

News from the Rajek Family

June 2022

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“To The Ends of The Earth”

Acts 1:8 (ESV)

Jesus said, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.”



Luther Academy instructors and students walking through the streets of Riga during Intensive Studies Week. Last April, students spent a week in Riga/Saldus learning about Diakonia in the Bible and the Office of the Ministry.

Welcome

Welcome to the June 2022 issue of our newsletter. In this issue, you will read an update on the mission, about the biblical definition of “repentance” and how you can support this important mission. So, I hope you enjoy this issue and, as always, thank you for your continued support.

Update on the Mission

An important event happened for me personally. This past semester, I taught my first class as an instructor at Luther Academy. Students from all over the world (including several continents – Asia, Europe and Africa) joined me in TH540 – Introduction to Mission and Evangelism.

Throughout the semester, the students learned the biblical and confessional definition of mission and evangelism, how the church carried out mission from Old Testament times up to the present, apologetics, church planting methods, how to become a better witness in their own communities,

Prayer Requests

- For the students and instructors of Luther Academy as they prepare for a much-deserved break from studies and teaching.
- For the recruiting effort and the incoming class of Luther Academy.
- For the people of Ukraine as their lives are severely impacted by the war.
- For the work of starting an English-speaking worship service this summer in Rīga.
- Continued prayers for my family as we adjust to life in Rīga.

best practices for witnessing through social media and so much more. For their final project, the students created a video to post on their favorite social media site to help get the message of Jesus Christ out to a larger audience. I am so thankful for all the input and the insight the students had throughout the course. It just goes to show that though we come from various backgrounds, our common faith in the Lord Jesus Christ unites us all.



Here is a picture of me teaching TH540 – Introduction to Mission and Evangelism for Luther Academy (Spring 2022).

Repentance: A Biblical Understanding

One of our topics in my TH540 class was the use of law and gospel in witnessing. In my discussions with students, we talked about repentance. Have you ever thought about that word “repentance”? Perhaps not very much outside of the season of Lent. However, the word repentance at least how the Bible describes it, is interesting. Let me tell you what I mean. Sometimes people get the idea that the word “repent” implies some sort of exchange with God. In other words, I give God my repentance and God gives me His forgiveness. But that’s not entirely accurate at all.

The Hebrew word for repentance is *shuv* (שׁוּב). Now, *shuv* can mean many things including “to turn” or “return.” However, it can also mean “to be brought back” or “restored.” So, for example, when King David writes in Psalm 23:3, “He [God] restores my soul,” the verb he uses is *shuv*. Notice the subject here is God. It is God who repents or brings back David’s soul. Similarly, in Lamentations 5:21 which says, “Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may be restored!” Here again we find a form of the word *shuv*. So too it is God who repents His people, He brings them back to Himself.

The Greek word in the New Testament has a similar understanding. Take, for example, Acts 11:18 where the apostles and the other disciples rejoiced because “to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance (μετάνοια or *metanoia*) that leads to life.” The same is true for Acts 5:31 where it says that God gives “repentance (*metanoia*) to Israel and forgiveness of sins.” Like its Hebrew counterpart, the Greek word *metanoia*, used in our Acts examples, simply means to “repent” or to “change one’s mind.” Again, it is God who grants or gifts *metanoia* (repentance).

So, is repentance something we do or is it something God does? Well, the answer is really both! God causes repentance in us. This is to say, He repents us. He brings us back and restores our soul. Isn’t that interesting, God

demands repentance and then He gives us, through the Holy Spirit working in the Word, that thing which He demands.

So, we are forgiven not because we have given to God this good work of repentance. Rather, we are forgiven because God works repentance and faith in us. We are forgiven because God restores us and brings us back into the body of His blessed Son who made atonement for us. Therefore, with God it is all grace, all gift, all the time. And that is the God we have come to know in Jesus Christ.

The picture to the right is of Jenny and me on our walk through Mežaparks (i.e., Forest Park) in Riga, Latvia on Latvia's Restoration of Independence Day. This national holiday celebrates the day that Latvia regained its independence from the Soviet Union on May 4, 1990. During this last semester, students were given the day off from studies in observance of this important event. Please note all the Latvian flags lining the street behind us.



Thank You for Your Support

A HUGE Thank you for your ongoing support of this very exciting yet important mission. I am continually amazed by what God has done and continues to do throughout the Eurasia region and the Luther Academy in Rīga, Latvia. Through your support, you are making a difference for Christ. I praise God for the good work He is doing and for your partnership in this mission.

If you'd like to support the LCMS through the work of Rev. Dr. Cory J. Rajek, you may send a tax-deductible gift to:

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
P.O. Box 66861
St. Louis, MO 63166-6861



Make checks payable to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Mark checks "Support of Cory Rajek." Gifts can also be given securely online through the LCMS website, on my online giving page at lcms.org/rajek.

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