be ready to share a word with other believers of the joys of service in international mission. Many don't give international mission a second thought, but need to hear that God can and will call them as well to such joyful adventures.

God Bless,
Jim Nance, Hope Center Chair
Meadowbrook UMC, Fort Worth TX
nancejl@sbcglobal.net



Gathering at Colleyville United Methodist: Dana McCarty, Roxane Dougherty, Gita Mednis, Ansley Dougherty, Dana Nance, Sarah McCarty, Joyce Mick.

“Gita Sightings” – NEXT Wood Fired Bistro, Colleyville, TX Dana McCarty

Gita Mednis was honored at a Women's Luncheon Fellowship on January 24 in Colleyville, Texas. Women attended from Colleyville, Grapevine, Martin, Meadowbrook and Smithfield United Methodist Churches as well as North Richland Hills Baptist Church and the Presbyterian church in Fort Worth.

Gita spoke briefly to the group before everyone enjoyed the delicious meal. Two women who have never traveled to Latvia that are planning a trip this Summer after being inspired by Gita's words and love of the Lord.

Dana McCarty
Richland Hills Baptist Church
rocknm@me.com



Pictured are Rebecca McCarty and Gita Mednis talking with Rebecca's grandmother, Leah Shaver.

While Gita was in Dallas she had the opportunity to reconnect with Martin United Methodist church in Bedford, the Covenant church with Riga 1st. Gita presented her message at both the 8:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. services which were highly attended. Her update on the challenges facing our sister churches in Latvia and the opportunities for mission were well received and many have expressed interest in learning more about how we might help.

Gita also spoke to a group of Sunday school classes and outlined the work being done at the Hope Center and Wesley Camp. Pictures of the Riga First choir wearing the choir robes donated by the Martin choir helped to bring home the connection between our two churches.

In the afternoon we had a brief reception with a question and answer period. All of these meetings helped to generate more interest in the work God is doing through us in supporting our Latvian partners. We now have several members who are looking forward to a possible mission trip to Riga in 2013 and will listen to God’s direction as we move forward.

Ross Carnes
Martin United Methodist Church, Bedford TX
rhcarnes47@gmail.com



Gita speaks to a combined group of Sunday school classes at Martin UMC on Sunday, January 22.

Friends of Latvia Golf Tournament

The Friends of Latvia Tournament is swinging your way on Saturday, May 19 at The Riverside Golf course in Grand Prairie, Texas. Make plans now to get your team together and join in the fun and fellowship of this great annual charity event! With your help we can help our brothers and sisters in Latvia.

Here’s How It Works:
The event is a “best ball” charity tournament benefiting the Methodist missions in Latvia.

Registration begins at 7:00 A.M. Play begins with a 8:00 A.M. shotgun start

Saturday, May 19, 2012.
Riverside Golf Club
3000 Riverside Parkway
Grand Prairie, TX 75050
817-640-7800
817-633-3323 fax

What A Deal! Cost is \$100 per person, \$400 per team if paid by May 10. Entry fees after that date are \$110 per player, \$440 per team. Mulligans can be purchased for \$20 per player. All net proceeds go to support our missions in Latvia. Over \$2000 in prizes are awarded for “Championship” and “fun” flights; plus prizes for longest drive, closest to the pin, beat the “Preacher” and other contests. Lunch will be served following the tournament.

Free Lunch with Each Entry!
Lunch begins immediately following the tournament at the Pavilion located at The Riverside Golf Course Golf Cart!

Find Some Friends and Fill Out This Form!

Team Captain _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ ZIP _____
Email _____
Phone(home) _____ (office) _____
Player 2 _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ ZIP _____
Email _____
Phone (home) _____ (office) _____
Player 3 Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ ZIP _____
Email _____
Phone(home) _____ (office) _____
Player 4 Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ ZIP _____
Email _____
Phone (home) _____ (office) _____

COMPLETE AND RETURN WITH ALL ENTRY FEES BY MAY 10, 2012. Turn in entry fees to the Friends of Latvia (FOL) coordinator at your church or mail them C/O Martin United Methodist Church, 2621 Bedford Road, Bedford TX 76021.

Latvian District Superintendent Gita Mednis visits Alabama

During the weekend of January 27-30 DS Gita Mednis visited in Fayette, AL to express thanks to Fayette FUMC and to Hannah UMC. Both churches have been long-time supporters of the ministries of the Methodist church in Latvia. The Fayette church sent a Volunteers in Mission team to Wesley Camp during the summer of 2006 and members of the church have been on various VIM teams there almost every year since. The church has also supported the Hope Center and been very instrumental in the purchase of the Hope Center’s Staupe building. In addition the church was very instrumental in starting the vitamin ministry.

Rev. Mednis preached at both morning services in Fayette and during the Sunday school hour held an extensive question and answer session. She was warmly received by all those who attended these services. Following the services, members of the church plus others who have been on VIM trips to Latvia from area churches enjoyed a wonderful meal prepared by Dr. Linda Acker.

On Sunday evening the Hannah UMC in Pickens County was host to DS Mednis at a pot-luck supper. The Hannah church has been very active in support of the work in Latvia. For three years the Hannah church provided the funds for the vitamin program in Latvia and during the years 2009-2011 generously supported the three main initiatives of FOL. Each month they sent funds to Wesley Camp, the Hope Center and the Pastor’s Support fund.

Rev. Mednis spoke to those gathered about the continuing needs in Latvia and answered questions from the congregation. Two members of the Hannah church who have been to Latvia were present. Gita was warmly received by the Hannah church also.

All in all, it was a wonderful week end.

Joe Acker
First UMC, Fayette, AL
jdacker@centurytel.net



2012 VIM Team Headed for Wesley Camp

July 28 will be the departure date for a VIM Team headed to Wesley Camp. The team will be lead by Joe Acker of Alabama and Holt Cason of Tennessee. The plan is for the team to arrive in Riga on the 29th and spend the first night in Riga. On July 30th the team will head to Wesley Camp and begin work tearing down a building which has some serious defects in its structure. They will also work on another tent platform and perhaps some picnic tables which have been requested by the leadership of the camp.

The team will depart camp on August 7 and spend a couple of days visiting other sites of interest in Latvia before leaving for home on the 9th of August. Some of the details of the trip are yet to be worked out but the cost of the trip will be approximately \$700 plus air fare.

There are still a couple of places available for additional team members. If interested, please contact Joe at: jdacker@centurytel.net



Pictured is Joe Acker representing LAMB, Wesley Camp and FOL at the Global Initiative Celebration at FUMC Huntsville, AL. During this four day event from February 8-12, Joe was able to speak to many groups about Latvia and Wesley Camp. During the services on Sunday pledges were made for a special missions offering to be taken up in March and apportioned for the many mission efforts supported by the church.

CESIS BUILDING FINANCIAL STATEMENT

The Cesis building fund, a project of the Friends of Latvia, is as follows:

Balance December 31, 2010.....	\$12,819.00
Net of Revenues, Expenses, & Transfers Jan.-Dec. 2011.....	\$10,193.00
Balance on hand Dec. 31, 2011.....	\$2,626.00
No activities in the account in 2012	
Amount due on loan.....	\$20,000.00
Net needed to clear debt.....	\$17,374.00

Thank you for your support in repaying the loan for the Cesis Church Building.



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)



Rev. Jim Chandler, Rev. Gita Mednis, Dana Nance and Rev. Charles Robinson.

You are never too old to make a difference and be a blessing to others. The ladies at Meadowbrook United Methodist Church were invited to knit or crochet blankets, scarves and hats for the moms and babies at the Hope Center in Latvia. The women

rose to the challenge and by the end of November a large box was shipped to Riga 1st to be delivered to the Hope Center.



What a delight to receive the pictures below of the Hope Center moms and their babies wearing the scarves, hats and blankets that were knitted in the homes of the women from MUMC in Fort Worth, Texas. Blessed to be a blessing indeed!



Pictured with Rev. Gita Mednis are Ruth Grimm, a 93 year old knitter, and Marjorie Williams.

Reminders

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 (jpgs) with names of those in the pictures, whether from your church group or one of the Latvia congregations. Send your follow-up report to: djnance@sbcglobal.net.

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

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