

Complete It... and They Will Come

Ozelnieki, Latvia Church Building Project

The concept in the film "Field of Dreams" starring Kevin Costner was simple, "build it and they will come." Kevin Costner's character was motivated by the voice he heard in the film to build a baseball field out in the middle of his cornfield. While this idea sounded crazy to everyone but the character Kevin Costner played, eventually everyone bought into the idea once they saw the results of his dream when the old-time baseball players appeared. A line of cars appeared on the road leading to the baseball field, the field of dreams. While Costner's character was placing the family farm in jeopardy, the dream he had was eventually realized. But this was just a movie. Thoughts of Faith has a real life "build it and they will come" opportunity in Latvia in completing a church building project. You can help make this possible. Please read on.

Thoughts of Faith (ToF) and the Confessional Lutheran Church in Latvia (CLCL) are working hard to complete the Ozelnieki church building project. A generous donor on the west coast donated the original funds that were initially thought to be enough to complete the church building. Latvia joined the European Union a few years ago and the cost of materials and labor increased greatly. The over-all cost of the church building project escalated way beyond the original estimates. Generally, the Lutheran church members in Latvia, where the country still struggles economically, do not have the resources to contribute much to the building project.

The city of Ozelnieki has donated the land the church is being built on and has also said they would contribute \$15,000 to the building project. Another \$230,000 is still needed to complete the building project so services can be held there.

At present, the Ozelnieki congregation worships in a rented facility. In Central and Eastern Europe, people are more likely to visit a church for the first time that has a permanent church building over a rented building. The Lutheran church in Ozelnieki is the only church located in this community, yet most people from the area do not attend services at the rented building the Ozelnieki congregation is using.

How can you help? We believe if we complete it... they will come! The Ozelnieki congregation wants to finish their new church building to be able to draw more people to hear the true Gospel message being preached.

You can help them spread God's truths with your generous donations to this building project. Consider personally making a generous donation earmarked for the Ozelnieki building fund. Also, communicate this opportunity to those in your church who may be able to contribute or to your

Church Council asking them to consider making a major donation on behalf of your church. Please contact Larry Dilgard at the ToF office toll-free at (877) 892-4718 for more information.

**Together, we can complete this project...
and they will come!**

Ozelnieki church under construction



Easter Blessings in Latvia

Our Lord continues to bless the mission of the Confessional Lutheran Church of Latvia. On Easter Sunday nine souls joined the flock of Christ through Holy Baptism. Easter services throughout our church body were very well attended and our pastors reported many visitors.

This Easter season we experienced a special blessing from the publishing work of the Augsburg Institute, and of the "Latvian Lutheran" magazine in particular. Talis Skuja, his wife and two children joined our Riga congregation on the third Sunday after Easter. Talis was a fourth year student at the Luther Academy in Riga belonging to the liberal Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia. During his studies he came to the understanding that if he were to be ordained in the liberal church, he would not be expected to exercise his pastoral duties according to the Lutheran Confessions. Reading the "Latvian Lutheran" he learned of the "Confessional Lutheranism" of our Confessional Lutheran Church of Latvia and of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference. A month ago he visited our church and after two or three visits he expressed a wish to join our church body. He quit his studies at the Luther Academy right before his graduation. It is quite a confession!



The pastors of the Confessional Lutheran Church of Latvia

Recently we learned that Thoughts of Faith and generous donors are helping to fulfill our dream of printing our own Worship Manual! It will be a great help for our pastoral work. We are looking forward to using this Worship Manual to help us preach the Good News to the people of Latvia.

*By: Rev. Gundars Bakulis
Superintendent (President), Confessional Lutheran
Church of Latvia*

Ukraine

Living By Faith in Christ

"And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me" Psalm 50:15

A few years ago I was leading the Bible class at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Kherson, Ukraine. It was a nice spring day and we studied the Book of Psalms. As homework I asked our students of different ages to memorize verse 15. The next week as we met together in the same group an older lady was the one who volunteered to recite the verse, "And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me" (Psalm 50:15). Her name was Maria Osypenko. She was 81 and after she had heard of the Ukrainian Lutheran Church she joined our church. She liked the Gospel preached in our church. She studied the Catechism diligently and finally became a communicant member of the congregation. She had a very difficult life. She was born after the Communists came to power in southern Ukraine. Her family had to move from place to place looking for food after everything they had was confiscated by Soviets in 1933.

Maria was baptized and she heard a few Bible verses she cherished in her heart. She could not understand much of



Maria Osypenko receives a large print bible from Rev. Oleh Stetsiuk

what the local Orthodox priests were teaching people because everything was in the old Slavonic language. When she heard a Lutheran sermon in Ukrainian and when she got her Ukrainian Bible in large print, she was so joyful and optimistic about her future. And she was right! For it is written, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith," Romans 1:16,17. She lived by faith.

Last spring Maria had a stroke and I visited her. She was suffering and yet I saw a joyful Christian lady. She asked for confession and Holy Communion. She received the true body and blood of our Savior. I paid attention to the fact that her Bible was divided by book marks and it was easy to see that her Bible was read regularly. Maria told me at the end of my visit, "God will give me power to be in His Church." In a few days she was in the Church Triumphant. She put her trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Maria called Him. He delivered Maria. She is saved. Her story is a story of victory and of glorifying the Lord in eternity. For the Lord says, "And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me." Maria continues to honor the Lord Jesus in His Heavenly Kingdom. "Thy Kingdom come!"

*Rev. Oleh Stetsiuk
Pastor, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Kherson, Ukraine*