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You may contact us in several ways:

By email:
ds@lithuaniaumc.org

By snail mail:
Lithuania UMC
J. Naugardo g.8
LT Kaunas 44280
Lithuania

At our Website:
www.lithuaniaumc.org

Our DS's US phone #:
410-504-6363

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Lithuania Celebrates its 14th Annual Conference

The 14th Annual Conference of the Lithuania United Methodist Church was held in Kaunas, Lithuania April 17-19. This was the final official gathering led by Bishop Oystein Olsen prior to his retirement on May 1st as Bishop of the Nordic and Baltic Areas. Reports were received from all of the ministries of the church including a new item of local church reports. In the afternoon on Saturday we received ecumenical guests from the Catholic and Baptist Churches.

We also had a time of "Holy Conferencing" where we discussed in small groups, the 4 focus areas of the United Methodist Church for 2008-2012. We talked about ideas for: New Church development; Leadership development; Ministry with the Poor; and Eradicating infectious diseases. Some of the ideas shared included looking for new ways to start "preaching points" of Bible study and humanitarian work.

It was shared that we will soon begin a new Bible Study group meeting in Šveicarija – a small village near Jonava—that Pastor Bonnie Campbell will lead. We also learned that monthly worship services are being held in the village of Pačeraukštes near Biržai that Pastor Walla is leading. When they met in May more than 50 persons from the village attended. We also hope to begin exploratory work in the city of Marijampolė later this year.

We also shared about the humanitarian work that is going on through our churches and Pağalbos Centras and how the humanitarian needs are growing in these difficult economic times.

Perhaps the highlight of the conference was a time to celebrate with Bishop Olsen his eight years as our Bishop for Lithuania and the Nor-

dic and Baltic areas. His wife Toril was able to join him for the conference and this was her first visit to Lithuania.

You can see pictures from the Annual Conference and reports by going to our websites www.lithuaniaumc.org or www.imb.lt

John Campbell, District Superintendent



Bishop Olsen receives gift of "amber tree" from the District

District Administrative Council Selects New Youth and Young Adult Coordinator

The District Administrative Council, at its meeting during Annual Conference, selected Larijana Budzinauskaitė to serve as the new District Coordinator for Youth and Young Adult Ministries. Larijana will replace Elgė Chomyrienė who has served in this position for 9 years. Larijana has been working recently in the Šančiai Church day center pro-



gram part-time. She has a degree in Business Administration but also has skills in art and experience working with children and youth. Larijana began her work on May 4th and is available to assist all of our local churches with their youth ministries. She will also be coordinating our summer camp for youth and is making plans for a Seminar for Youth Workers to be held in the fall. In her application

for the position she wrote: "When I got acquainted with Methodism and the community of the United Church of Methodism in Šančiai I firmly decided that I am eager to join them in their spiritual mission. I am sure that my experience, my knowledge and the support of God will help me to have a hand in the activity of the United Church of Methodism."

Please welcome Larijana to her new work with LUMC. You may contact her through email: laurijanabudzinauskaite@gmail.com

Ukmergė Links with Seniors



One word that you hear in United Methodist circles is "connected". And I can see this happening all over Lithuania. We begin with our connection with God's love. But that love is expressed in so many ways: across the ocean with partner and supporting churches, between churches here and also through connections with our Lithuanian communities. Uk-

mergė church recently helped one such connection come to life with a visit to an elder home, located about 20 km from us. We already have a long-standing relationship here but Pastor Walla Carlsson and folks in Sweden made that connection even stronger. Walla heard that there were needs among the seniors in this residence and so she gathered up supplies, donated by folks in her home country, and loaded them into her famous blue truck. Next Walla took the supplies on the ferry from Sweden to Klaipeda, and then transported them to Kaunas to be stored in the district youth office temporarily. Still, the journey wasn't over because we next loaded them into Vyta's car and drove the supplies to Ukmergė UMC. There were so many church members who wanted to visit the seniors, that we had to take a second car, and what a happy reunion it was! First there were tulips for the director, and each of the residents was given a tulip and

a bag of candy and fruit. But spending time with the residents is the best part. Some are blind and most cannot hear well, but our hugs and kisses communicated our love and affection. The supplies that Walla had given us were unloaded and shared with the director; and she was so grateful. She explained that the government provides some supplies for their care [for example, one Pamper per day per resident] but most of the seniors need 3 or 4. So, while our gift sounded like a simple thing, it really was meeting an urgent need. Sheets and towels were also given. As we sat around the table at the end of our visit, we prayed for the home and all who live and work there. It's a real blessing to be a part of a connection like this, and one that we hope will only grow and grow into the future.—

Bonnie Campbell

Seminar Invites European Women To Be Salt And Light

World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women (WFMUCW) joint European area seminar was held on May 19-23 in Glasgow, Scotland, and gathered more than 220 women from 26 countries from around the world to reflect on what it means to be salt and light in the contemporary world. The theme of the seminar was

closely tied to the Millennium Goals that were set by the United Nations Organization (UNO) at the beginning of this millennium. The women's federation has a special status with UNO and participates in the work of the UN Commission on the Status of Women. The Millennium Goals target poverty and hunger around the world, ensure universal primary education, prevent infectious diseases, improve maternal health and seek solutions to other contemporary global issues. WFMUCW president Dr. Chita Millan in her sermon reminded the participants of the seminar that if outward religious rituals or superficial following of rules and regulations become the primary concern of an organization or a church, it risks becoming pharisaic. True piety finds its expression in genuine con-

cern for the suffering and the poor.

Women could hear the call to become salt and light not only through plenary sessions and group discussions, but also through a variety of Bible studies, creative outlets and workshops. One of the key accents of the seminar was worship which featured music from around the globe.

Lithuania in the seminar was represented by Žaneta Rimškytė and Gražina Bielousova. Lithuania is not a member of the federation but in this seminar has received an invitation to start the membership process. The next major event planned by WFMUCW is a World Assembly which will be held in South Africa in 2011.



Kaunas Youth help in "kindness week"

The youth of the United Methodist Church in Kaunas remembered the time when the representative from the Pupil's Self-government in Kaunas visited them and told about kindness.

Quite a long time we sat and thought what and how could we do for our Church and community? And we invented that on April 20–26 would be a Week of Kindness – a time committed for doing good works.

On Monday, April 20, we cleared the gone Methodists' resting-places in Šančiai. We prayed for them.

The second day of the Week of Kindness we visited the elderly of the United Methodist community in Kaunas and helped them to order their life. The social worker Jurgita and Rev. Giedrius went with us. We cleaned windows and a chandelier for one old woman. Then we went to Lione and Antanina, our beloved members of the community, to clean windows. They rejoiced very much and made us welcome. We prayed for Antanina that her leg would be healed up sooner. Then we drank tea and sang beautiful hymns.

The third day of Kindness we cleared the riverside of the Nemunas. We gathered litter and draw on the cycleway. After finishing our work, we broiled some sausages and ate them tastily. After three days we rejoiced at our done works. The fourth day we went to Pilviškiai to help our brothers and sisters in Christ. Algis, the chair of the Church, and several members of the community met us there. Because we came not for amusements, so we sat into the cars again and went to clear the Methodists' cemetery. From the cemetery we came back to the Church in Pilviškii, where tea and meal waited for us. We didn't know how useful we were, but we thanked for warm and nice welcome very much. We believe that you will let us help you next time, too.

On the fifth day of the Week of Kindness we

discussed what kindness was. We decided that kindness was when you doing something expect nothing to get back.

On Saturday we participated in the worship for youth, then in the event „Kindness is beside us“. We wanted so much to share the kindness with other youngsters, who weren't with us during this Week of Kindness.

Then, on the seventh day, sad to say, all youngsters of the Church overslept and didn't come to worship. So we failed to share kindness with the community. We rejoiced very much that for these good works God gifted us a good weather all week.

We hope that this Week of Kindness will remain as a tradition and next year we will be able to take goodness from people and share it. We want to thank our leaders of the Church for letting us to do this. We are honestly thankful to the community of Pilviškiai that they shared kindness with us.



Vilnius Kids extend hands of friendship

Vilnius kids' friendship was extended across the Atlantic Ocean recently at the Friends of Lithuania gathering held in Marysville, Tennessee during the third week of April. Organizers of the event had asked our children to make outlines of their hands with their names and the church's name on them. But kids at Vilnius UM church went a step further, to show their appreciation, by making booklets for each of their supporting churches. While the front of the booklet was beautifully decorated with group shots of the After School Program activities, the real

message was found inside. Each of them had a photo of themselves, their name and words of gratitude. Here are some of their comments: "This church helps for my family" ... "The church is Love, Joy ... Here I trust myself and others" ... "The Church – my second Home" ... "In the Church I feel like in family" and "The Church- my second home". Next to these messages were the outlines of their hands, all decorated with stickers, flowers and glitter. Then, inside each hand ... words like, "Thank you" and "We love you." People say it is the children and youth who are first to build bridges with others. They are

the first to show hospitality ... even if they don't speak the same language. They know that God loves them and they freely give that love to others. Some say that our children are the future of the church, I think the reality is that they are the present ... they are our strength and they lead the way into what is to come. What a gift it is for the rest of us to love and nurture these young ones, but also to hear about their innocent faith and trust. We have them in our care for but a fleeting moment ... but that moment is a great opportunity and an important responsibility.

Editor's note: The Vilnius Day Center may have to close after the summer for lack of funds. If you would like to support this Advance project funds can be sent with Advance #14934A noted for Vilnius Project.



Jerusalem Marketplace—theme for Youth Camp

Summer is coming – the time of camps when we want to find some new Christian friends, learn new hymns and games, become closer to God and enjoy rays of the sun, light of the fire and freshness of water.... Have you already thought where would you camp?

If not yet, then we invite you (if you are 13–18 years old) to take part in the organized five days long camp of the United Methodist Church, which will be on August 17–21 in “Wesley Camp”, Latvia; its theme – “The

Market of Jerusalem”.

If you are more than 18 years old, then we invite you to be helpers-volunteers in the camp. Will we sell anything in “The Market of Jerusalem”? Sad to say, no, but you will have an opportunity to meet our brothers and sisters in Christ from Alaska and Maryland, who will share the Gospel teaching us various handiworks, games, hymns and other interesting things, which you probably have never tried yet... We will be able to hear more about Jerusalem during Jesus' times and nowa-

days, take part in the Most Decent Christian's election and share our talents, given by God!

So, if you have already decided to join us, fill in the form which you can get from your priest of the Church or the youth's leader and till July 1 bring it to Laurijana Budzinauskaite, the new youth's leader of LUMC (e-mail: laurijanabudzinauskaite@gmail.com).

Place”!

Laurijana and Egle

Pastors Salaries continue to be a priority for the Advance

Around the world people are experiencing the economic crisis. Lithuania with its fragile economy has also been struck. Unemployment is now over 10 percent, many persons have had their hours or salaries cut to avoid more lay-offs. The government has also raised the percentage of social taxes to cover their deficits. Our local churches are “trimming” their costs wherever possible as they continue to expand their humanitarian programs.

Even in the midst of difficult times we are invited to live hopefully into the future. In

January Bishop Olsen and the District Superintendent took the bold move of increasing Pastor's salaries in Lithuania from 1200 to 1400 Litass a month (currently \$462 to \$539) for our ordained pastors. We also had an increase in the social tax this year and so we have had to add that to our costs as well. This seems like a small thing but it brings our salaries a little above minimum. This will mean we need to raise at least an additional \$9000 for the year. They made this decision confident that we could raise the additional funds through the Advance for Pastors Salaries. This is our number one

priority for the Advance this year. We feel it is important to keep our pastors working full-time in the church if at all possible as we continue to grow and expand our ministries. Currently all of our pastors except one have some responsibility for more than one congregation.

If you would like to contribute to the **Advance for Lithuanian Pastors Salaries funds can be sent through your local church or directly to the General Board of Global Ministries #14715A.**

Lithuania United Methodist Church

J. Naugardo g. 8
Kaunas 44280
Lithuania

Office +370 3 732 3588
Fax: +370 3 732 3819

**"Open Hearts, Open Minds,
Open Doors"**

LITHUANIA UMC DISTRICT CONTACTS

District Superintendent John Campbell ds@lithuaniaumc.org
District Youth Coordinator: Laurijana Budzinauskaite laurijanabudzinauskaite@gmail.com
District Diakonal Coordinator: Žaneta Rimškytė caglinka@mail.ru
District Children's Corrdinator: Andželika Micutienė andzelikamicutiene@yahoo.com
District Treasurer: Ugnė Gavenaitė jmb.rastine@gmail.com
Chair of the District Administrative Council: Jonas Baltrusaitis alfa-vienas@one.lt