

Investing in people ... Norway and Latvia 2008



At the end of July, we returned from another great trip to Norway & Latvia, having spent a month with a team of approximately 20 students and recent graduates from the UK, USA and Latvia. We are very grateful for your support and while we were there we were very aware of the importance of your prayers in all that we did. This report is designed to give you a brief glimpse of what we have seen God doing both among the team and among the Latvian young people that we were investing in.

Ministry with the team:

We have always found that giving students an experience of cross-cultural mission work is an incredible training ground to learn about God, about themselves and about ministry. This year was no different and one of our primary responsibilities was to walk alongside these students as they experienced a whole range of activities, emotions, encouragements, discouragements and struggles. The Bible is full of examples of people drawing alongside others to teach, encourage, strengthen and equip them to live and minister for Jesus.

In Norway we spent a significant part of our time studying the Bible together, worshipping together and preparing for our time in Latvia. There were also opportunities to spend time alone with God developing our relationship with and dependence in Him. Another element of our time in Norway are the activities that we do to develop team-work and to provide opportunities to work together, chat together and draw alongside one another. These activities included service projects on the youth hostel, hiking and glacier walking.



In Latvia the emphasis changes significantly and after a few days to adjust to the new environment, we found ourselves welcoming around 80 young people to a youth camp near Rezekne. Each day while we were in Latvia we met as a team to worship, pray and work our way through Paul's letter to the Philippians as a means of encouraging one another and helping each of us to focus ahead of our busy daily schedule.



At the camp our primary role is to look after the team, helping them to cope with the challenging living conditions, helping them to lead Bible study groups, seminars and share their testimonies and helping them to invest in the lives of the young people. This year a Latvian girl who was part of our team said that she had never realised that young people could be so open to God and that she could have such an impact on their lives.

Ministry with young people in Latvia:

Many of you will be aware that we have an increasing desire and heart to serve in Latvia especially amongst young people and students. The camp that we have been visiting for the past three years has been running since 2000 and we are starting to see the fruit of many years of sowing seeds in the lives of these young people. Many of the young people are from a Russian orthodox background and last year one of these young people (Cos) commented that for us God is near but for him God was distant!! This year Cos was one of a few who became Christians and experienced the joy of coming to know a God who is near and who wants relationship with us.



We have found that the impact of taking a group of 20 students into this context to be very significant and it has been a privilege for us over the past three years to watch our students share their lives with these Latvian young people. Every year there are endless discussions at meal tables, walking around the camp and sitting around campfires about everything from relationships, guidance, suffering and of course what it means to be a Christian. By the end of camp lifelong friendships have been forged and we know of many team members from previous years who are still writing to friends in Latvia.



We too have enjoyed getting to know the Latvian young people and now feel that there are a significant number of them who we have also been able to invest our lives with. We spent the week after camp doing some follow-up with the young people from camp in both Rezekne and Riga. This was a great time for us as a team as we spent time with them, studied the Bible with them and challenged them to put into practice what they had learned at the camp. We saw some of the young people almost every day and a couple even met up with us back in Riga.

Ongoing prayers for Latvia:

- We are praying that God would raise up leaders from among these young people who would be willing to invest their lives in others and continue the ministry.
- We are praying that Bible study groups would begin in both Riga and Rezekne primarily for those who have been involved at camp.
- We have again invited our Latvian friends to our student weekend in November. We are praying that they would make the most of this opportunity to come and visit us in the UK.
- We are also praying about opportunities to return to Latvia soon. As we are expecting our first child in December it is unlikely that we will be returning during the winter, but we are planning to return next summer for another mission's trip.



Thanks again for your partnership in this ministry

Kind regards,

Steve & Debs