



CELEBRATION COMMUNITY CHURCH

May 1, 2018

Dear Friends and Family,

Hope everyone is enjoying the real start to our spring/summer season – it looks like in New Jersey that winter's hold has finally been broken! It seems we're jumping straight to summer with temperatures reaching to 90 this week.

Let me give you an update on my last trip to Latvia. Although it was only two weeks in duration, it ended up being jammed pack with ministry!

NEW LIFE CHURCH IN BAUSKA



I arrived in Riga on a Thursday evening and was picked up by Pastor Andrejs Zalucki and taken to his home to stay for the weekend. Andrejs and his wife Rita lead New Life church in Bauska. During Friday and Saturday, I had meetings with their youth group where I taught on "Smart things to do to find the right spouse," and met with several former students of the Baltic School of Ministry (BSM). Then on Sunday I shared the message and prayed for individuals during and after their service.

This church has a housing and support ministry for the elderly and single mothers. Several years ago, they began renovations on a two-floor building, making small studio apartments. Each apartment is basically one room with a private bathroom. In addition to housing, the church also helps with food. After my stay in Bauska it was off to Ozolnieki to stay at BSM.

MEETINGS WITH VENTSPIL CHURCH LEADERS, HOPE FOR CHILDREN, and HISTORY MAKERS

While at BSM, I visited with students and got to see Amy. She had spent the last two months at BSM as a student. I also met with Pastor Mauro and Julia who drove from Ventspils. Over the next several days, I had additional meetings with Hope for Children, History Makers, and my friend Emmanuel, a young man from Nigeria I had been mentoring while living in Riga. On Wednesday evening I ministered at Word of Truth in Riga.

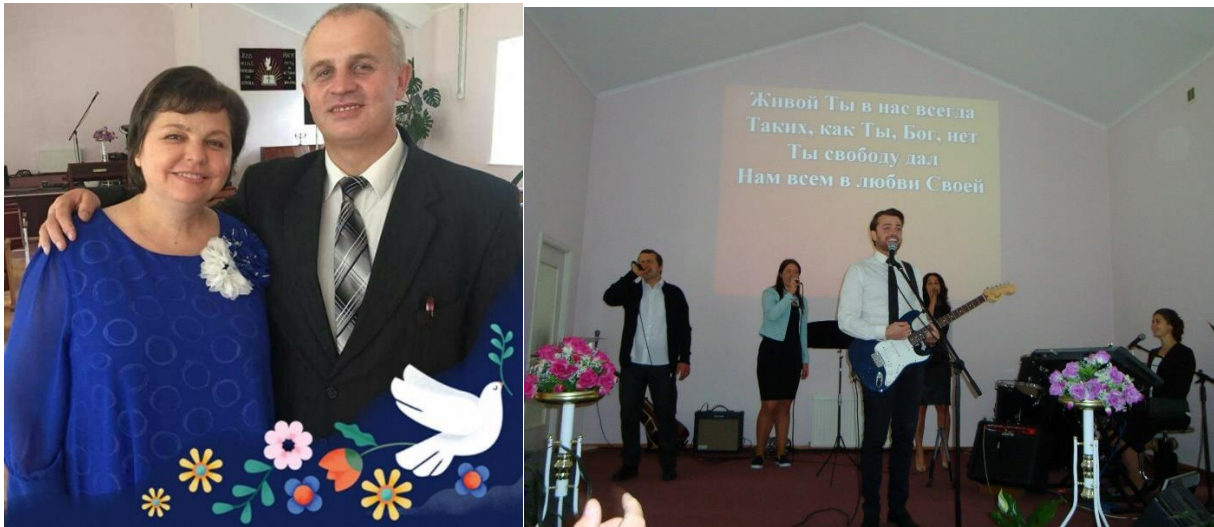
WEEKEND RETREAT WITH HOUSE OF GOD CHURCHES

On Friday and Saturday, I was the speaker at a retreat weekend for the House of God Churches from Riga, Liepaja, and another town. I spent Friday and Saturday teaching on the Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts. The group was eager to receive prayer and then step out in ministering to one another!



I've ministered at the House of God Church in Riga on several occasions, but this was the first time meeting the other churches and its overseer Paul Oleksa. He had invited me on my friend Kristaps' recommendation. Kristaps pastors the Riga church along with leading History Makers. I was grateful for another open door to teach and witness on God's love and His Holy Spirit! Over the weekend many individuals received God's touch and healing, along with His equipping!

CHURCHES IN JURMALA and KALNCIEMS



I left the retreat early Sunday morning to head to the towns of Jurmala and Kalnciems. I ministered in Jurmala in the morning and then Kalnciems in the afternoon. These two churches are pastored by Leonid Filimonov and his wife Galina.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

During this trip, with your help, I was able to give the following financial support:

1. \$500 towards the housing/feeding ministry in **Bauska**.
2. \$400 to help with expenses at **BSM**.
3. \$500 to **Hope for Children**.
4. \$200 to families in need.

BACK IN THE USA

Things did not slow up after getting home to New Jersey. Amy, Cole and I hit the road for a 2000-mile round trip to Jackson, Tennessee to visit Union University. After the visit Amy made the decision to attend Union instead of a school in Florida. I will be taking her there in June for new student orientation and then we will drop her off in the middle of August for her freshmen year.

After returning we turned around for a weekend trip to Virginia Beach to visit Emily and Brian. They both found jobs there after getting married this past June – it was a quick trip but they only live 5 hours away now – yay!

Now back in New Jersey, I have been helping the church by leading worship, teaching, and with the transition to our new location. Lots of painting, cleaning, moving etc. before the first service in June.

WHAT'S AHEAD

I will finally be getting some time to pray and seek God's heart for what's ahead over the next several months. Due to the churches upcoming move, family events, and some needed rest, I will not be heading back overseas till October. Here is what I have planned during this time:

1. Prayer and fasting, seeking the Lord on His will and plans for this next season.
2. Setting up personal ministry website and other social media tools/apps.
3. Transition to new church location.
4. Celebrating Amy's graduation and 30th anniversary.
5. Hosting BSM student in July
6. Hosting History Makers leaders in September.
7. Raising funds for ministry and trip in October.

FINANCIAL NEEDS

1. Summer Youth Camps: **Live to Overcome** camp is run by Word of Truth church and runs throughout the month of July – it ministers to church youth from several countries along with under-privilege children from age 7 to late teens. **History Makers** camp takes place in mid-August and is the largest youth camp in Latvia, drawing youth from many other countries besides Latvia. It is a camp for youth age 15 and older.
2. Church plant in Ventspils, Latvia: Pastor Mauro and Julia moved to Ventspils last summer and currently have a small group meeting in their apartment. They are moving to a new larger apartment this month and are expecting their first child in June.
3. Surgery costs: Last newsletter I told you about a young woman with hip dysplasia. She is still in need of surgery and we are trying to help the churches efforts to help raise necessary funds.
4. Travel expenses: In October, I will be traveling to both Latvia and Cologne, Germany, and possibly Norway.

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.

BIG THANK YOU AND SHORT MESSAGE

Most of you know the crazy life changes that have occurred in my life and my family lives over the last couple of years. It's been a time filled many highs, but some incredible lows. My best reply to those who ask how I am doing is: "I'm finding my way." It's been a season that includes two international moves, the loss of two very close friends, so many open doors, great breakthroughs, tears, rejoicing, but nothing going even remotely close to what was expected or planned. I can't properly express my sincere and intense appreciation to all of you for your prayers and support. I'm not big enough, strong enough, or smart enough to have made it through on my own. Please know that I often am thanking God for you and in some way giving you a hug of appreciation.

Recently in going through a box in storage I found my journal from 1996. It seemed to open to a page on its own where I had written a verse from the book of James:

"But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing."

I went on to write the following:

"Sometimes we ask God for something in our lives – not bad things – good things – and in the time between asking and receiving we experience trials. God encourages us to be patience so that He can make us perfect and complete, lacking nothing. Maybe besides giving us what we ask for, He also provides "pre-training" so that when we receive we know how to better use it – or when we step into a new role we know what to do – the equipping comes in the waiting."

I know I'm not the only one to experience loss or difficult times that challenge your faith. I want to end by encouraging some of you – God's not done with you, He hasn't left you, He's not far away. He loves you, is with you, and in you! There's a new season ahead – keep moving forward in God – winter's hold will be broken – maybe you'll find things becoming better than they've ever been!

That's my closing prayer for all of you – that you'll experience a season in life that's better than it's ever been.

Many Blessings and much love!

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