
FRIENDS OF LATVIA --- IN MISSION TOGETHER

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Riga 1st UMC *Becomes District Office*

The District Office began its work the beginning of September 2007. Kristine Vainovska with the agreement of Fairview UMC served as assistant to the DS, Gita Mednis, in charge of office administration. GBGM has approved a PIM position for this office work, and Rihard Germanis, now holds this position. He has a degree in Economics and is a member of Riga 1st. Kristine will continue as a part-time assistant to Gita Mednis and will lead the youth at Riga 1st and 2nd with the salary support of Fairview UMC and the Faithful Men's Choir in Maryville, TN. Inga Rate, paid by GBGM, is in charge of the Finances of the District Office and Riga 1st. She will also be the contact person for questions regarding donations.

Maryville ♥ Latvia **District District**

The *In Mission Together* partnership program of the GBGM is designed to assist churches in a shared mission and ministry with a developing congregation, region, or country. The program encourages and affirms the role of local congregations, districts, and annual conferences to be in mission in a global setting. By action of our 2007 District conference, the Maryville District will be in partnership with the Latvian District for a three-year period. The model of our partnership is based upon the model of membership in the local church as we affirm our commitment to be in Mission Together through our Prayers, Presence, Gifts, and Service.

Global Missions Summit *Held in Plano, Texas*

Methodists from all over the globe met the third week in April at St. Andrews UMC in Plano, Texas, to unite and discuss how we can be in mission together. There was a breakout session to discuss Latvia and their current issues. Mike Slaughter was the guest speaker. *He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8)*

Following...

W.C. Martin hosted the FOL Annual meeting.

A year has passed since the last FOL gathering, yet so much has changed in Latvia. If you were unable to attend, please forward your contact information, including email, address, phone, and connecting church info if applicable to jlppayne@msn.com.

Please continue to check the following websites:
www.friendsoflatvia.com; www.wesleycamp.com;
www.umcinlatvia.org.

Thank you W. C. Martin for hosting this event.

The next **FOL MTG.** will be held in Maryville, TN April 24th and 25th. Save the date!

NEW **Latvian Website**

www.umcinlatvia.org

Pastor's Salary Advance

Send check payable to UMC Global Ministries to:

Advance GCFA
P.O. Box 9068, GPO
New York, NY 10087-9068

Acct. # 14706A
Latvia Pastor Salary Fund

Liepa Hope Center

Half of the Liepa building is completely renovated, and the major structural changes, such as removing the weight-bearing walls and ceilings, have been done. Work will continue as funds are raised for this project.

At present, there are seven girls living in Liepa. It is quite crowded, and it is hoped that most will move to Straupe for the summer. Erika, the Liepa housemother and project manager, moved to Ireland in December because the salary from the Hope Center was just not enough for her to make ends meet. Her apartment is now used for the girls and their babies, expanding the capability to accommodate the growing need for mothers with more than one child. Rigonda assumed the responsibility for the Liepa Hope Center and closed Straupe for the winter.

The Liepa Hope Center's mission has become more clearly defined this year. This center has become a safety net for the girls as they transition to a more independent role. Each girl is responsible for her own money and must walk to town with her baby(ies) to shop for their own groceries. The girls may take public transportation to Cesis. The small town of Liepa gives the girls an opportunity to do more responsibilities on their own; however, there is still strict oversight as far as curfews, health of the babies, nutritional needs for moms and babies, as well as keeping themselves and their surroundings clean.

The young mothers are very grateful for the opportunity to live at the Hope Center. Most of the girls have asked to have their babies baptized and have started attending worship services by choice. One has even volunteered to help clean the church. One of the girls who left now volunteers at the Russian Congregation as a Sunday school teacher. Every mother who has been in our care has stayed in touch. They visit, ask for advice, and know that we are here to offer them help if all else fails. We are reaching these "least among us" in many ways.

Straupe Hope Center

The unfinished bedroom and office in Straupe were finished and safety railings put on the upstairs porches. Everyone is grateful for the helping hands from the US. A special memorial spot was created to honor the life of Jeff Acker, whose life ended early. The downstairs was prepared for the winter months, and plastic put on the doors and windows. Straupe is deep in the country, and roads in the winter can become quite challenging. In December, with Erika leaving and the reality of facing heating costs in two facilities, the decision was made to close Straupe until spring. All of the moms were moved to Liepa. The Straupe Hope Center helps each mom with budgeting, learning to cook, and learning to care for the babies.

Caregivers of The Hope Center

There have been difficulties in finding professional help. Dzintra Albuze, a single mom, was unable to make ends meet with the salary that the Hope Center was able to pay her. A new director was hired, but had to be terminated after three months because she was unable to handle her duties. Gita Binane was hired as the new director. She has worked as Dzintra's assistant for over a year and is very familiar with all of the issues. She has a master's degree in preschool education.

A part-time psychologist was hired, but she was not the right person for the position. There is a part-time social worker on staff, and she is helping the girls explore possibilities for further assistance from Social Services. The Hope Center is paid \$14 a day for each mom, which is not enough to cover all of the expenses. Expenses are not paid for the babies.

Camp Wesley

In 2007, there were a lot of renovations at Camp Wesley. Wesley Days was held in July. Fortunately, the second floor of the Alabama house was secured with new beams, because 100 kids were “rockin’ the house.”

Bathrooms with showers for men and women were completed. A new outdoor stage was built to replace the older structure that existed. A basketball court was added and is now enjoyed by many of the kids and adults. A new ramp replaces the old ramp that led to the top floor of the Alabama House. New doors were also added. The kitchen area has been cleaned up and moved to the new location. It is still a work in progress. The Holston house is to become the new living area for the Director. The floor was recently poured in the dining hall.

The camp is currently holding retreats for adults and kids from Latvia and Lithuania. They hope to reach out to children from Belarus and Chernobyl.

2008 Projects and Needs

- Insulation of Holston House
- Preparing bunk rooms—upstairs needs to be cleaned
- Pour sidewalks to each building
- Work on apple orchard
- Possibly add concrete slabs for tents
- Clean up large hay barn--currently used to sleep in during the rainy days

*****Roof contains asbestos: must be removed under mandate; will require \$\$ to contract licensed worker to remove material.**

Important Dates!

Wesley Days: June 30 - July 6

CINA Youth from all of Europe: July 14 - 20

Latvian Children’s camp: July 30 - Aug 4

Lithuania UMC Summer Camp: Aug. 4 - 10

New Wesley Camp Website

www.wesleycamp.com

It is AWESOME!

Check it out!

Our Missionaries at Work

Dan and Courtney are getting settled at First Riga. Dan has been asked to prepare a course on Methodist history, policy, and theology for the theological students and lay speaker program. Courtney has begun ministry with the youth and children, and is leader of the Youth Council. Both are attending language training and working full-time at the District office. Both have preached and led services at First Riga. They are a helpful communication tool for the FOL to use. Dan was featured on the front cover of [New World Outlook](#), the mission magazine of The United Methodist Church. The article features missionaries of the 21st century.

They can be reached at:

Courtney: courtneymrandall@gmail.com

Dan: sojournerdan@gmail.com

Blog: www.randallsreflections.blogspot.com