



Pieter & Nora Kalkman International Ministries

*Life-changing missions in Europe through partnerships
with European Baptist Federation*



September 2008 Newsnotes -- Marrying into Europe & A Mammoth Stretch

Dear Friends,

We started September by traveling a couple of days south from the Arctic-Circle to Helsinki, Finland, where after three Sunday worship services, I took the boat to Tallinn, Estonia, saving up to \$300 dollar on Russian visa hurdles by avoiding the St-Petersburg, Russia land-route. In Tallinn, I was surprised by the nation-wide September 1st celebrations for starting school. It would be at least six additional full days of driving further south to reach Lisbon in Portugal, where I spent the last Sunday of September. However with gas-prices up to \$10 per gallon, I did the Prague-Portugal lap by plane, saving several days and avoiding also heavily-tolled roads. Without visiting partners along the road, it turned out to be three times less expensive than driving the remaining 4000 miles of this mammoth north-to-south stretch.

In all three Baltic states, I noticed a deficit in full-time pastors. Many are bi-vocational, or using an insufficient (low) retirement that helps somewhat. Also, I noticed (more clearly than during earlier visits) the Soviet past of these three otherwise totally different nations of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, each with a different language, culture, and religious experience. It was great to see what our IM volunteers had accomplished in recent years, and good to see that futures teams and individuals can share the blessing of working there.

In Estonia, I met with James who, after an initial half-year of IM volunteer-service, went back to Estonia and married there. We had dinner together, and it was great to learn about James' and Maarja's ministry. Also, a visit to the Christian radio station at the seminary (with lots of volunteer needs) was a blessing, especially to learn that their calling the people to Christ in Russian reaches a couple of 1000 miles radius. In Latvia, the Baptist union and seminary facilities in downtown Riga are in need of volunteer assistance with their so-far effective renovation efforts. In Lithuania, I saw what our IM volunteers from NY state had accomplished. I noticed some work left for future volunteers too at the Baptist church in the capital Vilnius, which will help them to nurture the people who are coming to Christ.

The last week(end) of September, our annual most significant conference took place, the EBF (European Baptist Federation) Council. During the general sessions, we had some dedicated theologians speak who highlighted the responsibility of Christians toward the creation, that changing the world for Christ regarding the ecological concerns is a natural result of a born-again Christian who gets to knowing God better and follows Christ.

At the EBF council, we connect with virtually all of our partners in the EBF family; the leaders of the more than 50 Baptist Unions all over Europe and in part of west Asia. This year, it was the Portuguese who invited the council members to their capital Lisbon, and we had many good conversations. We all rejoiced in meeting Pastor Zaur who, after many efforts and prayer, was released from the Azerbaijan prison in March. We learned about the persecution and difficult circumstances from our brothers in Turkmenistan. We saw our Russian and Georgian delegates working through and overcoming recent war emotions in Christ. We finalized a special partnership agreement between International Ministries and Serbia, to make cooperation with volunteers and other ministry, and work with them more easily for the future. All in all, an exciting five days of renewing and strengthening our network of contacts and updating our volunteer opportunities listing around Europe.

Greetings and Blessings,
Pieter & Nora Kalkman