



What's happening?

The first online semester at Rīga Luther Academy successfully concluded. The Spring 2021 term begins on 25 January, and already has 16 students enrolled, with an expectation of at least 25. Two for-credit courses are being offered, plus a free tutorial in theology and philosophy. This will be the first joint teaching endeavor with our Latvian Church partners.

The Rīga Luther Academy will have its first on-location intensives this fall in Wittenberg, Germany (d.v.). Drs. Cortright and Bombaro will forge camaraderie between classmates and mentor students in person. Week-long intensives will be held each fall and spring.



If 2020 taught us anything, then it is that neither science nor governments are the light of the world, but only Jesus. (Pr John presides on Christmas Eve)



The 'new normal' wan't all that new. Mankind has been mucking it up since the fall in Eden. Praise be to God that we may abide in heart and mind in the kingdom of Christ.

According to Plan

While pundits and social commentators are giving the year 2020 one out of five stars, not recommending it to friends or family, their myopic vision clearly misses the big picture of what the Lord is doing in the world and it certainly isn't bad. We do well to remember who is in charge. It isn't the majority political party and it isn't CDC, the UN, or WHO. No, not ultimately. Instead, it is Jesus Christ the Lord. With the Father and the Holy Spirit, he is moving all time, all creation, to its consummation and the glorious restoration of all things. The Lord is providentially guiding all things to the Omega point when God himself will be all in all: "when all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15.28 ESV). To be sure, everything is going according to plan.

Covid 19, while no doubt a perversion of human invention, was not a surprise to the Lord our God. The blame for the global catastrophe that has resulted from meddling with diseases and government mismanagement of this pandemic rests with mankind and natural and structural consequences that have followed. Awful consequences. Yet, through it all, the Lord has



Sergiu Trifa of Bucharest, Romania, poses with the Bombaro children during his week-long stay with the Bombaros. Sergiu is a student of the Riga Luther Academy and is mentored by Pr. John. Sergiu is also pursuing a BA at the Uni. of Bucharest. He will follow in the footsteps of his father, the Rev. Dr. Sorin Trifa, into holy ministry in his home country.



Zoe S. and her accompanying cohort of boys at Blessed Sacrament Lutheran Church, a mission parish in Hayden, ID, receive their First Holy Communion on the Sunday of the Fulfillment, 22 Nov. 2020. Thanks be to God for His grace.

been saving and sanctifying people worldwide. Stunningly, more people in 2020 have opted for training in church work and holy ministry than in many years, and in some cases decades. Truly, “the harvest is plentiful” and now the Lord seems to be preparing a many laborers for the harvest. And the timing seems quite conspicuous on His part, too: fear, anxiety, and pessimism abound everywhere. There can be only one remedy: not vaccines, not stimulus checks, not even lockdowns and masking. No, only the abiding and comforting Word and presence of Jesus Christ, who saves us to the uttermost, provides true safety. For he has overcome the world, even this financially crippled and increasingly neurotic world. So, Lord, bring on 2021 and have mercy upon us!

In 2020 we have reprioritized. It isn't physical health that's most important. Health and fitness have become idols; a kind of religiosity. Science and medicine have been put in their place, too. Mutated strands of coronavirus outpace industry efforts. Governments prove reactionary. But our Lord Jesus brings the words of life — a gospel of the forgiveness of sins, adoption, and rebirth; and he brings to us the medicine of immortality — a holy communion in his body and blood that saves us from death itself. Indeed, everything is going according to plan for the salvation of our souls. There is no name given under heaven whereby we may be saved than that of Jesus. Not Moderna, not Pfizer, though they have their place for perhaps temporary reprieve, but only the name of Jesus saves us from inevitable death and in the meantime puts things into perspective and offers true hope, while building his Church.



Know how grateful we are for you, too! Your prayers, cards, emails, gifts, and visits make this mission happen. We heartily thank you. **Pray** for a successful semester and expansion of the program into Muslim regions and Israel. **Pray** for John's mother and Lacey, Donna, and Lou, all with covid. **Give thanks** the Cortrights returned safely to Riga and for Wittenberg opportunities.

- Send tax-deductible contributions to: Mission Central, 40718 Highway E 16, Mapleton, Iowa (memo-line must include Bombaro/Latvia)
- Give securely from any device www.lcms.org/bombaro. **Thank you!**