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## “God’s Word Does Not Return Void”



### Did You Know?

Rīga is home to Europe’s largest bazaar and market. Together with Rīga, Old Town, the Rīga Central Market has been included in the UNESCO World Heritage Site list. The main structures of the market are five buildings which were repurposed from old German Zeppelin (airship) hangars. A visitor to the Rīga Central Market will witness everything from clothing, to small appliances, to fresh bakery, meats, fish, fruits and vegetables. In many respects, it’s like a Super Walmart (only bigger!), with indoor and outdoor vendors. In total, the Rīga Central Market measures 778,000 square feet (72,300 square meters) wide with more than 3,000 vendors.



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A picture taken at the International Center of the LCMS in Kirkwood, MO. This picture was taken at the service of thanksgiving for all the former missionaries of the LCMS who were concluding their service.

“God’s Word does not return void.” This was the message of LCMS President Matthew Harrison on September 26, 2022, as people at the International Center (IC) and the Office of International Mission (OIM) of the LCMS gathered to give thanks to God for the blessing of missionaries, both present and past. Among the honorees were eight missionaries leaving the field and one missionary heading to the field.

In the sermon, Rev. Harrison observed, “The first word [Paul] says in his greeting is ‘grace.’ ... Today, especially to our retiring missionaries, the word for you is grace. ... You can be absolutely certain that the Lord is now, has been and shall be working all of your work, all of your life, for His benefit and blessing, and for the benefit of others. His Word does not return void, never returns void — you can count on it completely.”

As Christian Boehlke, interim executive director of OIM, reflected that there were over 100 years of mission service represented by those leaving the field. The eight

missionary honorees were:

- Kipp and Tami Beaudoin (Ukraine from 2019 to 2021);
- Jacob Gaugert (Togo and Francophone Africa from 2013 to 2022);
- Rev. Dr. Brian and Amanda Gauthier and family (Panama from 2015 to 2020);
- Tom and Debi Going and family (Japan and Indonesia from 1990 to 2022);
- Julie Lutz and family (Papua New Guinea from 1986 to 2022);
- Rev. Daniel and Lisa McMiller and family (Panama and OIM from 1986 to 2022);
- Rev. Charles and Deborah St-Onge (China, Canada and the Caribbean from 2013 to 2022); and
- Deaconess Stephanie Wilde (Puerto Rico from 2019 to 2021).

The lone missionary beginning service was Rebecca Bartelt, who has completed missionary orientation and will be going to Taiwan to serve as a sacred music educator.

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# With A New Year Comes New Responsibilities

Change is difficult. It doesn't matter if you're young or old, changing habits or locations or whatever, can be incredibly difficult.

I remember when my oldest daughter, Emiley, was a baby. For the first couple weeks after bringing her home from the hospital, Jenny and I would take three-hour shifts every night, holding her because she refused to sleep in her crib. Two weeks of little to no sleep was our breaking point. Something had to be done. Something had to change. It was then that we were given some wise advice. I don't remember who it was, but we were told, "sometimes you just have to let them cry it out."

It was one of the hardest things we had to do as parents. Putting Emiley into her crib and listening to her cry was difficult. But it didn't take long and she was fast asleep. From that moment on, she slept in her crib...even through the night. At first, this change wasn't easy for us or for Emiley.

Even mentioning the word "change" can stir up all kinds of emotions in us. When we see a problem, change can be a welcomed idea. Many of us may even like change, so long as that

change doesn't involve us personally.

Experiencing change makes us feel like our security has been ripped away. Fear and anger overtake us. A common reaction to change is to try to stop it, make it unsuccessful or, at the very least, slow it down.

Over the past year and a half, my family and I have experienced a great deal of change. From receiving my call into the mission field, to building a support network, to moving to Latvia, to teaching for Luther Academy in Rīga, to Emiley's visa being denied and having to take her back to the U.S., there has been a lot of change for us in a short period of time. Some of it was welcomed change and some of it, quite frankly, I wish I could have stopped it or, at the very least, slowed it down.

Well, true to what has become the norm for us, we have been presented with yet another change. Recently, I have been asked to consider being the next Associate Regional Director for Eurasia. After much thought and prayer, I have been led to accept the position. So, what does this change mean? It means that I will be next in line to be the Regional Director of Eurasia (a position which I will most likely assume in January when our current Regional Director, Rev. James Krikava will step aside to receive greater responsibilities at the Office of International Mission in St. Louis). From now until then, much of my job will be focused on maintaining missionary care, building relationships with our church partners, managing budgets, overseeing church plants throughout the region, among other things. It also means that I will be traveling more even as my responsibilities at Luther Academy in Rīga dwindle.



Here I am pictured with the current Eurasia Regional Director, Rev. James Krikava, and current and former Eurasia missionaries. In January 2023, I will become the new Regional Director for Eurasia.

What does this mean for you who continue to support me and this mission? It means little. I will still need and welcome your support moving forward. One might even argue that I will need more prayers and support as I move into this oversight role. Please pray that the Lord would give me wisdom and understanding that I may be an effective leader to His people in the Eurasia region!

Whether someone is young or old, change is difficult. It was difficult for Emiley (and her parents), and it will be difficult for us as we adjust to this new role with greater responsibilities. Yet, regardless of any changes we face, we have God's own promise to work all things for our good as St. Paul reminds us in Romans 8:28, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." Our Lord promised a Savior and He kept His promise. He promised to raise that Savior from the dead and He kept that promise. He promised to send the Holy Spirit to give us faith and He kept that promise. If He kept His promise in these most difficult of tasks, we can certainly trust Him to keep His promise to work all things, even a difficult change, for our good.





*Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. (Rom. 12:12 ESV)*

### PLEASE PRAY:

- For all who are struggling financially due to higher prices on goods.
- For Luther Academy in Rīga that God would continue to bless our outreach efforts.
- For the Eurasia Region and its missionaries, for my family and me as we prepare for anticipated changes in the coming year.
- For my daughter, Emiley, as she finishes high school and prepares for college.

### GIVE THANKS:

- For the dedicated missionaries who are on the field and who have just concluded their service.
- For the many congregations and individuals who pray for us, encourage and support us in this important mission.

### PRAISE GOD:

- For the partnership we have with faithful churches throughout the world, especially those in the Eurasia Region.

## New Responsibilities...cont.



L to R: Lexi, Emiley, Jenny and Cory

Allowing Emiley to “cry it out” was one of the most difficult things we ever did. (We were so concerned that when she stopped crying, Jenny and I even snuck into her room to make sure she was still breathing!) As concerned as we were with Emiley, our concern paled in comparison to our Lord’s concern for her...and you, His child!

So precious are we to Him that nothing would stand in His way to winning us back. Not false accusations. Not a sham trial. Not beatings. Not a cross. Not death. Not even a tomb. Nothing can separate us

from His love (Romans 8:38-39). How do we know? Because His love is on full display every time we hear His Word proclaimed by our pastor. Every time we witness a baptism and are reminded that we received such a gift. Every time we receive the bread and wine which are His body and blood. Every time we hear our pastor speak in the stead and by the command of Christ. Through Word and Sacrament, our Lord comes to us even as He delivers His love, makes good on His promise and strengthens us to trust in Him.

Change is difficult. And it doesn’t matter if you’re young or old. Yet, regardless of the change, we know that God has something good in store for us. So, fear not. Trust in the Lord. And know that His word of truth, comfort, and love will enable us to face any difficult change with hope and even joy through faith in Christ.

*I would like to sincerely thank you for your support of the Lord’s mission in Eurasia. We could not be touching peoples’ lives with the message of Jesus Christ without you. Please prayerfully consider sharing this mission with others. Tell them of the good that God is doing throughout this exciting mission.*

*Once again, from the bottom of my heart, thank you and the Lord be with you.*

~Cory J. Rajek



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://lcms.org/service). Click on “Service Opportunities.”

Prayerfully consider partnering with the LCMS to support the work of Rev. Dr. Cory J. Rajek. Make checks payable to:

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

OR

Mission Central  
40718 Highway E 16  
Mapleton, IA 51034

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