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Courses begin again



Rīgas pils (Riga Castle)

Riga Castle (Rīgas pils) is a castle on the banks of the Daugava River that runs through the heart of Riga. It was founded in 1330 based on a treaty between the rebellious Rigans and the Livonian Order (which was incorporated into the Teutonic Knights by this point) but was built in a different location than the original castle. This time, the chosen site was occupied by the Convent of the Saint Spirit, a hospital and shelter for the poor, so the convent was moved to the location of the original castle. The Castle at this location has been renovated, destroyed, reconstructed, and expanded multiple times since then; this is clearly evident based on the eclecticism of its architecture.

Throughout the centuries, the castle had been under the rule of Lithuania (1561), Poland-Lithuania (1578-1621), Sweden (1621-1710), and Russia (1710-1917). In 1922, the castle became the residence of the President of Latvia, well after their independence was declared from Russia in 1918. The Soviets occupied the location from 1940 to 1991 before it was returned once again to the Latvians.

In addition to housing the President, the Castle is home to several museums, namely the Latvian National History Museum and the Latvian Art Museum. All rooms of the Castle have been restored to their historical appearance.

<https://www.revisitinghistory.com/castles/latvia/riga-castle/>
<https://www.president.lv/lv/rigas-pils>



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Quintin (bottom, left of center) taking a class with Dr. Detlev Schulz at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana, during his recent Intensive Studies for his Ph.D.

Dear friends in Christ,

We are off and running! The spring semester of Academic Year 2023-2024 has begun for the students of Riga Luther Academy. In the words of our director, Jēkabs Jurdžs, “This is the best start to a semester we’ve had so far.” And he is quite right. One of the unique qualities that Americans bring to the mission field is our attention to detail and our need to plan ahead. Thanks be to God for the patience and understanding of our partners on the field to tolerate our questions and suggestions!

Over the past year and a half, Lindsay and I have worked closely with the other faculty of the Academy and the Latvian administration to put together a program and a system that is workable. I have often used the metaphor that what we have done at the Academy is put together a car while we are driving down the road. The work of putting together a school is no small feat. In other parts of the world, seminaries and colleges are starting up that will ensure that our Lutheran doctrine is passed on to the next generation. Our advantage in Riga is the ability to draw upon and build upon the existing structure of the Latvian

language program.

That said, much of the English program has been rebuilt and customized to meet the needs of the students. One of our most significant (and perennial) challenges is getting books into the hands of students. I have been successful in making great strides in this, and with the addition of Cody Mock joining us on the field for I.T. support, we are close to getting that problem sorted out.

This semester, I am teaching three classes for the Academy: “Introduction to Mission and Evangelism” in our practical department, “Luther’s Writings and Letters” in our dogmatics department, and “Introduction to Theology” for prospective students. You may have seen me post ads for that class on Facebook. I am doing this in addition to taking a full load of classes to make progress on my Ph.D. It is so rewarding to see our students growing in the faith and their theological thinking. Please continue to pray for the work of the Riga Luther Academy and all of her students who will serve churches in many different countries.

In Christ's Service,
Pastor Cundiff



PLEASE PRAY FOR:

- *The health and well-being of our families and friends in the United States.*
- *Our students, many of whom are working full-time and caring for their families and their congregations while taking multiple courses at Lutera Akadēmija.*
- *All the missionaries living and working across the globe.*

PRAISE GOD FOR:

- *The hard work of our Lutera Akadēmija administration and faculty to get the spring semester up and running smoothly.*
- *YOU - our generous donors and prayer warriors, along with the steadfast workers of Mission Central and Mission Advancement, without whom this mission would be impossible.*

A greener option?

If you would like to help us save on paper and postage by getting our newsletters in digital form, please email Lindsay at Lindsay.Cundiff@lcmsintl.org. We would be happy to make that quick and simple change for you. Thank you!

Navigating the darkness of winter



The Cundiffs catch one of the last few days of the smaller Christmas Market near their apartment in Riga.

We've had lots of people ask us about winter darkness in Latvia. Latvia sits at about 57 degrees latitude north; in North America, this is about the same level as Kodiak Island in Alaska. However, Latvia benefits from the shelter of the Baltic Sea so that its winters are not so frigid.

During the winter, around the time of the winter solstice (December 21st), the country gets a mere 6 hours and 43 minutes of sunlight per day (sunrise at 9:00 am and sunset at 3:43 pm).

Of course, you can still see sunlight even if the sun isn't up, but it is a far cry from the summer solstice in mid-June, during which the sun rises around 4:29 am and sets at 10:21 pm – a total of 17 hours and 52 minutes of direct sunlight.

The photo above was taken on January 1st at 3:57 pm. You can tell that the sunlight isn't very strong – in fact, the sun set that day at 3:52 pm.

As I (Lindsay) write this – on February 2nd – we

are already back up to 8 hours and 32 minutes of sunlight daily.

Many people in Latvia use vitamin D supplements to help with mood during this time of year. We've even seen billboards with ads by local pharmacies selling their vitamin D.

It is truly bizarre for Carter, in the middle of winter, to leave at 7:40 am for school in the dark and return home at 4:30 pm in the dark. Luckily, the local schools recognize this as a potential issue, so they have recess outside every day, and sometimes multiple times per day, so that the kids can get a better chance of experiencing daily sunlight.

This does leave us yearning for the long, long days of summer, which leads to our upcoming Home Service time in the United States! We will depart for the States around the second week of June and stay until the end of July. Quintin is currently scheduled for two separate weeks of Ph.D. intensives at Fort Wayne, but we are working to meet with as many people and congregations as possible during the rest of the time! We will likely be mainly in Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, and Missouri. If we cannot meet with you "in the flesh," we are happy to schedule a time to chat with you via Zoom! Please let us know if you would like to be considered for a time slot so we can better formulate our plan – we would love to see you!

Be sure to follow our Facebook page, "The Cundiffs in Latvia," for even more photos and stories of the Lord's work in this beautiful country!

Carter's Corner

Sveiki (hello)! January was an exciting and sporty month! I celebrated my friend's birthday, and he took us bowling – it was so much fun! I am on my school's middle school basketball team, and we recently had a tournament. They run them a bit differently here, but we got 3rd place out of four teams. We definitely need to work on teamwork to do better for the next set of games. We've had some tests at school already, and I've done well on them so far. Have a great day!

- Carter (age 12)



There are many opportunities to serve as short-term or GEO missionaries. Check out the current list and download an application at [lcms.org/service](https://www.lcms.org/service). Click on "Service Opportunities."

Prayerfully consider partnering with the LCMS to support the work of Quintin Cundiff and his family. Make checks payable to:

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St. Louis, MO 63166-6861

OR

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