



# Baltic News



Missionaries  
Mark and Rose Krause

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## Challenges for Outreach



Since the fall of the Soviet Union the cultures in the Baltic region have become much more secular and materialistic. Many people believe the church is an old institution that has gone out of style. As a result, they don't feel a need for what the church has to offer. Some feel the church is only for church people, mostly older church people. They often don't feel welcomed, especially with young children. The challenge for the church is to proclaim an old unchanging message in a way that would be relevant to a rapidly changing culture that is becoming more distance from the church culture.

There is also a huge gap between generations. The older generation has the greatest affection towards the church. Older women make up the largest percentage of people in worship on Sunday mornings. The middle aged generation, which grew up in the Soviet times, is the least active members of the church. It is interesting that some of the post Soviet youth seem to be more interested in the gospel. There are a few churches that have been effective in youth and young adult ministries. The challenge is to design outreach ministries that are sensitive to each of these generations. Alpha courses have become an effective means of outreach in some congregations in Latvia and Estonia.

The economic downturn has opened the door for the church to be a messenger of hope. Ask the Lord to give wisdom and direction to the leadership of the Christian churches in the Baltics so that the church can be the true messenger of hope in the world that often seems to be so hopeless. The government has failed to give hope. The economic situation has taken away hope. Ask the Lord to give the churches His Holy Spirit to meet the challenge of being a messenger of hope.

### *Prayer Opportunities:*

- Ask the Lord to give, wisdom, direction and courage to the leaders of the Baltic Lutheran Churches.
- Prayer of thanksgiving for the gifts we have received to support our mission and that our funding will be enough to stay in the Baltics.
- Pray for the needed funding to support the many mission projects in the Baltics.
- Give thanks to the Lord for the good health and protective care we have experienced over the past 3 years.
- Ask the Lord to bless the efforts of our two DCE interns serving in Latvia.
- Pray that the Lord will move a retired pastor to come to Latvia to serve the International community in Riga.

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## Estonia



The Lutheran Church is the largest Christian church in Estonia. Estonia has also become the most secular of the three Baltic churches which presents difficult challenges for the church. Most people just ignore the church. They don't see any reason to attend worship or be involved in the ministry of the church.

The Theological Institute and the Mission Center of the church are working to figure out ways to help pastors and the churches connect the gospel of Jesus Christ with their secular society. Please keep these ministries in your prayers.

## Latvia



The Latvian Lutheran Church has been blessed with an abundance of church buildings and a variety of other pieces of property. The thought was that if we get our buildings restored the people will come. Some people came, but many stayed away. The biggest challenge for the Latvian Lutheran Church is to educate and train its pastors and people for missions and then encourage their people to get out of their church buildings into the

communities they serve with the message of the gospel.

Many of the rural pastors serve four or five congregations. In the days of Soviet occupation the pastor was only allowed to preach on Sunday mornings. It was against the law to have Sunday schools, Bible classes, youth groups, etc. Today many of the rural congregations still operate under this model. The challenge for the rural pastor is to develop a pastoral relationship with the congregations and the communities he serves.

Before the economic crisis, the central church was able to sell property whenever it needed cash to support its expenses.

During the economic crisis they were unable to sell property which forced the church to make very deep cuts in its budget. A great *challenge for the church is to develop* a stewardship program to teach and encourage its people that giving is a natural response to God's grace.

St. Gregor's has an excellent opportunity to play a major role in creating a more missional understanding of ministry. The greatest challenge for the mission center is to promote itself to the congregations of the Lutheran Church to provide support in sending students and providing the funding that is needed for the mission center to develop its ministry.

## Lithuania



The culture in Lithuania is Roman Catholic. A very high percentage of the population has been baptized in the Catholic Church, but today a low percentage of the people actually attend worship or are actively involved in the life of the church. The Lutheran Church in Lithua-

nia is a very small church of about 50 congregations with German historical roots. The greatest challenge for the Lutheran Church is the need to assimilate into the Lithuanian culture to connect with the unchurched people, no matter what their cultural Christian roots may have been. There is a fear that if they talk to an inactive Roman Catholic about Christ they would be taking a member away from that church. This attitude makes it very difficult for Christian outreach.

Many of the Lithuania Lutheran Churches

are also in the countryside where few people live. The population centers have changed following World War II and the Soviet occupation. A major challenge is to plant new ministry where the people are actually living.

Ask the Lord to open up the eyes of the Lithuanian Church so that they may see the harvest field all around them and have the wisdom and the courage to find ways to connect people with the saving gospel of Jesus Christ.

## Family Camp in Nirza, Latvia



Mark and Rose were invited to attend a week-long Latvian family camp held in Nirza, Latvia. Nirza is located near the

Russian border in eastern Latvia. Dr. Robert Rosin, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis was the main presenter for the week. Dr. Rosin presented a historical presentation on the development of culture and how this understanding helps us to relate to our culture with the gospel today. Pastor Krause also gave a presentation on the “Mission of God” and what a “Missional Church” should look like.

LCMS Mission and Concordia Seminary have been sponsoring theological camps for a number of years. This year we were blessed to have over 85 participants; pastors, wives, and a number of lay people. Family camps provide an excellent opportunity for our church bodies to develop a greater level of partnership in ministry. We hope the funding will be made available to continue this ministry into the future.

## Rev. Peter Meier and his wife Kathy Visit the Baltics



Rev. Peter Meier (Minnesota South Mission’s Exec.) and his wife Kathy visited us during the last week in July. During their visit we hosted conferences in each of the three Baltic states, where Peter presented teaching on “Interpreting Scriptures through the Lens of God’s Mission” and “The Missional Church.” The Meiers

and Krauses hosted the pastors and their spouses at a meal and fellowship following each of the three conferences. The meals and conferences were sponsored by St. Peter’s Edina, and Christ Victorious, Chaska. We have spent the past three years working to establish relationships with Lutheran pastors and churches in the three Baltic States. These conferences have opened up the door for us to do more missional conferences in the future.

The pastors attending the conferences showed their appreciation to Rev. Meier. One of the pastors commented: “Everything you suggest about what a

missional church should look like was against the law during the communist occupation.” He went on to say, “The communists worked to destroy the church, your ideas must be important for a church to be more missional if the Soviet’s were against these ideas.”



## Lay Ministry Training Program for Lithuanian Lutheran Church



The Lithuania Lutheran Church has developed a lay ministry education program to train and equip lay people for missional ministry. Under the leadership of Bishop Mindaugas Sabutis a team of Lithuanian

pastors with consultation from Dr. Charles Evanston from Fort Wayne seminary and LCMS mission area facilitator of the Baltic region, Rev. Mark Krause, have designed a ten session program which will be offered to church leaders as day long conferences for the next ten months.

The first conference was held in Sakiai, Lithuania on Saturday, October 30 with over 70 participants. The leadership team

was amazed with the spirit of the participants. It was clear that they were excited to be there. Most stayed for the entire day. The day’s theme was “Sin and Grace.” This theme was developed through Bible study, theological, historical, and practical presentations. The participants were even given homework to do before the next conference on November 27th. LCMS Mission provided the funding for a delicious lunch.

## Drug and Alcohol Ministry Center in Western Lithuania



About 400,000 people live in western Lithuania. Drug and alcohol abuse is a big problem here, but there are no drug and alcohol treatment programs. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania (ELCL) sees this need and is doing something about it. They have begun a program that provides professional drug and alcohol treatment along with spiritual care. The ECLC owns property on a rural site in southwestern Lithuania. This area was once a thriving German Lutheran community, but since World War II there has been little Lutheran

presence except for the abandoned buildings.

Mark has been working with the director of the “Gabrielius Rehabilitation Center” for the past two years. The International Lutheran Women’s Mission League have provided a generous grant to help support this most important program. The program is up and running with 9 men currently in the program. There is a waiting list to join the program but they do now have enough housing at this time. It is an 18 month program, Two men have finished the program.

A major part of the program is the renovation of the building. The building was really in bad shape. They have come a long way in their remodeling process but they have a long way to go, at least from an American perspective. Funds were used to purchase a new wood furnace, buy wood

for heat and a new plumbing system for the building. They have also replaced many of the windows. The center was also able to purchase a cow, some chickens, and even a few sheep. The clients also raise dogs to show. Taking care of the animals is also part of the program. This all works to develop responsibility and accountability. The director of the program told me that it is important for the clients to develop routine and learn how to not only take care of themselves but also simple projects, such as taking care of the animals. Most would rather just stay high and not do anything.



## International Outreach Ministry in Riga:



We have discovered a mission field among the international community in Riga working for embassies and worldwide international businesses. In addition to offering an English speaking worship service on Sunday morning in the Riga Cathedral, we try to attend events sponsored by international groups. On the first Wednesday of the month many in the international community attend a dinner held at a different restaurant each month. This month we were able to talk to a man from Denmark who had just moved to Riga. We learned through con-

versation that he had lived in America for six years and that is where he had met his wife. Rose was able to invite him and his family to worship services on Sunday and also his wife to the international mom’s day out program on Fridays that she helps administer. Mark was also invited to



attend a hockey game. We pray that this will develop into another opportunity to share the gospel.

We have asked LCMS mission to recruit a retired pastor to serve as a pastor for the

English speaking community in Riga. We have been praying that God would lead a retired pastor and his wife, if he is married, to move to Latvia for a year or two to serve this very unchurched community. It would take a special person or couple that finds it easy to develop relationships with people for the purpose of sharing the gospel in a non-threatening manner. We have also requested a vicar to help in this ministry. We ask that everyone would pray for these positions to be filled.



## Pastoral Leadership Mentoring



In August the Latvian Lutheran Church sponsored their first pastoral leadership training conference. 12 Latvian pastors and 9 pastor's wives attended the week-long conference. The main topic for the week, "Leading from Within" was

taught by three presenters from the International Pastoral Leadership Institute from America. Mark and four Latvian pastors also taught Bible studies, gave presentations on vision, spiritual gifts, and marriage enrichment. One of the Latvian pastors commented, "This was one of the best practical conferences he had ever attended." He went on to say, "It was also the first conference that their wives were included. This was greatly appreciated by his wife." Rose and Iveta Kalme provided additional study and fellowship times for the wives

attending.

Following the conference the pastors and their wives will meet monthly to continue the training and also give each other encouragement as they develop vision and a plan for ministry development in their congregations. The group has already met twice since the conference and they continue to look forward to future meetings. The plan is to have a first and a second year conference next summer. We pray that God will provide the needed funding.

## New DCE Intern Joins our Ministry Staff

The past year we have been blessed to have Kathleen Garner, a Director of Christian Education Intern from Concordia University in Seward, NE serving with us in Riga. Kathleen has been working with leadership of the Riga Youth Center and the Jesus Lutheran Church to help them develop new ministry opportunities and to administer their current programs. Latvian Pastor Kristis Kalnins, the director of the Youth Center has shared with Area Facilitator Rev. Mark Krause that Kathleen has been a great help. Kathleen's role has become

even more important with the economic crisis and the cutbacks in staff that have been needed. Without her help they would have been forced to make even deeper cuts in program.

DCE Intern Julia Mueller has now joined Kathleen to continue the ministry that has been developed. Kathleen and Julia will serve together for the next five months to help with the adjustment of living in a different culture and the introduction to the ministry. In March Kathleen will head back to the states and

Julia will be on her own until a new intern would arrive in the fall. It is our plan that we will be able to provide this learning experience for DCE interns interested in foreign ministry well into the future.



## Latvian Pastor's Wives Retreat

The third annual Pastor's Wives Retreat was held at a Latvian retreat center on Friday and Saturday, October 23 and 24. Over 30 pastor's wives from all over Latvia attended the retreat. This is the only event where pastor's wives can get together for Bible study, topical discussions, prayer, and fellowship.



The conference theme was "Encouraging One Another" based on 2 Corinthians 2:14 & 15. The wives attending showed their appreciation to Rose Krause for her efforts of love to help organize and make the retreat possible. A grant from the Central Illinois District provided the funding for the retreat.

## Churches Visiting Latvia



Rev. Tom Wirsing and a team from Trinity Lutheran Church in Bloomington, Illinois visited Latvia from August 23-26 to investigate possible ways of partnering in ministry between Trinity and churches in Latvia. The team met with the director of the Youth Center in Riga, Pastor Kristis Kalins, the senior pastor of the Riga Cathedral, Pastor Elijs Goodins and one of the bishops, Pavils Bruvers. Each pastor talked about their ministries and how Trinity congregation might partner in ministry. Mark then took the team to Grobina on the west coast to meet with Pastor Gints Kronberg, the pastor of Grobina Lutheran Church. Trinity and the church in Grobina have been in a partnership relationship for a number of years.

The meeting was scheduled to discuss ways in which the partnership may be developed. Much of the conversation centered on the possibility of sending outreach ministry teams to Grobina in the near future.

Pastor Harold Bender, Jr. from St. John Lutheran Church in Quincy, IL led a team of 14 church members to visit and meet with Pastor Rinalds Grants and the congregational leadership of Old St. Gertrudes Lutheran Church in Riga. The purpose of the visit was to become better acquainted with the challenges and the ministry opportunities in Riga so that the two churches could develop their partnership relationship. Mark met with the team to talk about their visit and offer support in helping them determine how they might provide a positive influence. Pastor Bender said the trip was a very positive learning experience. He was most impressed with the Alpha Course program at St. Gertrudes. Over 150 people are currently attending the weekly classes to introduce people to the Christian faith.



## Thanks to All for Your Continued Support



We give thanks to God for the many congregations and individuals that continue to give us the prayer and financial support needed for us to continue our ministry in the Baltic region. The past three years we have served in the Baltics have been challenging, but also a real blessing for both of us. Without your continued support we wouldn't be able to serve. Thank you so much! After three years of building relationships with the leadership and pastors of the three Lutheran Churches in the Baltics, God is now opening new opportunities for service. Some of those opportunities were shared with you in this newsletter. Some are just developing as I am writing this article.

The economic challenges have made it more difficult to receive the funding needed to continue. But we believe God will provide the needed funding. If God is moving you to help us with a special gift before Christmas, that would be greatly appreciated. You can send your tax deductible gift a number of ways. Each way will work to apply your gift to our account. Just make sure you say it is for financial support for Mark and Rose Krause in the Baltic Region.

Gary Thies and his many volunteers at "Mission Central" work hard to raise funds for missionaries and special mission projects throughout the world. You can send your gift to support Rev. Mark and Rose Krause in the Baltic Region to "Mission Central – LCMS World Mission, 40718 Highway E. 16, Mapleton, IA 51034. Gary will send your entire gift to St. Louis.

You can also send your gift to support Rev. Mark and Rose Krause in the Baltic region directly to LCMS World Mission, Missionary Support, PO Box 790089, St. Louis, MO 63179-0089. For those who are familiar with the internet you can also give your gift online by going to [www.lcms.org](http://www.lcms.org). Click on "Make a Gift", then click on LCMS Mission Eurasia, then click on Latvia, then click on "Give Now" next to support for Mark and Rose Krause. They will then tell you how you can give electronically.

