



January 5, 2017

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Hi Everyone and Happy New Year!

A day before New Year's Eve, Pastor Sasha sent me the greeting "Shavua Tov." In Hebrew, this literally means "good week" but is intended to express the message "Have a Joyful Week!" It was a greeting I received whole-heartedly and want to extend it to all of you – not just for this week but for the 52 weeks of 2017 - So Shavua Tov 52 times! I then learned another expression: "Shona Tov." This means "Blessed Year."

So, as you start out 2017 I'm praying for you all to have a Joyful and Blessed year! In fact, Psalm 5:11-12 confirms that this is something you can expect as believers ☺. It reads:

*But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You;
Let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them;
Let those also who love Your name
Be joyful in You.
For You, O LORD, will bless the righteous;
With favor You will surround him as a shield.*

This became very real to us on New Year's Eve, when our daughter Emily got engaged – it was still 2016 in her time zone and already 2017 in ours – we rejoiced that we could both end one year and start another on this event. Just a confirmation of the joy and blessings God has for us.

Thanks for helping us through 2016 with your prayers and support – it was quite the year – I will leave it at that – I woke up on January 1st with the thought we made it. 2016 has ended and it is time to move into 2017 with renewed focus and faith – we climbed the mountains of 2016 and we'll climb any mountains of 2017 ☺. So, a Very Happy, Joyful, and Blessed New Year to all of you!

NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER ACTIVITY

Here is a quick summary of some of the things we've been up to since our last newsletter:

- Ministered at churches in Riga, Daugavpils, Jurmala, Kalnciems, and Marupe, Latvia at Sunday services the month of November and the first two Sundays in December.
- Ministered at Friday Night Outreaches on November 9, 23, and the 9 of December.
- Board meeting for the Baltic School of Ministry (BSM) and met with the leader of History Makers.
- Meeting with the Director of Hope for Children and attended a fund raiser event for their centers.
- Spoke at a Christmas Eve Service, a New Year Service, and the 20th Anniversary Celebration for the Church in Gardene.

And after 9 trips to the Immigration Office, we are very happy to tell you that we all have our residence permits! Thanks for all your prayers regarding this – special thanks to Pastor Wayne for all his help with documents and mailing!

The outreach services at Word of Truth ended on December 23 after 7 years. The church will start to do more active street ministry and more one on one ministry with individual families. It is sad and exciting – sad to see something I have participated in over the last 7 years come to an end and exciting to see what the Lord has in store moving forward. Over the last 7 years many, many people have come to salvation in addition to receiving food and clothing. Many people's apartments have been renovated, many have received healing, many have been released from addictions, and many have come into the church family. Please pray as the team makes this ministry transition.

Last month when I was preaching at Factory-99 we met the director of a Christian ministry called Hope for Children. Her name is Helen and she is originally from the UK, but came to Latvia in the early 90s. Over the past 20 plus years, she has opened a children's home, several after school facilities, and locations to collect and distribute food, clothing, and household products for families in need.

Beginning in January we will begin to get more involved with this organization, helping in both spiritual and practical ways. In addition to extending God's love and Good News, and praying for individuals and needs, MaryBeth and Amy have been asked to help teach the kids English, provide help with school work, and read Bible stories. In addition, MaryBeth will have the opportunity to use her nursing skills and teach them on the importance of personal hygiene.

LOOKING TO 2017

For 2017, in addition to serving the churches in both the Russian and Latvian speaking Unions, we will serve the following organizations in Latvia in whatever ways we can:

- The Baltic School of Ministry (BSM): BSM is a one year program running from September to May. I have been a teacher with BSM since 2010 and started serving on the board of directors in 2015. The website is **Schoolofministry.lv**
- Hope for Children: Hope for Children runs three children's day centers in three separate towns and a family center in Riga. These facilities provide love, safety, meals, clothing, education assistance, and financial assistance among other things. The website is **Hope.lv**
- History Makers: History Makers is a youth organization that brings together young people from various denominations, nationalities, and walks of life. Many students from BSM serve with History Makers which was my initial connection to this organization. I've been a speaker at their annual Youth Conference and have since formed close friendships with the leadership. The website is **Historymakers.lv**
- Smethurst Ministries: Many of you already know Dave Smethurst. He supports many orphanages in Latvia and Ukraine. In addition, he has an open door of ministry within the Latvian military, the Latvian Professional Basketball League, and regularly serves as chaplain to the summer Olympics. His website is **Smethurstministries.org**

My upcoming schedule includes:

- I will be at the Baltic School of Ministry (BSM) from January 9-20, teaching on Spiritual Disciplines.
- We will be preaching and ministering at Factory-99 Church January 8, 15, and 29.
- Going to an orphanage outside of Riga with Word of Truth this month for an evening of games with the children, plus taking supplies and gifts.
- We have History Makers Youth Conference January 27-28.
- Ministering at the Church in Gardene February 5.
- Also in February, we will be headed to Liepaja, in the Southwest corner of Latvia to give a Worship Seminar to the church's Worship Team and minister during their Sunday service.

PRAYER NEEDS

- Continue to pray for the Linser family as they transition to a new culture and languages, plus any other way the Lord leads you to pray.
- Pray for a young single woman who recently came to Hope for Children pregnant. She had every intention of aborting her child, but choose to keep her baby! She is now a single mom with very little financial resources. We met her at Factory-99 when she came with our friend Helen.
- Pray for my upcoming weeks at BSM.

YOUR FINANCIAL IMPACT

Lastly, we'd like to give you a financial report of our giving here in Latvia. From September through December, in addition to the expenses of setting up our home, securing our residence permits, and insurances, we financially helped in the following ways:

- Provided \$1,000 in love offerings to the churches we visited to go towards their needs and efforts.
- We gave \$450 to Hope for Children for their Christmas efforts to buy gifts and clothing for the children in their centers.
- We gave \$1,000 to the Baltic School of Ministry. Half went to pay the first semester tuition for a student in need. The remainder went to support the staff.
- \$450 was giving to help cover the hospital costs of two individuals – one had back surgery and the other a liver transplant.

None of our efforts would be possible without your prayers and your ongoing support! If you feel led - financial gifts can be made through www.Celebrationcc.com.

Love and Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doug". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a long, sweeping underline.