



BRIDGES

Bridge Builders International

April 2012 • Volume 51



By Rebecca Manley Pippert, author of *Out of the Saltshaker and into the World*

Who Wants to Leave When One Senses the Presence of the Lord? *God is doing something extraordinary in Latvia through Mission Days*

DUBLIN, Ireland – We loved our first time in Riga! The city itself is lovely, the music and culture are amazing, but it's the people we enjoyed most. There is a depth and thoughtfulness in Latvians that moved us. Even though my approach to teaching an incarnational/relational kind of evangelism was a bit of a paradigm shift for them, we were so encouraged to see such an enthusiastic embrace to what I was teaching.

I explained with my stories that yes, an American could ask questions and move more quickly into spiritual conversation; nevertheless, the principles were still the same for Latvians. Asking questions that reflect a genuine interest in the person and learning to affirm verbally the good we see in people isn't an American value, it's a biblical one. After all, Jesus did it! To be a missionary in one's own culture always means we will be somewhat counter-cultural.

BBI's vision – to see Latvia transformed by the love and power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dick and I were also deeply touched by the response to the prayer ministry that we offered at the end of the conference. The leadership told us afterwards that because we were asking people to come forward for prayer, they were worried no one would come. But oh my, how they came! We had 15 prayer ministers up front with us and so many came for so long! No one was in a hurry to leave – but who wants to leave when one senses the presence of the Lord?

We were also so impressed by the leadership team of Bridge Builders International and Partners. They were a joy to work with and so gifted! The conference itself was run brilliantly but what we especially appreciated was their deep love for God. They are doing such an important work in Latvia. After our first brief ministry visit, we left feeling keenly aware that God is doing something in Latvia! 🌱



Mission Days, an annual three-day event since 1995, is all about worship, training, friendship, vision, opportunity, the presence of the Lord, and joy.

Why Should I Check Facebook Before Seeking His Face?

By Chuck Kelley

RIGA, Latvia – On the first evening of *Mission Days* Becky Pippert spoke about the importance of daily sensing the presence of the Lord. Theologically, we all believe that Jesus is with us, but how often do we live as if we are alone? She challenged us to practice something simple: "Tomorrow morning, when you get out of bed and before your feet hit the ground, thank God for His presence and ask Him to help you recognize and sense it throughout the day."

The next morning, when the alarm sounded and I started to get up, I stopped and thought, *Becky said that we should pray for something before our feet hit*

Continued on back page

EXPERIENCE LATVIA



Could it be that the Lord is giving a fresh vision?

During *Mission Days* I invited a dozen key mission and ministry leaders for a special 90-minute meeting. The purpose was to discuss the question: What does the Lord want our ministries to do together that we cannot do alone? Interestingly, about 20 showed up.

I asked a young Lutheran pastor, Raimonds Mezins, to lead the meeting. He invited us to pray for the first 45 minutes. The prayers were deep and wide. I prayed silently for 30 minutes before the Lord spoke to my heart in a special way. I quickly wrote the words, *Mission Days in UK!!!* As I prayed I wondered what this could mean.

A few minutes later I shared, "We have prayed for years for the Lord to use us to raise up a new generation of Latvians who embrace the Great Commission and are willing to go anywhere and to do anything the Lord wills. Few Latvians are actually doing this; one reason is the lack of adequate Latvian funding to support missionaries.

"We have also sadly witnessed some 300,000 Latvians, 15% of the population, leave the country for better jobs abroad, mostly in the UK, Ireland, Norway and Sweden. 50,000 are in Ireland, mostly in Dublin. We grieve because these represent the people Latvia can least afford to lose.

"Could it be that this does not surprise the Lord? Has He already sent hundreds of his choice servants abroad for purposes that exceed meeting financial needs? Could it be that what the enemy intends for evil God will use for good? Does the Lord want us to do something fresh together?"

"What if we worked together to bring *Mission Days* to Ireland for Latvians already living and working there? How can we reach, encourage, challenge and assist Latvians who have already been sent, complete with jobs to support them, as they do their ministries?"

A lively discussion followed as various leaders spoke about how their ministries might help serve in such an effort. We also spoke about the various networks represented in the room and how they could be multiplied by linking with similar networks in Ireland. And then we agreed to continue to pray and think for a couple of months, and then come together for a specific time of serious prayer and planning the last week of April.

In the meantime, Latvians in Dublin have been contacted and rejoice at this possibility. They have even asked that the first *Mission Days* for Latvians in Ireland take place the first week of October.

Could it be that the Lord is in this? I have little doubt. 🌿



Katie Roth teaches about Treasure Hunting



Hanns & Elaine Berzins are Brazilian missionaries to Latvia



Lienite Bemere shares a testimony



Could it be that the Lord is confirming His guidance?

Some have heard me share about something special that the Lord did for my foot. I have had a bone growing out of the back of my left foot for several years. This condition is called Haglund's Deformity; it often produces debilitating pain. To be honest, I have wondered if this problem was going to force me to quit traveling.

On the last evening of *Mission Days*, after a powerful season of prayer, an evangelist from Lausanne, Switzerland who was attending *Mission Days*, asked to pray for me. She said she had a calling to pray for healing and asked me if I had pain. I told her about my foot. Skeptically I said "yes." She then laid hands on my foot and prayed in French. Five minutes into her prayer I felt a little involuntary motion in my foot and the pain was gone.

I didn't believe it at first, nor did I acknowledge it, but it has now been two months and I continue to walk quickly and up and down stairs without pain. Life is so much better without pain!

Interestingly, the protruding bone remains, but the pain is gone. There is much about this that I don't understand, but this I know: God did something special that evening as a result of her prayer. The Lord is rather mysterious, wouldn't you say?

As I write about the reality of the presence of the Lord and how we were mightily blessed at *Mission Days*, I want to be clear. His presence is not simply warm and fuzzy feelings manufactured by a certain style of music and worship. It is real because He is real. He is infinitely more interested in our lives and the advancement of His kingdom than in our toasty feelings, which inevitably fade.

Mission Days 2012 were days when the Lord prompted, guided, spoke, healed and unveiled a fresh vision that can only be accomplished in His power as we do together what none of us can do alone.

Could it be that this will lead to something fantastic? 🌿

Could it be...?

by Chuck Kelley

Important Musings about Mission Days



Becky's husband, Dick, prays a powerful blessing while Latvia's National Hymn is sung.



Every January, 250+ enthusiastic young people attend **Mission Days**, a three-day event that provides education, encouragement, motivation, opportunity and vision for world missions.



News & Notes

A Truly Happy Valentine's Day

MADONA, Latvia – Beginning on Valentine's Day, during the frigid month of February, an extraordinary outreach took place involving a Latvian church in Madona and a Dutch church from Haarlem. Small teams visited 400 impoverished homes giving each family almost thirty pounds of food staples and some sweets in the name and love of Christ. They offered to pray for each family, with only a few turning down the offer.

They also visited two nursing homes, an orphanage and a soup kitchen. Many hearts were touched as was made evident the following Sunday when the church was packed with many of these 400 families in attendance. Read more about this stellar example of partnership on BBI's website. 🌱

Continued from front page...

the ground. I wonder...is it for guidance or forgiveness? O yeah, now I remember. "Dear Lord, thank you that you are with me today and I ask you to give me a very real sense of your presence right now and throughout the day. Thank you."

I got ready for the day, made coffee, headed for my man-chair and laptop and started to check email...and then I stopped. Why in the world would I want to check email before seeing what the Lord wants to say to me this morning? Why should I check Facebook before I seek His face? My Bible was right next to my chair and I did exactly what I knew the Lord wants me to do every morning: spend quality time with Him. When I am aware of His presence, it is infinitely easier to fellowship with Him deeper.

A strong sense of His presence remained with me throughout Mission Days...and since then as well. 🌱

From the Mind to the Heart

Since 1999, *Prayer Days* has been one of the most important annual events for pastors and spiritual leaders in Latvia. This year we are using A. W. Tozer's classic, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (already translated into Latvian) to help us meditate on and experience the essential attributes of God.

The top leaders of five Latvian denominations (including two archbishops) are each presenting one attribute, like God's love, power, presence and trustworthiness, from their unique perspectives. And then we will discuss and pray and enjoy what the Lord will do...in our own hearts and as a group.

More than 150 will participate. The dates are May 7-9. Many can't pay, but we



turn none away. We need many to give \$110 scholarships. Is this something the Lord has enabled you to help with – and might nudge you to respond? 🌱



There's Still Time...

Experience Latvia with BBI!

We love introducing people to Latvia, not only because of its beauty, but because God is doing special things there and we want to involve as many as possible. One way to get to know Latvia and the good work of BBI is to join **Chuck Kelley's vision trip, Experience Latvia, from July 31 - Aug. 8**. Call us or check our website for more information. 🌱

www.bridgebuildersint.com

USA Team

Chuck & Nancy Kelley President
David Jones Sr. Advisor to the President
Naomi Strauser Office Manager
Jennie Smith Administrative Assistant
Helen T. Goody Communication Specialist
Matt Strauser Director of Technology
Dustin & Kristine Peterson BBI Associates
Robin Bruner Graphic Designer

Latvian Team

Lienite Bemere 'Partners' Director
Vineta Zale 'Partners' Office Manager
Diks Bortnikovs Eagle's Wings Camp Director
Dan & Katie Roth Missionaries
Paula Hewitt Missionary
Jaycee Jensen Missionary



Bridge Builders International

P. O. Box 4073
Salem, OR 97302

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Philomath, OR
PERMIT NO. 18

