

**Friends of the Baltics Summary Report**  
**Partnership Discussions with**  
**Friends of Lithuania, Friends of Latvia, and Friends of Estonia**

**BEGINNING CONNECTIONS**

The *Friends of the Baltics* group was formed in 2018 by Ullas Tankler and Jeanie Reimer from Global Ministries who, for many years participated, in the *Friends of Estonia*, *Friends of Latvia*, and *Friends of Lithuania* gatherings. Seeing many similarities and challenges between the ministries of the Methodist Church in the three Baltic countries, we saw an opportunity to bring together representatives from each group. The purpose was clearly defined as a way to learn about each other, to understand the ministries in each country, and to build relationships, not to merge together as one group. Ultimately, we want to support each other in the ministry of God's work. (Representatives from each group: Jim and Rachel Davis and Carl and Page Henry – *Friends of Estonia*; Mark and Julie Croft and Chuck Gildrie – *Friends of Latvia*; and Rev. Kelly Clem, Rev. Dale Clem, and Robin Richardson – *Friends of Lithuania*.)

During one of the first meetings of the *Friends of the Baltics*, we discussed ways that our three groups could work on a shared project with the goal of inspiring and creating more awareness and understanding of each other. In the discussion, we became aware that there was little collaboration or communication between these three *Friends* groups so we set about to have the *Friends of the Baltics* group work on that issue.

The idea of a shared discussion to be facilitated at each annual *Friends* gathering was an idea that surfaced with great enthusiasm. We agreed this would provide invaluable insight into how the three groups are similar, how we share the same spiritual connection with our partners, and how we love that God has placed us in ministry with our friends in the Baltics. We agreed the discussion would be rooted in a Bible passage as our overarching guide for the discussion (John 1:35-51 was selected). In this passage, Jesus is calling his first disciples. They are eager to share with others the good news that they have found Jesus, the Messiah. Like the disciples, encouraging others to “come and see”, we are invited to “come and see” how God will transform us through our relationships and partnership in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Questions were created that encouraged discussion about how we are surprised and transformed through our relationships and partnerships, how we see Jesus at work in these countries, and other questions.

**PARTNERSHIP DISCUSSION PROCESS**

It was agreed that we would facilitate a face-to-face discussion at each of the next *Friends* gatherings. *Friends of Lithuania* and *Friends of Estonia* were able to have the discussion in person. *Friends of Latvia* had to cancel their annual gathering in 2019 and had planned on having a face-to-face discussion in 2020, however, Covid made that impossible. Instead, their discussion was held at their Zoom Gathering in May 2020 which proved to be just as effective. The following questions were selected for the discussion:

1. *How have you been surprised, transformed through your relationship/partnership with the people from the Methodist Church in Estonia/Latvia/Lithuania?*
2. *What would you want to share about where you have seen signs of Jesus in Estonia/Latvia/ Lithuania?*
3. *What do people in Estonia/Latvia/Lithuania think about Jesus? Who do they think he is? What do people in the US think about Jesus? Who do they think he is?*
4. *What would you say to people who are considering being in partnership with the Methodist Church in Estonia/Latvia/ Lithuania about why they should do this? How will both partners benefit?*
5. *Where did we see the work of God's Kingdom during the years of Soviet occupation? Where do you see it today in the midst of the tumultuous worldwide climate of terrorism, violence and hatred?*

The same questions were asked of each group. Notes were taken to gather the responses generated from the discussion. The complete responses follow as attachments to this report and format and demographics of each group are listed here:

### **Friends of Lithuania**

The *Friends of Lithuania* gathering was held on November 3, 2018 at FUMC Royal Oak, in Royal Oak, Michigan. The format selected was to hold the discussion with the entire group so all could hear the questions responses. There were approximately 35 lay and clergy from the Lithuania and the US who participated. The comments received after the discussion were extremely positive. People spoke about how it was good to hear from others about their partnerships and it affirmed for many the importance of keeping these partnerships alive.

### **Friends of Estonia**

The *Friends of Estonia* gathering was held on May 11, 2019 at Mt. Bethel UMC in Marietta, Georgia. The format selected was to break into small groups for the discussion. There were 6 small groups, 4 in English, 1 in Estonian and 1 in Russian with approximately 50 lay and clergy participating. Comments received after the discussion supported how important these discussions are to affirm the importance of our partnerships.

### **Friends of Latvia**

The *Friends of Latvia* gathering was held via a Zoom call on May 30, 2020. There were approximately 40 people on the call who participated with clergy and lay representation from Latvia and the US. Even though we did not know how the discussion would go using Zoom, it went remarkably well with people from both countries passionately sharing their perspectives.

### **SUMMARY**

As you read the responses from each of group, you will see many similarities and shared experiences. It is exciting to see how God has brought people together from across the world to be in ministry together. The responses reiterate how these partnerships, and now lifelong relationships for many, have inspired and transformed people both in the US and in the Baltic countries.

Here are a sampling of responses from each *Friends* group. For a complete report of each group, please read the full responses at the end of this report. You will be amazed at the similarities and passion for which each group shares their responses.

### **Sample of responses from Friends of Estonia, Friends of Latvia, and Friends of Lithuania:**

1. *How have you been surprised, transformed through your relationship/partnership with the people from the Methodist Church in Estonia/Latvia/Lithuania?*

#### Friends of Estonia:

- Deep love and long-term friendships that have developed
- God knows no language barriers and the Holy Spirit is not bound by distance & cultures.

#### Friends of Latvia

- I continue to be surprised and transformed through Jesus Christ by my friends in Latvia.
- We become family with our partners. We have lifetime relationships. Their hospitality is overwhelming and humbling.

#### Friends of Lithuania:

- The love and commitment shown to us for the past 20 years has been a gift from God.
- No matter what country, continent, language, there are not boundaries when working for God's Kingdom.

2. *What would you want to share about where you have seen signs of Jesus in Estonia/Latvia/Lithuania?*

Friends of Estonia:

- In the people in the churches, their obvious love for God
- See Jesus in Estonia in Camp Gideon, Baltic Seminary, District Superintendent, individual congregations, Lighthouse

Friends of Latvia:

- Where do I begin? I see Jesus everywhere, every church, every pastor, Hope Center, Wesley Camp, every single person. He is everywhere.
- We are different because of our partnership with the Latvians. We become better people. Jesus is among us and teaches us together.

Friends of Lithuania:

- Our partnerships show such love for each other. We see each other the way that Jesus want us to see each other.
- Seeing Jesus in the life of the elders who persisted in their faith despite the hardships of Soviet occupation where you had to hide your religious beliefs and practices.

3. *What would you say to people who are considering being in partnership with the Methodist Church in Estonia/Latvia/ Lithuania about why they should do this? How will both partners benefit?*

Friends of Estonia:

- Be prepared to be blessed beyond measure. Beneficial for both partners: prayer, hope, sharing the love of Jesus, miracles, lifelong relationships, family. (You have to know the history to appreciate the culture.) It is a brave thing to go out of your home into different. Leaving family, home, obligations behind and depending on others, sharing your faith and praying with someone you just met will build your faith more than 100 Sunday sermons.
- It is a brave thing to go out of your home into different. Leaving family, home, obligations behind and depending on others, sharing your faith and praying with someone you just met will build your faith more than 100 Sunday sermons.

Friends of Latvia:

- First, I would say "Just do it". Second, I would ask, do you need more love in your life? Do you need more faith? Hope? If you need more of God's fruit in your life, that is how you will benefit.
- You will get to experience God's grace in a new and very visible way that will deepen your faith and experience with Christ. You will bless those you visit by mirroring God's love and you will be blessed by what you receive back.

Friends of Lithuania:

- You will see Jesus in the hearts of the Lithuania people
- This is your opportunity to . . .
  - Be transformed and inspired
  - To see Jesus
  - To really live your faith
  - To meet Jesus face-to-face
  - To give and to receive

Appendix I *Friends of Lithuania* Partnership Discussion Responses, November 3, 2018

Appendix II *Friends of Estonia* Partnership Discussion Responses, May 11, 2019

Appendix III *Friends of Latvia* Partnership Discussion Responses, May 30, 2020

For information about this report or the *Friends of the Baltics* group, please contact Jeanie Reimer at [jreimer@umcmmission.org](mailto:jreimer@umcmmission.org) or 920-851-5485

***Friends of Lithuania***  
**Partnership Discussion Responses**  
**Royal Oak UMC, Royal Oak, Michigan**  
**November 3, 2018**

**1. How have you been surprised, transformed through your relationship/partnership with the people from the Methodist Church in Lithuania?**

- I realized on a personal level that we are a Global church and that is why Methodism is so important to me.
- Trips to Lithuania are a religious/spiritual experience from start to finish.
- The people of Lithuania influence me still today because of their strength during difficult times that I will never have to face personally.
- The power of religion/faith has been sustained in Lithuania even during times of soviet oppression.
- I have not been in control of this process of forming and sustaining a partnership with the Methodist Church in Lithuania, but I have seen examples in my life where I know God is in control of our partnership.
- I feel the closest to God when I am on a mission trip to Lithuania.
- There are differences in the mission field between the US and Lithuania. Sometimes I see people in the US getting “burned out” by mission and I see the Lithuanians have a totally different approach – there is a hunger for missions but there is not burnout.
- My faith seems so much more alive when I am in Lithuania.
- I am humbled by the faith of the Lithuania people.

**From Lithuanian’s attending conference:**

- My first encounter with a missionary from the US was that she gave me a warm welcome and that was very different than our religious leaders in Lithuania. They are usually more distant and not as friends. This had a major impact on me.
- American’s are good people.
- The love and commitment shown to us for the past 20 years has been a gift from God.
- We work together for Christ – that is our responsibility.
- No matter what country, continent, language, there are no boundaries when working for God’s Kingdom.

**2. What would you want to share with our friends in Latvia and Estonia about where you have seen signs of Jesus in Lithuania? (How have you experienced Jesus to be at work in Lithuania?)**

- Seeing Jesus in the life of the elders who persisted in their faith despite the hardships of Soviet occupation where you had to hide your religious beliefs and practices.
- Seeing Jesus in the 3 pastors – they do so much with so little. They inspire me and make me want to do more.

- Seeing the “eyes and smiles” of the shut-ins – even though they have nothing to share, they shared the most important thing to me which is their smile and their welcome in to their home.
- Easter is not just a good story. The Easter story is alive and real in Lithuania. The stone is rolled away in Lithuania. Jesus is alive.
- I saw Jesus in the Birzai Church with their love for us.
- See Jesus in the fellowship and joy of being together with our brothers and sisters in Christ in Lithuania.
- Our partnerships show such love for each other. We see each other the way that Jesus wants us to see each other.
- Seeing Jesus in the youth and their enthusiasm about studying the Bible.
- Seeing Jesus in Toni, Loni, and their brother at Kaunas Methodist Church who were waiting for the church to be reopened as they remember being in that church when they were children. They were so full of joy in the Methodist church being re-established

**What do people in Lithuania think about Jesus? Who do they think he is?**

- See Jesus as the “suffering Jesus” or “worried Jesus” as depicted in the hand-carvings of Jesus.
- All Lithuania’s honor Mary because of the Catholic tradition.
- We know Jesus is alive by looking at the Americans. Lithuanians can see clearer who Jesus is in Americans.
- Jesus really cares about us.
- Religion and faith is very hard for Lithuanians to talk about. It is a private space and we are learning to talk more about this with help from our friends in the US.
- Lithuania people want blessings – even if they are not religious. Pastors visit in hospital – they want a pastor to bless them especially if they think they are dying. Even atheists seek help in the church when they are struggling.
- Our country’s independence is a gift from God.
- “The Baltic Way” – 2 million people from Vilnius to Riga to Tallinn all holding hands in unity for freedom. This is the spirit of the Baltics. We wanted to show the strength of the Baltic spirit. That is much like believing in Jesus.

**What do people in the United States say about Jesus? Who do we think he is?**

- He is our Savior. He is the best teacher ever showing us how to love, to live a better way.
- Jesus is someone we want to emulate – “what would Jesus do?”
- A Muslim friend once told me that Jesus is the only perfect man there ever was. I believe this.
- Some in the US see Jesus as being judgmental; we do not see him that way.
- Jesus is God incarnate to teach us how to love.
- Fewer people in the US believe in Jesus. Many don’t know who Jesus is.
- Growing up, I “practiced religion”. Now I try to grow in faith and live my faith.

**3. What would you say to people who are considering being in partnership with the Methodist Church in Lithuania about why they should do this? How will both partners benefit?**

- You will be transformed.
- You will see Jesus in the hearts of the Lithuanian people.
- It will re-energize your faith.
- You will be inspired by the resiliency of the people.
- Do this for your own faith journey.
- I want you to know the love of Christ – this partnership will do that.
- This is our opportunity to spread God’s love to another area of the world where the Soviet occupation eradicated so many things regarding faith and region.
- Your salvation is at stake, too.
- They are such a blessing to us.
- This is your opportunity to . . .
  - be transformed and inspired
  - to see Jesus
  - to really live your faith
  - to meet Jesus face-to-face
  - to give and to receive

**4. Where did we see the work of God’s Kingdom during the years of Soviet occupation?**

- In how people helped others even though they too could have been deported or killed themselves.
- In the smuggling of books, Bibles, etc. to keep language and faith alive.
- In the stories of hearing people shutting their curtains to pray and sing in German so the KGB would not understand their words. Honoring the Sabbath at such a huge cost if they were caught.
- Methodist closed their doors, but some went underground to keep practicing their faith.
- In Estonia, it was not allowed to teach children about religion, so people would have “birthday parties” so they could gather the children and teach them in a way that the KGB would not understand what they were teaching.

**5. Where do we see it today in the midst of the tumultuous worldwide climate of terrorism, violence and hatred?**

- People are stepping forward and saying, “no more” and doing something. This is different than in the past when many people would not get involved.
- Different faiths coming together.
- God says, “Love your neighbor”. That has a significant meaning today more than ever.
- People who are standing up in the face of injustice and risking their personal lives.
- Our partnerships are sharing God’s love and emulating what Jesus wanted us to do.

***Friends of Estonia***  
**Partnership Discussion Responses**  
**Mt. Bethel UMC, Marietta, Georgia**  
**May 11, 2019**

**1. How have you been surprised and transformed through your relationship/partnership with the people from the Methodist Church in Estonia? From the United States?**

- Their dedication/commitment through the Soviet years
- Dependence on prayer
- Heart connection – hard to describe
- Passion of young people in the church (now)
- Love, kindness, openness, support
- Each side felt partners had what was needed
- How we prepare as mission team & how flexible & focus on relationships
- Wonder “how can I make a difference?” & they impact us so much
- Flexibility, patience, time – based on relationships
- Prayers
- Deep friendships
- I have seen greater reliance on God’s provision among the Estonians and greater joy even in difficulties. This has made me more grateful for what I have.
- Meeting other Estonians in a different context makes us debate difficulty even to each other. We will see our situations from a different point of view enlightening.
- I am just moved by the stories when Americans tell about how God has put Estonia into their heart.
- Belief in prayer
- Looking inward changed to looking outward
- Being loved in culture of keeping things tight
- Power of prayer
- Strength of the people thru hard times – passion of young people
- By the depth of the Estonian faith
- Deep love and long-term friendships that have developed
- God knows no language barriers and the Holy Spirit is not bound by distance & cultures.
- The prayers requested by Estonians, humbling, Taavi Hollman
- Welcoming & warm prayer life
- Just the love/relationship connections
- Surprised at depth of affection & real relationships – individual & much of other Christians
- Taught me faith, prayer, preplanning
- Trust in details of team leadership
- Surprised by the depth & longevity of the relationships
- Prayer requests, especially for sustenance
- Watching the children grow
- Warm & welcoming
- Continued communication & social media

**2. What would you want to share with our friends in Latvia and Lithuania about where you have seen signs of Jesus in Estonia? (How have you experienced Jesus to be at work in Estonia?)**

- Children's ministry at Camp Gideon & Sunbeam
- The seminary
- Camps
- Youth work
- Artur Põld – Godly man – but takes care of business – fearless in the name of the Lord
- How things began – Holy Spirit was moving – details
- Prevenient grace at work – stories, experiences, God is working to pull people back to Him
- Deep commitment & faith
- VBS at Agape Church in Pärnu
- Prayer support
- In VBS camps, where Jesus is presented, I have seen positive changes in the children participating.
- I think that hospitality is important. New people bring new ideas. This is nothing to be afraid of. In Estonia, the churches that focus on relationships grow more than others.
- When I have done street mission, my experience has been that most people are open to have prayer or talk about God. I see the fields are quite ready and we as Christians should be bold and step out.
- Starting seminary, building Baltic Mission Center
- Hope in country, deep faith of youth – Joel Aulis (youth pastor)
- Hope for future
- Seminary and camps, youth work
- Building of seminary
- Deep faith of youth
- There are many Americans who have a heart for spreading the work of the church in their country when we see that they are receptive.
- In the people in the churches, their obvious love for God
- I have seen Jesus in the smiles of every child and host/hostess. I have felt the servant's heart through their hospitality. Camp Gideon is where Jesus is working in Estonia.
- Seminary, Camp Gideon, Sunbeam
- Seminary
- Prayer life
- Local pastors and congregations
- Just the love
- Faith led to trust in finances
- Faithfulness to Estonian's vision regarding UMC
- See Jesus in Estonian in Camp Gideon, Baltic Seminary, District Superintendent, individual congregations, Lighthouse
- Children
- Faith led to trust in finances

**3. What do people in Estonia think about Jesus? Who do they think he is? What do people in the US think about Jesus? Who do they think he is?**

- Secular country – atheist

- (in Estonia) believers – savior, friend, source of strength, protector; non-believers – crutch, for people and children, mythical
- (in US) believers – best friend, savior, confident; non-believers – fairy tale, for previous generation
- Those who believe seem very vibrant and excited about Jesus as Savior & Lord. Have not really encountered non-believers.
- I do not hear enough about Jesus actually. Jesus meets needs, ethical living. I teach a class in Seminary where we focus on Jesus' life not on this death only. (Savior)
- I think the church people think he is our Saviour and I think we can go far deeper with relationship with him.
- Know His name but not Him
- More faith than made public
- This is a question to ask our Estonian contacts. This is their daily challenge – we do not see the details of the unchurched majority.
- The people in the church love to Him & serve Him. Those outside don't know who He is. Christians love Him but many are lukewarm.
- Most do not believe Jesus is the Savior of the world & God's Son (in Estonia). In the USA, many believe that Jesus is who he says he is in the Bible, but do not have a relationship with Jesus.
- Same, but Estonians more physical healings
- Estonian Christians – Savior; same
- Some are very accepting and see the light; some unsure because prayers don't happen; example Misha but sees our love
- (in Estonia) Jesus is real, personal, is God's Son; (in US) Jesus is a personal savior and that US is a "Christian" nation, God's Son
- Lots of atheists in Estonia, therefore, assume Jesus was a man, prophet, or fictional

**4. What would you say to people who are considering being in partnership with the Methodist Church in Estonia about why they should do this? How will both partners benefit?**

- Transformational experience
- Friendships
- Impact of ministries on Baltics through seminary & ministries
- Investment in seminary has such a broad impact
- Bring the Gospel to Estonia
- Friendship and partnership in ministry
- Life changing
- Cross-cultural experiences – one big world and one big God
- It's both ways – Estonian church holds us up too. Their prayer has held us up.
- Deepens faith – both sides
- Strong witness example
- Blessing of friendship
- Stretches faith
- There is definitely growth in some locations & need for working together to spread the gospel to other locations. There is joy in working together to fulfill God's purposes. Others may have new ideas that will benefit.
- It is a brave thing to go out of your home into different. Leaving family, home, obligations behind and depending on others, sharing your faith and praying with someone you just met will build your faith more than 100 Sunday sermons.

- I believe churches and leaders in USA have a lot to offer how to do church, outreaches, how to lead. I think in Estonia we can be more open to new ideas how to reach younger generation.
- Grows your faith – opens your eyes there and here
- Christian model about inclusion
- Consider partnering prayerfully. Enter into partnerships only if you feel led and are willing to follow where it leads you. Richly for both partners.
- It furthers the Kingdom of God. They will gain wonderful new friends.
- You can support each other in different ways.
- Be prepared to be blessed beyond measure. Beneficial for both partners: prayer, hope, sharing the love of Jesus, miracles, lifelong relationships, family. (You have to know the history to appreciate the culture.)
- Seminary there offers services in Russian – Sergei Sutskov’s church (in Kohtla-Järve)
- Christianity stymied during occupation
- Their life & faith will be enriched, enriching both ways
- Would be blessed to be in partnership – see being brother & sisters in Christ in a new way

**5. Where did we see the work of God's Kingdom during the years of Soviet occupation? Where do we see it today in the midst of the tumultuous worldwide climate of terrorism, violence and hatred?**

- Olav and Urve Parnamet’s “birthday” parties to maintain Sunday School
- Olav and Eddie Fox’s partnership/friendship
- God was alive & working – especially through Olav Parnamets (see his book)
- Kingdom – our “kingdoms” have fallen; our focus is on God; we are family
- Estonia will become a lighthouse
- Source of peace, strength, and faith
- Our confidence is in the Lord!
- Those Christians stayed strong in their faith by encouraging and supporting one another.
- Nowhere, really, for I was not a Christian yet. Just Holy Spirit somehow working in my heart. When people care of others. World is selfish place. Christians care about those who are left under-privileged.
- The church of Christ continued through the Soviet time, despite all the threats.
- Everywhere – church survived
- Fear not as intense if they know Jesus
- Can’t image during Soviet times; very troublesome
- The Methodist churches that survived. The churches continue to reach out to the lost.
- The Soviet remnants are still very much alive. Lives, especially of the older, are still very affected by their past. The youth are moving away but struggling because of those who remember.
- Alive & well underground church
- Eddie Fox and Olav Parnamet’s stories
- Still challenging only different
- Church survived
- Struggling in atheistic culture
- A light in darkness
- in Estonia, the church continued
- Martyrs

***Friends of Latvia***  
**Partnership Discussion Responses**  
**Online Zoom Call**  
**May 30, 2020**

**1. How have you been surprised, transformed through your relationship/partnership with the people from the Methodist Church in Latvia?**

**Comments from Latvian partners:**

- I am transformed everytime I see you. In spring, I usually think about Ireland but this spring I thought of the US partners. I prayed for my friends in the states. This helps me to not give up on my ministry. It helps me to keep going. You have a very special place in my heart. I love you.
- The connection is about relationships, not just about monetary donations, but like family relationships.
- I am amazed at God's grace on both sides, amazed at what has happened to me and how deeply this partnership has affected me. It's like agape love.
- I really miss you when you are not here and I love talking with you and working with you.
- God is so faithful. There is such grace on both sides. I am amazed at what has happened to me – how deeply I am affected by all of you. Surely you are my family. I am so blessed. This is God's grace and God working is working in us. So thankful to God. He has blessed us.
- Others agreed with that point that the partnerships are a big blessing to them, the most important thing is the relationships.

**Comments from US partners:**

- The Holy Spirit moves me when we hear the depth of faith we see in the Latvians and how many of the church's concerns are similar to the US.
- The depth of faith of the Latvian pastors transforms my faith.
- I continue to be surprised and transformed through Jesus Christ by my friends in Latvia.
- 2005 was my first visit to Latvia under the *In Mission Together* (IMT) program (through Global Ministries). People asked me why not just send money instead of incurring the cost of travel, but travel/building relationships was/is a fundamental value of the IMT program. Being face to face with people allows you to build friendships and relationships and those still continue today. That does not happen with just sending a check.
- I leave my heart in Latvia everytime I travel there.
- In addition to becoming friends, you become like family, the relationship is forever.
- It's like becoming family, you fall in love.
- The commitment and enthusiasms of the Latvian people and the strength of their faith.
- I am thankful for the Latvians who have taken me into their family. At first, it felt like we were long lost cousins; now it feels like we are brothers and sisters. I have much love and admiration for the pastors. Deep love for Wesley camp. I have been to Latvia 12 times and each time I

appreciate it more and love them more. It has surprised me how much my love grows deeper each time I go.

- We become family with our partners. We have lifetime relationships. Their hospitality is overwhelming and humbling.
- We hope to get the Walk to Emmaus in the Baltics. I fall in love over and over again when I go to Latvia.
- I have moved away now, and what has surprised me is that Latvians are as much a part of my church family as my US church families that I have been a part of. I feel as much love for them, feel that they are family, look to them for spiritual encouragement and nourishment.

**2. What would you want to share with our friends in Lithuania and Estonia about where you have seen signs of Jesus in Latvia? (How have you experienced Jesus to be at work in Latvia?)**

- Where do I begin? I see Jesus everywhere, every church, every pastor, Hope Center, Wesley Camp, every single person. He is everywhere.
- I see how the church has grown, see the joy and love and support of each other, how Faithful Men reacted by the love with which they were shown in Latvia and how it changed them. We sing better – beyond our own abilities. Jesus is part of the Latvians having courage to allow us to be 50/50 partners.
- The enthusiasm of linking Jesus, and how Ullas connected the scripture about “Come and See to being found”, through inviting and sharing with each other.
- We are different because of our partnership with the Latvians. We become better people. Jesus is among us and teaches us together.

**3. What do people in Latvia think about Jesus? Who do they think he is? What do people in the US think about Jesus? Who do they think he is?**

**Comments from Latvian partners:**

- Jesus said love each other. You are showing this love not only by words but by works.
- Jesus is a friend you can trust, always. He brings peace amid turmoil in the world.
- Christ is truly the Way, the Truth, and the Life once we have opened our heart to Him.

**Comments from US partners:**

- Jesus was a teacher. He has so much to teach us about love, how to treat one another, about grace and peace.
- We are having a battle in our country (US). Political leaders are seen as idols, we are fighting and not caring for each other. Through our relationship with Latvians, we can show people about love and what Jesus has taught us. It is a family with much love for all.
- In the states, we read about the Disciples in our Bible studies and at church. In Latvia, I feel like I am truly seeing disciples in action and working along with them.
- AMEN!

**4. What would you say to people who are considering being in partnership with the Methodist Church in Latvia about why they should do this? How will both partners benefit?**

- My goal is to share about Latvia and get people interested in going, knowing once they go, they will fall in love with the Latvians and with Latvia.
- It's hard to get people to get on a plane to go so far, but they would see Christianity at work.
- Sometimes Pastors in US have personal agendas or previous missions they favor, and it's hard when you get a new pastor at your church, to get them interested. That is why we need to keep talking about this within our church and to share with our pastors why this partnership with Latvia is so important.
- You will gain a terrific new family!
- First, I would say "Just do it". Second, I would ask . . .do you need more love in your life? Do you need more faith? Hope? If you need more of God's fruit in your life, that's how you will benefit.
- You will get to experience God's grace in a new and very visible way that will deepen your faith and experience with Christ. You will bless those you visit by mirroring God's love and you will be blessed by what you receive back.
- You get to see, firsthand, what your presence can do with people and their churches. You see that you can have a positive impact on others of different language and history. You will find that we are truly one in Christ and you will be changed.
- Because of you I started to learn English 🗣️
- Our pastor came to Latvia and saw a need of a new piano at Riga 1st. He went back to his grandparent's Methodist church, and told them of the need. This church, with the help of others, helped to get a new piano for Riga 1st. We need to keep telling the story, and others will hear, and be moved to reach out.
- If you want to see agape love, this is it.

**5. Where did we see the work of God's Kingdom during the years of Soviet occupation? Where do we see it today in the midst of the tumultuous worldwide climate of terrorism, violence, and hatred?**

- In my first trip, 9 years after freedom in Latvia was restored, I saw that during the occupation, 2nd Riga had pretended to be Lutheran, but Methodist traditions had prevailed. Faithful Men sang at a nursing home and a gentleman shared he had kept hope of US coming back.
- Under Soviet regime, the message to me was that "I am not enough, that I need to work better, to do better". When I went to the US at age 18, I saw how creative the ministries were in the US and that God's Holy Spirit was working in you. I learned that we all need one another to do God's work. When Faithful Men and other teams come to Latvia and they see our ministries, they are amazed and appreciate how much we are doing. This builds us up and helps us to keep going. We need each other to see what we do not see in ourselves. We help each other to see how God is working in each other.

- The adults had to work in communist regulated enterprises, like factories, certainly in the organization of the common farms and so on. As far as I know, they were not permitted to speak in native Latvian for any official business. If they do talk about their experiences under communism that means they trust the person who asked them. Trust from what I understand is a very difficult thing to have for them in a free society. Under communism they did not know who to trust, who might use information against the person and so on. The people who survived in Eastern Europe are strong, strong people. I admire them so much for what they must have lived through.
- LOVE that... we all need each other so that we can see/know who we are