

December 2023

Dear Friends and Faithful Supporters,

The wind was blowing everything sideways and the cold, Baltic Sea air penetrated our clothing like needles through cloth. Such can be the weather in Riga, Latvia in the fall and winter, where we found ourselves last October. Terry and I were waiting for a ride in the center of Riga, which would take us to the Sunday morning street outreach for the homeless, sponsored by Teen Challenge Latvia. The city streets were mostly empty making the experience almost eerie.

Because of the cold, we stepped into the main Lutheran church in the heart of Riga to escape the cutting wind. The Sunday morning service was happening as we entered that huge, magnificent church. I started to count those in attendance and came up with 6 people. That's right; the main Lutheran church in a European Capital City had just 6 people attending their Sunday morning service. To say I was shocked would be an understatement.

At last, our ride arrived and we were transported to the Teen Challenge street outreach in another part of Riga. Sitting in chairs and warming up from the brutal weather were 65 homeless people—mostly men and mostly alcoholics. The TC staff led a small church service and I had the opportunity to share a brief message from God's Word. Then, a nice warm meal was served to everyone who wanted it.

That whole morning served as a poignant reminder of the spiritual condition of much of Europe. While the traditional State Church had just a handful who heard God's word, the street outreach for the homeless—who were many—had more. These kinds of experiences always intensify the desire/need for more action, while working in the harvest fields of Europe.

We found ourselves in several other places in the fall. Somewhat ironically, a trip in Ireland intensified the need for action even more. We visited, among other places, a street outreach for homeless people in Dublin. It is called "The Light House," and that is exactly what it is. Tiglin (TC in Ireland) feeds 420 homeless people per day. The seen need there is overwhelming.

The fall journeys ended with a trip to the poorest country in Europe—Moldova. There we celebrated 20 years of TC work. It is an experience I will never forget but, sadly, don't have the space to report much here. I can say the Spirit of God is alive and moving in that beautiful country!

As the year 2023 closes with so many problems throughout the world, I find myself very thankful for all of you who have stood with Terry and me all of these 40-plus years. We pray for God's abundant provision for all of you in 2024.

Let me close with one prayer request: Pray for Europe!

God Bless,  
Tom