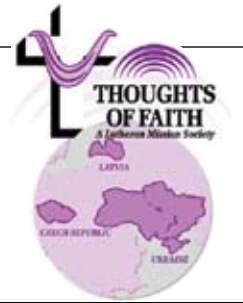


Thoughts of Faith

Thoughts of Faith is a confessional Lutheran mission society dedicated to spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ to Ukraine, the Czech Republic and Latvia through printed materials and personal ministry.



October 2008

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Donations for the Lord's work in Ukraine, Czech Republic and Latvia may be sent directly to Thoughts of Faith. Please see the enclosed envelope to donate by check or by credit card.

VBS in Ukraine: Another Mission "Prehoda"

The Ukrainian word "prehoda" means adventure. Forty-six American volunteers experienced their "prehoda" of a lifetime on the 2008 Ukraine Vacation Bible School (VBS) trip. Their purpose was to assist congregations of the Ukrainian Lutheran Church with VBS programs. The programs reach spiritually weak or unbelieving children and adults with the Gospel message.

The volunteers traveled from Minneapolis and Chicago to Kyiv, Ukraine, on June 24th. The trip took about 13 hours. They arrived safely with all of their luggage and 17 duffel bags of craft supplies. That evening everyone was excited to be in Ukraine, but very tired. The next day the group did a walking tour of the beautiful city of Kyiv. The third day the volunteers met as a group to go over details for teaching VBS before dispersing to 14 locations throughout Ukraine. For many the journey was by train, with some enduring an 18-hour ride.

Each day's VBS program included the VBS lesson, craft projects, singing, English lessons, snacks and game time. In addition, the volunteers experienced family life and Ukrainian culture as they made excursions to neighboring areas. We praise God that during the two weeks in Ukraine, more than 600 children and about 120 adults participated.

Additional articles on this year's VBS program are included in this newsletter. Please take time to read about these wonderful efforts and learn more about the evangelism and outreach work being done cooperatively with the American volunteers and pastors and members of the Ukrainian Lutheran Church.

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Opportunities for Next Year

Success of the VBS program depends on energetic people devoted to spreading the Gospel message in a foreign land. Applications are being sought for the 2009 Ukraine program. Please consider this opportunity if you are free from the end of June to mid-July,



Coloring Bible story illustrations is a part of Vacation Bible School in Ukraine...and the world over.

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From the Executive Director

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6

Thoughts of Faith (ToF) has been blessed with its direct relationship to the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) for many years. ToF was incorporated in 1982 as an independent not-for-profit Lutheran mission society. In 1988 ToF was approved as a "church-related organization" of the ELS. ToF and the ELS have enjoyed this positive relationship for the past 20 years.

Typically, foreign missions are a direct operation of a synod. The ELS has expanded its missions from Peru and Chile to Korea and India. Discussions about the ELS incorporating ToF directly under its Board for Foreign Missions have taken place over the past year and one-half. This discussion culminated this past summer at the ELS convention with a resolution approving ToF moving to the ELS. The operations of ToF have been headquartered in Oregon, Wis., for seven years under the direction of the ToF Board of Directors. There will be a transition over the next year moving the operations to the ELS headquarters in Mankato, Minn. The ELS Board for Foreign Missions is being restructured to

incorporate the operations by Jan. 1, 2010. This is a positive change that adds the full backing of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod to the mission work of Thoughts of Faith. While the change is occurring in the U.S., it is expected that there will not be much change in the mission fields.

The work of Thoughts of Faith has been blessed in its support by many people from many places. You have provided your prayers and financial support to restart the Lutheran church in the formerly Communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

Much work needs to be done as this transition takes place over the next year. But more importantly, your continued prayers and financial support are needed now and in the future to keep this mission work moving forward. Please use the enclosed envelope to send your donations to Thoughts of Faith, 280 W. Netherwood Road, Oregon, WI, 53575.

We "trust in the Lord" to provide the workers and the support, whether through Thoughts of Faith or the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, for the missions in Ukraine, the Czech Republic and Latvia.



*Kermit Traska
Oregon, Wis.*



The volunteers from America gather for a group picture in Kyiv.

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are an ELS or WELS member, a junior or senior in high school, a college student or an adult. Please contact us for more information by e-mail at: pamtof@att.net or by phone toll-free at (877) 892-4718. You too can have the "prehoda" of your life!

Financial support is needed

The American volunteers pay for their flight and some of the travel expenses in Ukraine. Donations to Thoughts of

Faith cover the remainder of the costs. The program has been supported by grants from foundations and individuals. Please consider a generous donation designated for the Ukraine VBS program.

All praise and glory to God alone.

*Kermit Traska
Executive Director
Thoughts of Faith*

Sowing the Seed of God's Word in Ukraine

On June 24, forty-six American volunteers from Thoughts of Faith boarded planes bound for Ukraine to teach Vacation Bible School. They were teenagers, young adults, adults and retirees. They were from California, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Oregon, Texas, Washington and Wisconsin. They were ELS and WELS. For some it was their first trip abroad (or even their first plane trip); others were seasoned travelers; and some were returning to Ukraine to for a second, third or even fifth time. They were filled with excitement and apprehension: What would it be like to teach through a translator? What would accommodations and food be like? What difficulties would be encountered not knowing Ukrainian or, in some cases, Russian? Despite their differences and their fears, the volunteers were united in the desire to reach out to God's children in Ukraine with the message of love and forgiveness found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

After spending several days in the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv relaxing, touring and receiving orientation, the group dispersed to the VBS locations. For three of us -- Heidi Reiter, Kirsten Johnson and me -- the destination was Ivano-Frankivsk, a bustling city of 250,000 in west central Ukraine, not far from the Carpathian Mountains. The three of us would work with a young pastor of the Ukrainian Lutheran congregation there, Rev. Serhiy Romanyuk. He is an enthusiastic supporter of the VBS program and sees it as an effective way to reach out to the community, especially the children. I was pleased to be working with him for the second year in a row and knew that he had been laying the groundwork by distributing some 3,000 VBS invitations to homes in the area.

At church that first Sunday, the American volunteers were introduced to the members of the small Lutheran congregation. Worship and Bible classes, as well as VBS, were conducted in several rented rooms in an office building in the city center. By Monday morning, Heidi, Kirsten and I were prepared and anxious to meet our classes and our translators. We had three classrooms available, so we divided the children into three groups. Kirsten had the youngest children, ages 5-8; I took ages 9-11; and Heidi, with Pastor Romanyuk as her translator, taught ages 12-16.

Our Bible lessons included Creation and the fall into sin and then leaped forward to the humble birth, perfect life, atoning death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the help of our translators we were able to instill the basic tenets of our faith in these children. Hymns that echoed these truths were taught daily, some in English and others in Ukrainian, with keyboard accompaniment by the church's musician. The translators worked with the students to memorize Bible passages and rewarded jobs well done with pieces of candy. Craft projects were greeted enthusiastically by the kids and reinforced the day's lesson. When time permitted, we taught English with the help of games, booklets and other activities. The first day flew by in a blur and that was the pattern for each succeeding day.

Afternoons were spent preparing for the next day's lessons, getting to know our host families and visiting places of interest. One evening we took VBS to a group of 60 at a resi-

dential sanitarium for children with behavioral problems. With Pastor Romanyuk translating, we taught the Christmas story, chosen mainly because we could scrape together supplies for crafts to reinforce that lesson, and sang "Jesus Loves Me, This I Know" with hand motions. We worked in a hot, steamy room lit by a single bare bulb. These children were enthusiastic and eager to hear, learn and do. What a blessing they were to our experience in Ukraine!

On Saturday morning, before setting off for a day of adven-



Pupils in Ivano-Frankivsk sing traditional Christian songs.

tures, we accompanied Pastor Romanyuk to a "geriatric hospital" (home for the elderly) where he conducts a worship service and Bible class each week. There are no Lutheran elderly there, but Pastor Romanyuk is committed to sowing the seed of the Word and bringing the comfort that only Jesus can give to those lonely and forgotten souls. What a sobering and heart-rending experience. What a blessing his ministry is to these people!

Too quickly our last day of VBS was upon us. There would be no lessons on this day because parents, siblings and friends had been invited to hear, in song, what the children had learned. It was a day for the parents to meet the American teachers, to exchange thanks, to take pictures and gather lesson books and craft projects to be carried home. It was one last opportunity to share the good news of Jesus and for Pastor Romanyuk to invite the children and their families to return for church on Sunday.

On the first day of VBS, our attendance was 29. By the end of the two weeks we had reached a total of 49 children, some attending for the entire two weeks, while others came off-and-on, and still others were present one or two days. We ended each day with a prayer and the questions: "Who can come back tomorrow?" and "Who will bring a friend with them tomorrow?" The missionary zeal of some of our students was inspirational. It reflected the spirit with which we came to Ukraine and the power of the seed of God's Word that we humbly sowed. We pray that seed will grow and flourish in that rocky soil.

*Polly Joubert
Hartland, Wis.*

Return of Volunteers Eagerly Awaited

By changing a familiar phrase used in America and Ukraine -- In God We Trust -- we can say: God Trusts Us. God trusts his faithful followers to preach the Word of God to other people. "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." Matthew 28:18-20.

The Word of God is useful for everybody. It is a very important mission to bring the truth about Christ from the purity and fullness of the Bible to the youngest members of society because the Bible says, "Let the little children come to me." Matthew 19:14. That is why the congregations of the Ukrainian Lutheran Church conduct Vacation Bible School each summer.

VBS was first held in Oleksandria in 2005, but not for the next two years. Children who participated in 2005 kept asking members of the Oleksandria congregation if they would be having VBS again this year. Our congregation was looking forward to having the program return. So it was good to know that there would again be VBS in Oleksandria in 2008.

As time for VBS drew near, many other children heard about the program and were anxious to attend. That day finally arrived on June 30th. Children who had previously participated in VBS came and brought their friends. Other people learned about VBS from literature distributed by members of our congregation.

Thirty children showed up on the first day. The number of participants went up each day during the two weeks of lessons. The American teachers were Edward Bremberger and Michael Puglisi from Wisconsin and Lauren Wisdom from California. The teachers presented the Word of God about creation of the world, the fall of man, and the work of Jesus Christ.

The program provided nine days of wonderful VBS lessons, craft projects and songs. The children also learned some English. All lessons focused on God's truth and were used to tell about Jesus. During music classes, the children were able to express their joy about what they learned each day. There were also breaks when the children went outside to play games and enjoy refreshments. But above all, the children were exposed to the Word of God, where they heard of salvation through Jesus Christ.

During the final days of VBS, our town experienced a severe wind and thunderstorm. With the weather raging, 35 children still found their way to the church for the closing program. About 100 people attended in all.

For the American teachers, much of the time outside of VBS activities was spent with Oleksandria area residents. One day they met with a group of people learning English; on another they met believers of different Christian confessions. The tireless Americans went to two nearby villages. They visited a museum and learned about the everyday life of Ukrainians in the past. They also took a trip to the ravines, the river valley and the lake created 80 years ago when water rushed from a spring. They walked to another

village where they visited a family farm where vegetables are grown in hot houses and in the open air. They had lunch in the shade of trees and ate food grown on the farm. The group returned to Oleksandria by train and everybody was tired but excited about the trip to the villages of Protopopivka and Aleyevka. On another day, the teachers visited another museum and saw an exhibition of pictures by one of the upper level VBS students.



Pastor Oleksandr Dich

The two weeks of VBS classes passed quickly for the workers of Christ who came to Oleksandria to sow the Word of God and help the local congregation and pastor in their ministry. "For the Word of God is alive and active." Hebrews 4:12a. Some of the children knew a little about Jesus Christ and were very excited to learn more. The children and their parents were satisfied with what they learned. The teachers and the congregation rejoiced when we heard that some children heard the truths of Jesus for the first time. One mother shared her impressions of the changes in her son after he joined VBS. She told us that through the classes the Holy Spirit managed to draw her six-year-old son to God. The VBS teachers and all the members of the congregation were especially pleased when the VBS children and their parents accepted the invitation to come to the worship service on Sunday.

Our Ukrainian Lutheran congregation and many residents of Oleksandria are grateful to God for the generous sowing of the Word of God this year in our town.

*Oleksandr Dich, Pastor
Holy Trinity Congregation
Oleksandria, Ukraine*

Thoughts of Faith Facts

Thoughts of Faith was incorporated in 1982 and first used a Christian radio broadcast into Ukraine as the start of the Gospel outreach mission work.

- On-site work started in Ukraine with the Ukrainian Lutheran Church in 1991
- On-site work started in the Czech Republic with the Czech Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1991
- Support first started in Latvia with the Confessional Lutheran Church in Latvia in 1998



Your Continued Support is Needed

We thank God, and we thank you, for your continued generous support of the work of Thoughts of Faith in Central and Eastern Europe. While we are blessed with personal financial donations at mid-year running modestly ahead of last year's total, we have to conclude that it will not be enough to compensate for the serious impact of a \$100,000 reduction in annual giving by a major Thoughts of Faith donor organization. The Board of Directors and faithful field workers of Thoughts of Faith ask you to prayerfully consider an additional financial gift at this critical time in order that we may meet our expenses.

Significant factors contributing to our financial shortage are the devaluation of the dollar and rampant inflation in Central and Eastern Europe. The result is that our dollars

have only about half the buying power they had five or six years ago. We are now at a point where mission programs may be affected without additional donations. This could mean fewer classes at Martin Luther School in the Czech Republic, fewer seminary students at St. Sophia Seminary in Ukraine, fewer issues of the Latvian Lutheran and other program reductions.

Thoughts of Faith has been blessed in 2008, but we need your continued financial support in order to fully fund the Thoughts of Faith programs. Your generous donation sent to Thoughts of Faith at 280 W. Netherwood Road, Oregon, WI, 53575, would be truly appreciated and invested wisely in the Kingdom of God. Thank you for your interest and support.

Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9:7

Gift of Life—Ukraine

Good Health Arrives on Wheels

For the needy people of Ukraine, the Medical Clinic on Wheels (MCOW) means free access to preventive medical and dental care. In July of 2008 the MCOW rolled in and opened the doors of its two buses to children and adults of the Buchach District in the Ternopil region in Western Ukraine.

The high infant mortality rate here is especially disturbing. Insufficient funding, outdated equipment, problems related to strange religious movements and widespread poverty are some of the factors that cause medical problems in this district. In addition, there is no pediatric dentist in our region. The Medical Clinic on Wheels addressed this acute need for medical and dental care. Work was organized for two weeks in the area of Golden Stream Village and for three weeks near the town of Buchach. The dental clinic provided examinations, fluoride treatments, fillings and other basic dental services to more than 700 patients.

Workers at the medical clinic examined and diagnosed patients, conducting blood tests, vision and hearing screening, urinalysis and other diagnostic procedures. Health information was provided and vitamins were given without charge.

Thanks to the diagnostics provided by the Medical Clinic on Wheels, many children were diagnosed with anemia, enlarged thyroid glands due to iodine deficiency and worms. Another achievement of clinic doctors was to help patients realize the need for preventive health care. For some people, it was their first visit to a doctor and their first dental care.

Most importantly, all of the patients had an opportunity to hear about God's love found in Jesus Christ from a deaconess of the Ukrainian Lutheran Church who travels with the clinics. The clinic staff enjoyed their work in Buchach and look forward to treating many more patients with the help of the Great Physician.

*Olena Surmiak,
Buchach, Ukraine*



For many, dental care offered by the Medical Clinic on Wheels is a first-time experience.



Deaconess Lyudmyla Voichunas teaches children about Jesus beside one of the clinic buses.

Editor's Note: Olena Surmiak is assistant chief of the Buchach District Council and is familiar with the work of the Ukrainian Lutheran Church.

“On the Front Lines” of Mission Work

From the beginning of Thoughts of Faith mission work in the Czech Republic 17 years ago, American volunteer workers have played a crucially important role in sharing the saving message of Jesus with the Czech people. Over the years, 70 Americans have served as volunteers in the Czech Mission. Some came to this mission field shortly after college; some came while on a year's sabbatical from their teaching positions; some came several years into retirement. Some had been trained as church workers at Bethany Lutheran College or Martin Luther College; others had attended public colleges. The volunteers have been different from one another in many ways, but they shared a common goal: As Christians they wanted to dedicate a year of their lives to working “on the front lines” in a foreign mission.

What do American volunteers do in the Czech Mission? Most of them teach religion and English classes on a daily basis to the children in our Christian school. In addition, they share the Gospel with adults in evening activities designed to reach out to the community. According to their interests, they also lead youth groups, coach athletic teams, play the organ for worship services, lead youth choirs and help with Gospel outreach activities in nearby villages where our mission has preaching stations.

Volunteers who serve in the Czech Republic are always busy and they are called upon to work hard.



A volunteer from America teaches a class in Plzen.

But they enjoy a precious opportunity: sharing the message of Jesus with people in a land where almost no one has ever heard the saving message of Jesus. To make it possible for volunteers to devote their time and effort to reaching out with the Gospel, our mission provides modern and fully equipped apartments for them to live in, a stipend to help with living expenses, airfare to and from the mission field and health insurance.

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Is the Lord Tapping on My Shoulder?

In the Scriptures we often read how the Lord tapped the shoulders of those who were to preach his Word. The Lord called Samuel; the Lord chose the reluctant Moses; and, on the road to Damascus, the Lord tapped Saul (Paul) a little harder than usual.

For the past several years, I went through the process of deciding when was the proper time for me to retire from the pastoral and teaching ministry. Finally, the decision was made. After 46 years of service, I informed the president of Luther Preparatory School in Watertown, Wis., that the 2007-2008 school year would be my last. For many the decision to retire is easy and is made years in advance. They want to get rid of rigid schedules and have the freedom to do what they want to do when they want to do it. Perhaps it means rubbing the rust off the golf clubs, visiting chil-

dren and enjoying grandchildren, or trying to visit a few of the interesting places in the world.

I made the decision to “retire” and in less than two weeks the Lord was tapping me on my shoulder saying, “I want you to consider whether or not you are finished yet. I want you to go back to Plzen as a volunteer and teach ninth grade English; and, by the way, I have two vicars there who have almost completed their theological studies. I want you to guide them through the Book of Romans and the Formula of Concord, and how about preaching once a month?”

I am sure that some of my friends and colleagues thought that I had “flipped my lid” when I decided to lock up the house and accept the call to the Czech Republic. For me it was a “no-brainer.” It was the only thing to do and I am totally happy and content to be here. I will probably work harder this year than any other year in my life.

Maybe it is ironic. Some say that



Rev. Harold Schewe and Jeanne Schewe.

God has a sense of humor, or maybe he is reaffirming that he wanted me in Plzen. My first sermon text is from Samuel.

Rev. Harold Schewe

Editor's Note: Rev. Harold Schewe and his wife, Jeanne, served as volunteers in the Czech Mission during the 2000-2001 school year and recently returned to Plzen to serve a second year.

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Frequently asked questions

Who can volunteer? Any member of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod or the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod who has a college diploma. Individuals as well as couples may apply. Prior to arrival, volunteers need a Czech work permit and a long-term Czech visa. The process of obtaining those documents is straightforward, but takes at least six months. (Unfortunately, that means that May or June college graduates are not able to serve in the year of their graduation.)

Do volunteers need a degree in education or a teacher's license? No, however, they do need a bachelor's degree in some subject.

What is it like living in the Czech Republic? The Czech Republic is a small nation (about the size of South Carolina). Its climate is similar to the climate of Tennessee or Kentucky. The Czech Republic is a safe place for Americans to live and work.

What about the language problem? The volunteers use English in their classrooms and in other activities.

What is the application process? If you are interested in volunteering during the 2009-2010 school year (September

through June), or if you would like more information, e-mail me, Pastor Mark Grubbs, the Czech Mission director, at the address listed below. I will provide background information and details and answer questions. If you decide to volunteer, you will be asked to work with a representative of WELS Kingdom Workers in the United States. WELS Kingdom Workers will ask you to fill out an application form and meet with one of its representatives. When that process has been completed, the Thoughts of Faith Board will extend one-year calls to those whose abilities fit the needs of the mission. Volunteers who receive calls decide to accept or decline, based on the Lord's guidance.

How important is the time element? If you are interested in serving during the next school year, September 2009 through June 2010, it is important to begin the process as soon as possible. There is no doubt that the Czech Mission will need volunteer workers, but the "red tape" takes a lot of time. So, if you would like more information about using your time and talents in sharing the saving message of Jesus in the Czech Republic, please contact me as soon as possible.

*Pastor Mark Grubbs
Director of the Czech Mission
e-mail: maryjoang@yahoo.com*

Ukraine

Changing Times at the Seminary

Some things don't change. Our students grow daily in their knowledge of God's Word. Our staff continues to faithfully teach that Word. Professors and pastors from the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod willingly come to Ukraine to serve as guest professors. Our seminary's old van, by God's grace and our mechanic's skill, keeps rolling.

Some things do change, however. Changing conditions call for changes in the means we use to fulfill our mission. That is certainly true for us at St. Sophia Seminary in Ternopil, Ukraine.

We opened the year with only three on-campus students in the seminary department. This is a significant reduction. Why? Changing conditions in Ukraine are part of the answer. For one thing, the post-Communist interest in religion seems to have cooled, and the growth of our congregations has slowed. As a result, young men with potential to become pastors are fewer. Another factor is the changed economic situation. Inflation and devaluation of the dollar have eroded a pastor's pay – as well as the buying power of the stipends that make it possible for men with families to study full-time at the seminary.

The changes have led to a big change at our seminary. This year we have four men in the preparatory department, but none of them is on campus. We will be supplying

courses while they live at home and work at their secular jobs. We will be using a variety of distance-learning methods, including self-guided home study, Internet classes, brief face-to-face courses, often with the professor going to the student's home. We have some experience with this because one of our students lives in Bulgaria and is instructed through such means. While this is not the ideal way to train pastors, it may be the necessary way of the future.

Another change at St. Sophia is the use of a variety of languages. About half of the people in Ukraine, including some of our students, speak Russian. And to enjoy the worldwide fellowship we have in the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference requires the use of English. St. Sophia seminary is trying to meet the language needs for pastors in the 21st Century. When we have guest students who understand Russian better than Ukrainian, our classroom translator uses Russian. Our Russian-speakers conduct chapel once a week using a Russian liturgy. English is taught twice a week as a required course. And new this year, one chapel service each week is conducted in English.

Yes, things change, but our Lord's promise remains sure: "It will not return to me empty..." That promise lies behind our enthusiasm and confidence as we seek to carry out our mission of preparing pastors who will share the Gospel with the people of Eastern Europe.

*Rev. John Vogt, Rector
St. Sophia Seminary*

Summer Youth Camp on a Baltic Beach

At the end of July, which is the warmest and most pleasant time of the year here on the Baltic Sea, our Confessional Lutheran Church held its annual youth camp. Even though our summer has not been very warm, the week of our camp was sunny and beautiful. We accepted it with thanksgiving as the Lord's good gift.

This year our youth camp took place in Saulkrasti, 30 miles northeast of our capital, Riga, on a delightful beach. Attending were 25 young people and a few volunteers from our congregations who helped with medical assistance, meals, activities and crafts.

The teaching and preaching was done by Rev. Didzis Melkis, Rev. Ugis Sildegis and Janis Erno, a student of theology. The First Letter of John was the topic for the Bible studies and for the morning and evening devotions. We were confronted with a question: What would the Apostle John say if he were here today to teach us?

We came to an understanding that even though our modern age seems so different from those ancient days when the Apostle John lived, the problems and challenges for God's people remain the same. It means that even today we need the same basic teaching, which the Apostle John put forth so powerfully.

As in those old days, we too have to face the power of sin, death and devil, and we are still in need of God's grace, which is given to us only in our gracious Savior Jesus Christ. Special attention in our Bible studies was given to such themes as walking in light, the meaning of new birth and new life, living in brotherly love and the assurance of our salvation.

One of the most important features of this letter is John's admonition to love one another. "Love" is a very confusing word in today's culture. In our Bible studies we had a wonderful opportunity to take up some of the false meanings and clarify the true meaning of the word "love" as



Campers relax with a game of cards under the Baltic sun.

revealed by Jesus Christ, who showed us what perfect love is all about.

During our camp we had not only serious and thoughtful times in our Bible studies, but also fun and entertainment. Since the weather was hot, we spent time swimming and playing volleyball. This was a fruitful experience for friendships and Christian fellowship among the young brothers and sisters in Christ.

Most of the participants in the camp were young people who are growing up in our congregations and who regularly take part in our camps. There were also some newcomers. After the camp ended, one of the new young men started to come to worship services at our Riga congregation and expressed a desire to go through confirmation class and become a member.

We thank our dear Lord for the great time at the summer camp and for watching over us.

*Rev. Ugis Sildegis
Riga, Latvia*

Ukraine

A Blessed Summer at Resurrection in Kyiv

The summer of 2008 has been a blessed time for the Resurrection Lutheran Church in Kyiv. Three young people were invited to their first Holy Communion after they attended catechism classes and were found to be confessors of our precious faith in the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. All of them are students in high schools of Kyiv and are children of parish members. Alina Plakhotniuk, Inna Khavchenko and Vladyslav Horpynchuk received the true body and blood of our Savior Jesus Christ on June 15, the day our church celebrated Pentecost according to the Julian calendar. The new communicants received as their confirmation gifts the Book of Concord, white roses and pins with Martin Luther's rose on them.

Three children became citizens of the kingdom of heaven

through Baptism. On Pentecost Day, a baby boy, Nikit, was baptized. His life had been rescued through the efforts of the Gift of Life Charitable Foundation and its faithful worker, Anna Kuchma. Two other children, twins – Yulia and Katerina -- were baptized on July 19. They were a true miracle for their mother, Olena Boiko, whose prayers for children were so bountifully responded to by our gracious and generous Lord! The Lord says, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." Mark 10:14 KJV

What a wonderful mission to be stewards of such great mysteries of the Lord as Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Our congregation is thankful to Thoughts of Faith for the support provided for the ministry of the Gospel.

*Rev. V'yacheslav Horpynchuk, Pastor
Resurrection Lutheran Church
Kyiv, Ukraine*