



The **Preus Family** in **Eurasia** Fall 2023 Newsletter

Pastors and church secretaries, please consider printing [this newsletter](#) for parishioners who may not have access to a computer. Thank you!

Dear friends and partners in God's mission,

So much has happened in our Eurasian mission since this past spring. I will do my best to give you the highlights. In April, the Trifa and Preus families traveled down to Sofia, Bulgaria to visit my student, Deacon Arthur Boshinov. Arthur is in his third year of seminary studies. He has a heart of gold, and is fully committed to spreading the gospel in Bulgaria. We also traveled to the city of Peshtera, where we met Turkish pastor, Rev. Feymi Madjirov and his Finnish colleague, Jouni Haverinen, who serve the Turkish-speaking Lutherans in that area. Their denomination, the Istanbul Lutheran Church (ILK), consists of four churches—two in Bulgaria and two in Turkey. Bahadır Argönül, also my student at the Riga Luther Academy, who serves as Lutheran pastor in Istanbul, was featured through video at the LCMS convention. It was a real joy to meet all of these people, but especially our dear brothers in Sofia. The church there is quite small but the saints are thoroughly dedicated to the gospel. They were overjoyed to see all of our children, one member even shedding tears of happiness at seeing them. We so enjoyed our fellowship with the Divine Service in Arthur's home.

Later that month, I took my girls, Rebekah and Lena, to Madrid, Spain. There, we had a brief conference focusing on the pressing needs of the church in Spain and we discussed our next steps for serving that vast land with the preaching of the gospel. Pastor Isaac Machado, a Venezuelan pastor and former student of mine in the Dominican Republic, is serving as "alliance missionary" in Spain. He is covering nearly two thirds of that expansive country, serving churches in Madrid, Toledo, Galicia, Asturias, Logroño, Barcelona, and Seville. We pray to the Lord of the harvest, that he send faithful laborers into that harvest to assist our

dear brother in Spain.

Meanwhile, I continue to serve alongside Pastor Sorin Trifa as we seek to establish a church in Romania and the Balkans. We have nearly finished our building for the Ukrainian refugees. Our sanctuary is complete, and the builders are still putting on the finishing touches on the upstairs apartments, which our Ukrainian guests will begin to occupy by the end of October. Our short-term vicar, Michael Wenz, a seminarian from our sister church in Germany, arrives in the first week of October. He will assist us in our ministry among the Ukrainians. Besides preaching and teaching Bible class, Michael will conduct a thorough study of the refugee situation in Romania to assist us in connecting these Ukrainian souls to the saving means of grace we are called to administer. In this way, by God's grace, we will succeed in converting our humanitarian mission into a mission of spiritual care.

At the same time, we are in the process of canvassing the entire metropolitan area of Brasov for gospel outreach. We have decided to distribute leaflets with information concerning our church, our physical address, basic content of what we believe and teach, and how to connect to us and our ministry. LCMS missionary, Rev. Andrew Fedder, who has recently taken up residence in Brasov, will assist us in this colossal effort. We are confident that we will experience the spiritual growth (both intensive and extensive) that we desire to see. We know and trust that God himself has planted this vineyard, and he will see to its growth.

As you may remember from my past missionary activity in the Dominican Republic, I served as a professor of Dogmatic Theology and Church History for over five years. Since taking my post at Riga Luther Academy, where I work from my office in Brasov, I have assumed the responsibility of teaching biblical languages. Last year, I taught biblical Greek and this semester I am teaching biblical Hebrew. This has been a huge challenge, since I am now peering into textbooks I had closed more than twenty years ago. And I thoroughly enjoy it! I love to witness the students grasp the language in which the Holy Spirit inspired the prophets to write. And, besides, I consider biblical languages to be an essential component of our future pastors' theological education. In order to focus more on languages, I relinquished the directorship of Praxis and Mentorship to another missionary, but I remain close to my students from all over Eurasia and Africa. By God's grace, more than a dozen new students have enrolled in the program, and our faculty at Riga is also growing. We look forward to the remainder of this academic year.

Since last spring, my family and I have immersed ourselves in the Romanian language. Unlike our experience in the Dominican Republic where we were required to learn Spanish for day-to-day living, and where I used the language exclusively in my work, we have much less opportunity to speak Romanian here since so many know a little English. But I am confident that as soon as our evangelism campaign has extended to the villages and we meet more Romanian families, more opportunities will arise. This is also essential - I firmly believe that we each need to hear the gospel preached in our own native tongue, for it is with the language of the heart that the devil is most persuasive and dangerous. Likewise, the Romanians need to hear the tender voice of their Good Shepherd in their own tongue, even if it is filtered through my own American accent.

The past summer came and went faster than I could catch my breath. I suppose it began towards the end

of May when the Luther Academy faculty met in Riga to make plans for the coming academic year. Throughout June and July, I built my Hebrew class, prepared my seminar for the Corpus Christi Youth Conference, and wrote my speech for the LCMS convention. The Corpus Christi Conference took place in Liepaja, Riga. We had about 200 people from 17 different countries in attendance. I presented on the topic of "Vocation and Authority" from a biblical, Christian perspective and heard fantastic presentations and sermons from other lecturers as well. Four of my kids joined me, and they were very edified and reinvigorated through their experience. It became very evident to us all that, despite the darkness hovering over the Western world, droves of people across Europe (and especially youth) are returning to Christ.

From Liepaja (departing from Riga), I flew to Milwaukee where I presented to the LCMS convention on the topic of Church Planting. If you have not read or heard my speech, you may find it in an email we sent in early September. Soon after I returned from Milwaukee, my family and I traveled to Riga to attend a missionary retreat in nearby Jūrmala, Latvia. For most of this time, I was occupied with meetings and planning for the conferences we intend to host over the coming year. With the help of other missionaries, I hope to make some significant progress on this massive effort.

Through all of these tasks, as we continue planting and watering at God's command, we go forward in cheerful hope that God will give the increase he promises. Thank you all for your generous support of this mission. I ask for your continued prayers.

Your brother in Christ,
David Preus



Home service with Deacon Arthur in Sofia, Bulgaria.



Some of the family traveled north to Suceava, Romania to spend the weekend with Pastor Traian Niculescu and his growing parish.



Interior of Pastor Traian's church.



This is the new sanctuary after major renovations were completed. They are still working



This was the final Sunday in August and was our last time worshiping at our temporary church facility, where we had



This is the "before" picture of our sanctuary in Brasov Romania before renovations began.

on some finishing touches, such as placing adhesive stained glass to put over the windows.

services every Sunday at 1pm.



David is pictured here with some of our Bulgaria friends and pastors. We enjoyed learning of how the gospel is being spread in Bulgaria and Turkey during this visit.



David conversing with the Bulgarian pastors at their church in Peshtera, Bulgaria.



We drove with the Bulgarian friends up to a beautiful lookout in Peshtera.

Reflections from Home, by Jenny

Big news: Since our last newsletter we have many updates to share about our mission and home life! The most exciting announcement is that we are expecting our ninth baby, soon to arrive! This will be our third baby born since David took a call to be a missionary but it will be our first birth overseas. We appreciate your prayers as we prepare to meet our little one due in early October!

Sofia, Bulgaria church visit: Backtracking a bit, the entire family visited our mission plant in Bulgaria in April. This trip brought us to our church plant in Sofia where Deacon Arthur is serving, and also to Peshtera - about an hour's drive from Plovdiv (formerly Phillipopolis, named after Alexander the Great's father) where we met a Finnish Lutheran missionary who has been serving there for four years. One unexpected surprise on the trip was our van breaking down on Orthodox Easter Sunday which added some drama to our trip, but all ended well with the help of some friendly locals who towed the van about an hour to the nearest city and were able to remedy a fix that got us back to a mechanic in Romania.

Suceava, Romania church visit: With the mountainous routes accessible again, we planned another long-desired church visit in April where we traveled north to Suceava to meet members of Pastor Traian Niculescu's parish. It was a fun weekend of fellowship and worship. Though we are all spread apart, it is always encouraging to join together and meet other Lutherans within the Balkan region, since most of our communication throughout the year takes place virtually.

Daria's birthday: David is godfather to Daria, who moved here with her family from Ukraine when she was two weeks old. It was fun for our congregation to attend her birthday celebration in April at the refugee house.

Immigration renewal: We began the visa renewal process early this year (in February) in hopes that it

would be completed without some of the delays we experienced last year. Eventually (by July), all was approved and thankfully all of us now have residency here for another year. We have a very helpful immigration lawyer who helps us navigate the many requirements of the process of EU residency.

Delta Danube visit: We took a short vacation to the Danube Delta in early June. It was neat to see this amazing part of the country which is teeming with wildlife, especially diverse birds and fish. We enjoyed a boat ride through some of the tributaries that connect the Danube to the Black Sea, and we ate a lot of fresh fish.

Rolf's chess tournament: After many years of participating in virtual chess tournaments and clubs, Rolf researched the process of enrolling in a real Romanian, youth, chess club. He made the necessary contacts and using the Romanian language he's learned, he navigated through registration and participation in a weekend chess tournament in the capital of Bucharest. Hopefully, this will be the first of other tournaments he attends around the country, as it has been a passion of his since living in the Dominican Republic.

Ukrainian outreach: One of our Ukrainian families (Alex and Alina) are expecting their third baby. In August Alina had to return to Ukraine for some medical visits since she hadn't yet navigated the process of finding a doctor here. On account of the war turbulence near Odessa, their children stayed with us for two weeks during the workday while Alex worked on the church's renovations. It was a fun summer diversion to be able to get to know the girls better and also was nice to be able to help the family. From now on, Alina will be seeing a doctor here in Brasov until she has the baby.

New church building open: Over the past month, we have been able to worship in our new sanctuary! (See the before and after pictures in the gallery above.) After much labor and effort, we have a beautiful sanctuary to use and have started having bible class and Divine Service at 10:00 am on Sundays. Now renovations are continuing on the upper floor which will serve as a refugee and visitor housing. We are very excited to have this beautiful facility in a historic building near the Brasov town square.

Corpus Christi conference: The older four kids and David attended the Corpus Christi youth conference in Liepaja, Latvia in July. While there, they met other Lutherans from all over Europe and enjoyed listening to lectures and participating in discussion groups centered around the theme of "Built on the Rock". David also led a session on the topic of "Authority and Christian Vocation".

Regional conference: Our regional missionary conference was held in Jurmala, Latvia in mid-August. We enjoyed meeting and spending time with other missionaries and their families from across Eurasia and listened to Professor Joel Biermann who spoke on the topic of "Rest in Christ".

School year: School has had a staggered start for the various kids since the end of August until now. Between seven of the kids, we have one starting university this week, one finishing high school by December and then starting university, three at Wittenberg Academy for middle and high school, and two at a local Romanian public school in our neighborhood. Lars - age 4 - is looking forward to being a big brother and helper once the new baby arrives!

We are thankful for God's protection through much travel and local commuting over the past months. We have been amused by the frequent emergency phone alerts that come through, informing us of local bear sightings or wild pigs on the loose. :) What an amazing backdrop for our life and work here, nestled in the Carpathian mountains of Transylvania. We are thankful to have the opportunity to meet the challenges and joys of life here as we serve in Christ's mission for Eastern Europe.





Our baby is due in early October and I will deliver at a hospital here in Brasov. My mom is coming to stay with us for the month of October which we are all looking forward to!



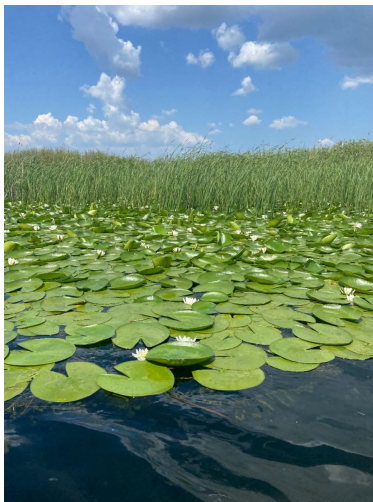
Daria's 1-year old birthday!



We had Vika and Daria here for two weeks in July while their mom received some medical care in Ukraine.



On the boatride through the Danube Delta.



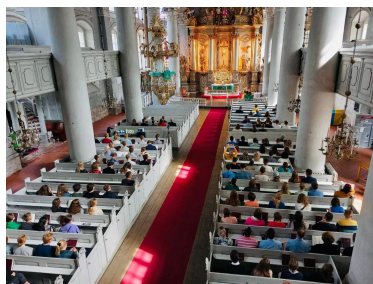
Such a fertile and amazing area, where salt water from the Black Sea meets the fresh water from the Danube River.



We commemorate our beloved country's Independence Day on July 4th, no matter where we are in the world. This year Lena made a patriotic cheesecake.



Here are the kids in the main



This is the church where the Corpus Christi conference was held, in Liepaja, Latvia. The older four kids and David attended in July.



Lots of special family moments

square of Riga, Latvia. We traveled here for our regional missionary retreat in August.



David and some of the kids on the shore of the Baltic Sea, in Jurmala, Latvia.

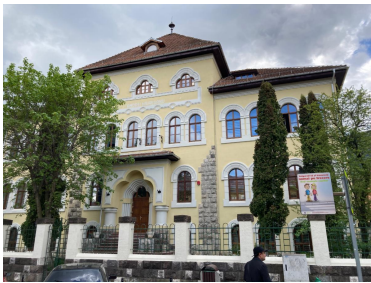


This was following our van breakdown and tow through central Bulgaria. Thankfully we had some translation help to navigate the whole affair.

while traveling on planes and trains around Europe. This sweet moment was captured while returning from the regional missionary retreat in Latvia.



This was taken at Memorial Cathedral St. Alexander Nevski. It was built in the beginning of the 20th century in memoriam of liberating Bulgaria from the Ottoman Turks.



This is the younger boy's school, where they are attending this year.



Walking to school on the first day, September 11, 2023.



One of our favorite Romanian meals - sarmala (cabbage, meat, and rice rolls) with mamaliga (polenta) and sour cream.



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