



February 16, 2018

Dear Friends and Family,

Many thanks to all of you who have been praying for me and my travels – seriously, I could not do the things I do without your prayers! January and February have been busy, and March is looking very much the same.

WORD OF TRUTH CHURCH IN RIGA

As you'll remember, Amy and I left for Latvia on January 11th and arrived late afternoon on the 12th. We spent the first weekend with Word of Truth church in Riga. Amy wasted no time and was at the Youth Meeting several hours after we arrived – so much for jet lag 😊.

I spent time with Bishop Nikolajs and ministered at the church during their Sunday morning and Wednesday evening services.



This was our home church while living in Latvia and it was good to see everyone and give them an update of our previous three months in the US.

BALTIC SCHOOL OF MINISTRY

After the weekend, Amy and I were off to spend the next two weeks at the Baltic School of Ministry (BSM) in Ozolnieki. Over the course of 10 days, I taught 31 classes, share the message during 2 chapels, and ministered to every student over the course of 3.5 hours during a Worship Evening. This class has 8 students who are the son or daughter of a pastor from either Latvia, Estonia, England, Germany, or the USA. We spent class times studying “Spiritual Disciplines” and “Praise & Worship.”



During the Worship Evening, I watched as the Lord touched many of them; they were weeping in tears as they received healing for their hearts and encouragement. I continue to be motivated by a verse in Psalms that I believe the Lord highlighted for my ministry:

Psalm 71:17-18 *O God, You have taught me from my youth; and to this day I declare Your wondrous works. Now also when I am old and gray headed, O God, do not forsake me, until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come.*

Reaching this generation means something to me – it’s something very important – and I’m very grateful to have the opportunity to share God’s Truth and impart His love to them. Please continue to pray for this group of students as they finish out their final semester at BSM.

CHURCH PLANT IN VENTSPILS

I spent the weekend in between my two weeks at the school in the town of Ventspils. My good friends Mauro and Julia Martinez moved there this past summer to plant a church. Mauro had asked me to teach on the Lord's Supper and we celebrated Communion for the first time with the same group that currently meets in their home. Before the meeting, I prayed and asked the Lord if there was anything else I should share with the group. He led me to several verses in the Bible about new beginnings. I felt I should encourage them that this church plant is a blessing from God that would be a fresh start for everyone and a new beginning for the community – that they shouldn't look back but forward. When I finished Julia shared with me that they had just recently named the church "New Beginnings." Please continue to pray for this church plant.

Mauro and Julia recently experienced a miracle. When Julia was young she had several surgeries that created scar tissue in her reproductive organs. About a year and a half ago she required another surgery where she and Mauro had to decide between her health or the ability to have children. After much prayer they decided she would have the surgery and they would adopt sometime in the future. MaryBeth and I had spent an evening praying with them about this at the time. I'm happy to tell you that Julia will give birth to their first child this summer. The 4-month ultrasound showed a healthy baby, but even more astounding, her reproductive system was complete and perfectly restored. There was a lot of rejoicing with tears for them and their families. Please pray for the pregnancy and join us in giving praise to God!



HISTORY MAKERS

After finishing my weeks at BSM it was off to the History Makers Winter Youth Conference. From teaching about 20 students to spending a weekend with 500 young people going crazy praising God 😊. I was the oldest one there probably by almost 15 years – happy to report that my 53-year-old body not only survived but felt very much at home raising up a shout to God, teaching His Word, and praying for His kids:



That's me in the center of the picture above shouting "Jesus You are the Way!"



I spent the first part of my session convincing the group that the most influential people on the planet aren't the rich or beautiful, politicians, world leaders, or famous – but rather – the most influential people are God's sons and daughters who have a right relationship with Him, and who know how to seek His will and pray prayers that He answers!



I finished up my time teaching them a story about animals trying to be the best at something they weren't created to be. I encouraged everyone to focus on being the person God created them to be, using the talents and spiritual gifts the Holy Spirit has equipped them with. If you're a duck, don't try to be the best runner – be the best swimmer!

The evenings were spent laying hands on and praying for the mass of people who came forward for prayer. God brought salvation, healing, and freedom from many serious issues – those that came forward weeping left in the joy of the Lord. Please continue to pray for the History Makers Team as they reach the youth of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia.

HOUSE OF GOD CHURCH IN RIGA

I spent my last Sunday at my friend Kristaps Aboltins' church in Riga. Kristaps also heads up History Makers. We had an amazing service with almost double the attendance as normal. I shared a message of moving forward and pressing in to God, especially during difficult times.



I spent an hour praying for individuals for a variety of issues at the end of the service.

NORWAY

After the weekend it was on to Norway where my friends Sasha and Vera had moved their family this past summer. On Wednesday and Thursday, we had evening prayer meetings with about 20 people. Sasha is currently exploring meeting locations that can better accommodate the group.

GIFTS MADE ON YOUR BEHALF

While on this trip I was able to help the following organizations/people financially:

1. Hope for Children: We gave Hope \$1,000 to help the Bolderaja facility. You'll remember from past newsletters. This is the location where MaryBeth and Amy served. It provides warm meals, clothing, and assistance to children in need and at risk.
2. Baltic School of Ministry: We gave BSM \$1,000 to pay the remaining tuition for a student in need. We have provided the entire years tuition for this student who has no other means to attend the school.
3. Church Plant in Ventspils: We gave \$500 to help with this church plant.
4. Family in Need: We gave \$250 to help a family in need with groceries and utilities.
5. Norway Ministry: We gave \$750 to help this upstart ministry.

MaryBeth and I provided personally towards some of these needs, but the majority was given on your behalf!

UPCOMING MINISTRY AND NEEDS

I will be heading back to Latvia on February 28th for a two-week trip. During this time, I will be ministering at three churches – the first weekend will be spent in Bauska and the second weekend in Jurmala and Kalnciems. During the week I will minister at Word of Truth and have meetings with Mauro (pastor in Ventspils), Kristaps (History Makers), Emmanuel (Nigeria), and BSM. Amy and I will fly back to the US on March 13th.

We appreciate your ongoing prayer and financial support as I continue to minister on the mission field abroad. I have been asked to go churches in Ireland and Germany and am now trying to raise support for a combined trip to those locations.

I am also trying to raise financial support for a young woman who needs surgery for hip dysplasia. She is a member of a church in Riga. The medical coverage will not cover the cost, so she needs to raise approximately \$5,000. She can walk, but with difficulty. She has a wonderful attitude and has not asked for help, but I felt led to do something. I have spoken with her pastor and the church is also trying to raise support as well.

As always, I do not want anyone to feel any pressure to give but ask that you prayerfully consider helping towards these ministries and needs. Please feel free to give our newsletter to anyone who might have an interest in helping as well.

Your support is greatly appreciated, and we are constantly giving thanks for you and credit to you!

Financial gifts can be made through www.Celebrationcc.com or mailed to Celebration Community Church, PO Box 140, Columbus NJ, 08022. Your gifts are tax-deductible.

Many Blessings and much love!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ray". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "R" and a cursive "ay" following it.