



Whatever you did
for one of the least
of these brothers,
you did for me. -Jesus

Matthew 25:40

Hope International Ministries NEWSLETTER

September 2003

Returning home after 3 weeks of being in Latvia, thoughts still haven't left me of the boys and girls we became friends with. For some reason, I am reminded of the story of David Wilkerson from his book, "The Cross and the Switchblade," about teenagers in New York. The New York teenagers are similar to those in Latvia. Although the book was set on a different continent, in a different culture and approximately 50 years ago, the problems are the same and the needs are the same. The kids in Latvia, as well as the kids in New York, need to be loved, need to be cared for and need to know Christ. I am so thankful to the Lord that he has given me the opportunity to show these kids Jesus Christ.

We had two camps for a week each and a total of 140 children. In the first camp, we had 70 teenagers between 13 and 18 years of age, the majority of these were from the correctional school we visited before Christmas. I had the oldest group of boys, 8 of them from 16-18 years of age, and the most problematic group of boys. But God performed miracles and I witnessed the changes that came with every passing day.

Each of these boys has their own amazing story. Let me tell you about one of these. His name is Zhenya and he is 17 years old. Zhenya's parents were considerably wealthy people during the communist regime. His father sailed on long voyages and his mother worked as a manager for a big store. Already years ago, they had their own home, car and the best of everything. But with major political changes, trouble came and the store where Zhenya's mother was manager went bankrupt. Huge debt fell on her shoulders and in order to pay the debt, the family lost everything they had. Grief and depression drove Zhenya's parents to heavy drinking and the two children were left to their own fate. Soon both parents were deprived of parental rights and Zhenya and his brother were left with a well-to-do grandmother. But, the oldest brother started to steal and ended up in jail for 7 years. The same lot waited for Zhenya. Running around with bad company, drugs, alcohol and fighting became the norm for his life. However, Zhenya found himself in our Christian camp and on the fourth day of camp he accepted Christ into his heart. We gave him a Bible and after this, Zhenya could always be found reading it. When the first week of camp was finished, Zhenya and a few other guys asked if they could help with the second week. Now Zhenya comes to church every day to help in any way and actively participates in Bible studies. The first Sunday after camp, Zhenya brought his friend to

church and his friend accepted Christ as his personal Savior.

I want to express my deepest thanks to those who help the ministry of HIM. I had a meeting with a Minister for Special Assignments for Children and Family Affairs in Latvia. This strong believer is the former pastor of a large Baptist church in Riga. We spoke about the possibility of opening a Christian center for children in Liepaja, Latvia. Please, pray that God would grant us this possibility. Again, thank you.

Paul Minakov

My name is Nathan White and I am going to be a senior at Wheaton College. I am studying Christian Education and Ministry and I hope to go into foreign missions after I graduate. This past summer I was able to spend a little over a week in Latvia with HIM as a camp counselor. A bilingual Latvian counselor and I were assigned to 8 and 9-year-old boys and we spent the week with them doing skits, eating, sleeping, and playing together. It was a good experience for me in that I was able to minister to needy children, broaden my horizons, and grow as a person. I pray that I made a difference in the lives of some children in Latvia through this trip and I hope that HIM will continue to do the same for many years to come.

Nathan White



Look for our
new website
www.him4kids.org

P.O. Box 211
Wheaton, IL 60189
(630) 546-7605
him4kids@aol.com
www.him4kids.org

Board of Directors

Dr. Sam Shellhamer
Paul Minakov
Jonathan Stevens
Ben Kidder

Far away in a thick Latvian forest in a rustic cabin along a swift flowing river I spent seven days. This was not a vacation it was Hope International Ministries summer camp July 2003. About seventy kids ages 6-12 spent the week learning about the great heroes of the Bible.

My job at camp was to help my friend Ruslan lead a group of seven year old boys and to give English lessons to all the boys in camp. Needless to say there were few dull moments. The days started early with a number of shoes needed to be tied and a lot of teeth to make sure got brushed. During the day we had devotions with our group, later a story about the Bible hero for the day, and finally an all camp meeting with songs, skits, and a Bible lesson taught by one of the pastors from a local church. In between there was field hockey, soccer, obstacle courses, swimming, and lots of great food. Somewhere in that mix a lot of eager boys learned new English words, some of the older boys polished their conversational English skills, and I learned a few Russian words.

It is well evident that God blessed our time in Latvia in many ways. The most obvious was the good weather. Every day was hot and sunny at camp while only twenty miles away the city of Liepaja was hit with thunderstorms and thick fog. Another blessing was good health for our group. Usually someone becomes very ill but not this year. The most important blessing was the volunteer help from the Voice of the Gospel church. Without the help of the church teenagers in the kitchen and setting up each day camp would have been much more difficult. Our group of adult leaders like Anya, Roma, Natasha, Ramil, and Irina worked very diligently at their tasks each day from preparing Bible lessons to cooking huge meals.

At our return from camp to Liepaja the children put on a short program for the many parents waiting to take them home. Quite a few parents stayed to thank us for camp. A few of these parents who have rarely seen the inside of the church have begun attending each week with their children.

Were many children changed from their week at camp? Yes they were! At the last camp meeting I heard a lot of children pray to accept Jesus as their Savior. But please pray for them. Most are from broken homes where fathers have abandoned them. Some like my friend Sasha have a hard time understanding there is a Heavenly Father who loves them personally.

Our work is not done. A vacation? Hardly!

Jonathan Stevens

My summer took an unexpected turn in late June which opened the way for me to travel to Latvia with Hope International Ministries. This was an interesting occurrence for I had desired to visit a Russian-speaking country for some time.

My burden is for spiritual revelation to dawn on the hearts of young people, that they may see the Lord for themselves and begin to walk with Him, to begin to love Him with all their heart. Only the Spirit of the Lord can accomplish this grace in lives, and how I wish for a Living Word to go forth in Latvia and other countries that the people may know their Lord and Savior. The camps gave the kids Bible lessons each day, stories of godly individuals in the Bible and, of course, about Jesus Himself. I think the seeds were planted, the seeds of His word that if properly nurtured can bring forth the beauty of Christ in these kids. How those seeds need to be watered, and tended and looked after by the Gardener, God. "Lord we pray that you would bring to completion the work of your love in the lives of the young people in the camps, that they would turn to you, look to you, know you, and serve you with their heart in this generation. Build your church in Latvia, and use us in any way you desire to fulfill your purposes."

Thanks to Paul Minakov for letting me be part of the trip.

Jesse Hill



PRAYER REQUESTS

PRAY FOR teens who accepted Jesus at camp, especially to be a witness at school this year.

PRAY FOR the possibility of opening a Christian center in Liepaja, Latvia

PRAY FOR counselors who are with children year round.



I would like to thank you for the donations that you have made to support my Latvia trip. When I came to Latvia, I couldn't wait to see the kids that I met last year and I also couldn't wait to meet new kids. Out of the 9 boys that were in my group last year, only 4 of them came again this year (Max, Sergie, El Mar, and Pheolix). I also met a lot of new boys this year such as Valero, Oleg, Anton, Victor, and Sergie. In our group, we had two leaders, Arnes, and Jared (from America). The boys in our group weren't really into reading the Bible but when it came to Bible study, they all listened closely. Also, none of the boys in my group knew how to or liked to pray but near the end of the week of camp, they were volunteering to pray for the food at Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, and at the night time Snack. When I came back to America, I found out that one of the boys is attending and helping the church.

Once again, I would like to thank you for your donations that you have made to support my Latvia trip. GOD BLESS YOU!

Max Minakov