



St. Basil's Basilica, Moscow

“RED” SQUARE

I don't think I ever imagined I would be standing in “Red Square” across from the Kremlin and Lenin's mausoleum. But during some free time, I had the opportunity to visit “Red” Square—the name is really “Beautiful” Square in Russian—and even toured inside the Kremlin's walls. It was nothing like I expected. We visited four Russian Orthodox chapels and churches where the early czars are buried, where they were crowned, and where the head of the Russian Orthodox church once lived.

As the capital of today's Russian Federation, the area around the Kremlin is home to many monuments. The tomb of Russia's “Unknown Soldier” is there as are cannons captured from Napoleon's ill-fated 1812 invasion of Moscow.

But the Square holds some other non-historical surprises. A carnival was in full swing in the square with the usual carnival sights and sounds. A huge, modern shopping mall—the ГYM (pronounced “Goom”)—is directly across from the Kremlin with many upscale stores and shops. But most incongruously to an American's eyes is the “KFC” and Макдоналдс (MacDonald's) right next door to the Kremlin.

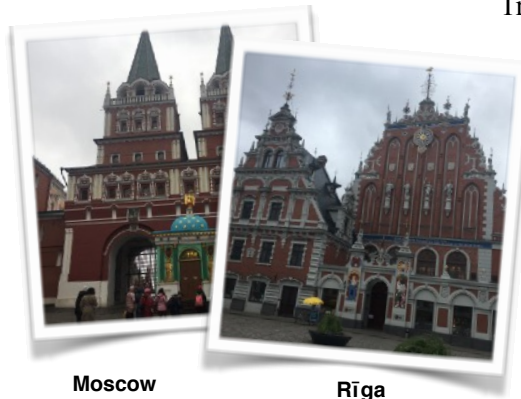
I'm lovin' it. 😊



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charles.cortright@lcms.org

A Tale of Two Cities



Moscow

Rīga

Dear friends and partners in mission,

January has been a month of traveling and teaching; let me report a bit about my trip to Trinity Lutheran Church, Moscow and our move to Rīga.

Just before our move from Russia to Latvia I traveled to Moscow to teach an introductory course on the Old Testament to students at Trinity Lutheran congregation there. The students who gathered there are exploring the possibility of enrollment in education programs at the Theological Institute of the Ingrian Lutheran church (St. Petersburg) to be pastors or church workers. We met in the Trinity parish house which is the former caretaker's house for the cemetery behind it.

As in St. Petersburg, my lectures were translated from English to Russian. My translator was Mr. Aleksei Zubtsov who has worked on numerous translation projects for the Lutheran church in Russia.

Aleksei is a native Muskovite who lived through the fall of the USSR and who has been part of the life of

Trinity congregation since the late 1980s. He told us the story of the revival of the Lutheran church in Moscow and the changes since communism. Quite a tale of God's grace!

Next, on January 29 Connie and I boarded an overnight train to travel the 300 miles to Rīga, Latvia, our new home. We have visited Rīga before (especially the airport!) but now we have moved to the Latvian capital. We have been

busy getting settled, but as I write this, I have already met with my students for the first class meeting of our study of 1 Corinthians at the Luther Academy, the seminary of the Ev. Lutheran Church of Latvia.

Here, too, is a tale of God's grace. My Latvian students—10 or so in class *plus* 6 more via “Skype”—are all preparing to serve as pastors or church workers in Latvia. Like Aleksei in Moscow many of them remember life here when the church was suppressed. Today they are training to serve in a social climate which offers the different challenges of secularism.



Outside Trinity Church, Moscow



PRAYER REQUESTS

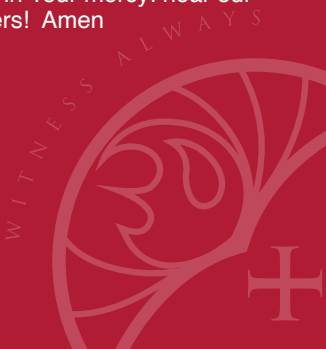
God has blessed us over many miles of travel with health and safety. Please thank Him with us for these and all His blessings.

This work—teaching the faith—is such a privilege! Please pray that our teaching will bear fruit in the churches we serve as faithful pastors and church workers go forth to preach and teach the Gospel in Latvia, Russia, Lithuania, and...

Please join us in thanking God for all our partners in this work. We do not take them (you!) for granted, but are grateful to God for their constancy, their generosity, and dedication to helping spread the Word at home and overseas.

Please pray that our colleagues, Rev. Dr. John Bombaro and his family, will be able to join us soon here in Latvia. Pray for their visa approval and for a safe transition from the U.S. to Latvia.

Lord, in Your mercy: hear our prayers! Amen



A Tale of Two Cities

It is a reminder that the church on earth, wherever we consider it, is the church *militant*, fighting the “good fight of faith” for the sake of Christ and the spread of His Gospel.

As we settle more into our new city I look forward to telling more tales of God’s grace here.

THANK YOU for reading this and especially for your prayers and support of us and the work we strive to do...



Soli Deo Gloria!

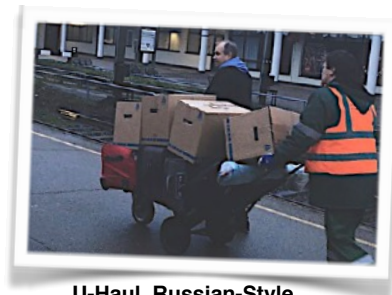
-Pr. Charles Cortright



Rīga from the Daugava River

This and that...

We moved to Rīga by train; here’s a picture of our “moving van.” We had an actual mini-van for the trip from the Rīga train depot to our apartment.



U-Haul, Russian-Style

We are still working on our residence visa; all our paperwork has been submitted and a minor glitch corrected. We should have our Latvia visas by late February. Keep praying!

Upcoming teaching trips include traveling again to Palanga, Lithuania in April. Palanga is only about 2 hours away by bus now. Also, the annual pastoral conference hosted by the U.S. Luther Academy is in early May in Brno, Czech Republic.



Rev. Ivan Laptev (above) was consecrated as the new bishop for the Ingrian Lutheran Church in St. Petersburg on February 9. Please keep Bp. Laptev in prayer as he begins his service.

THANK YOU for your prayers, your support, and interest in our work. We remember you in our prayers and thank our Savior for you. We are here because you serve Him as partners in the Gospel.

The Lord bless and keep you in His care!



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