



Did You Know?

You may have seen the 1986 hit movie “Crocodile Dundee,” but did you know that the main character may have been based on a Latvian? It is widely believed that the main character played by Australian actor Paul Hogan, was inspired by none other than Latvian born Arvīds Blūmentāls (or Crocodile Harry as he was known in Australia). Born in a small town near Rīga named Dundaga in 1925, Blūmentāls moved to Australia in 1951 and spent years hunting crocs in Queensland. He would later remark that he had to leave Latvia due to the mass deportations enforced by the Soviets after World War II.



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Divine Service in English Comes to Rīga



A picture of the altar area of Svētā Jāņa Eviņģēliski Luteriskā Baznīca (or St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church). On August 7, 2022, the Divine Service in English returned after a 2 year hiatus due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

On August 7, 2022, an important event took place at St. John's Lutheran Church in Old Town, Rīga. After a two-year hiatus, the Divine Service in English returned to that sacred space, a collaboration between Latvian Pastor Gints Graudiņš and me. I would like to thank Dr. Charles Cortright and Dr. John Bombaro (my predecessors in Rīga) for laying the foundation for the English service years ago. Unfortunately, the events surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic put an end to those efforts. Now that all of Latvia has opened up and tourism season is upon us, we thought it right to begin these services again.

Some may wonder, why start the Divine Service in English? The

purpose is to share the message of Jesus Christ to all the tourists and would-be English speakers in Rīga, Latvia. The English language has become a universal language of sorts the world over. With many tourists coming to see the sights of Rīga, we want to make the most of the opportunity to share the message of Jesus Christ.

I would like to thank Pastor Graudiņš and the members of Rīgas Sv. Jāņa Baznīca (St. John Church of Rīga) for their willingness to partner with us in making this mission outreach opportunity a reality. You can read more about the Divine Service in English on St. John's website (<https://www.janabaznica.lv/worship-service-in-english/>).

Why Do Lutherans Say “Divine Service”?

With the Divine Service in English starting up in Riga, I thought it fitting to write about why Lutherans use the term “Divine Service.” Indeed, people will often use the term “worship” to describe what happens at church. The word itself is from the old English “worthship” which was used to ascribe true worth to something. In the case of God, the word would be used to ascribe true worth to God. Perhaps you can see the dilemma this word creates toward a Lutheran-biblical theology. First, who are we to attempt to ascribe “worth” to God? Second, the Bible states, “no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.” (1 Cor. 12:3 ESV) Therefore, true worship cannot be offered unless God creates the faith in us to want to worship Him. Furthermore, God as God needs nothing from us including our

worship. On the contrary, if we are to live, we need something from Him, namely His favor. And that’s the purpose of the Divine Service.

The German word, *Gottesdienst* is translated literally as Divine Service. Likewise, the word liturgy, which is often referred to as synonym for Divine Service, comes from a Greek word for service. Notice the contrast between the words “worship” and “Divine Service.” Whereas “worship” implies ascribing true worth to something or someone (our action) versus “Divine Service” which implies the Divine God serving someone (God’s action). In this way, Divine Service works well with our Lutheran theology which states that, when it comes to salvation, we do nothing. God does everything!

And, of course, this is the purpose of the Divine Service. God comes to us through Word and Sacraments to serve us, just as He did by taking on our flesh, living a perfect life in our place, dying our death on the cross, rising on the third day and ascending into heaven where He rules all things for the good of His church.

In the Smalcald Articles (III, XII) of the Lutheran Confessions, Martin Luther wrote,



A picture inside beautiful St. John's in Riga, Latvia.

“Thank God, a seven-year-old child knows what the church is, namely holy believers and sheep who hear the voice of their Shepherd.” I can’t help but think Luther had John 10:27-28 in mind when he wrote this. There Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.” (ESV) Since we cannot go back in time to receive the gifts of the cross (i.e., forgiveness, life and salvation), God delivers the gifts of the cross to us through ordinary means. The Augsburg Confession (VII) defines the church as “the assembly of saints in which the Gospel is taught purely and the Sacraments are administered rightly.” In other words, the church is defined as the place where God’s people receive God’s gifts through God’s means of grace. The focus here being on God who comes to serve His people by forgiving their sins and giving everlasting life. This, then, is why we say “Divine Service”.



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 students and faculty of Luther Academy as we gear up for the fall semester.
- For my daughter, Emiley, as she adjusts to life back in the states without her mom, dad, and sister.

GIVE THANKS:

- For the staff of OIM who have incredibly supportive during this time of transition for my family and especially, Emiley.
- 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 the Latvian Lutheran church.

Family and Ministry Update



L to R: Lexi, Emiley, Jenny and Cory

Two major topics have consumed much of my time this past month. The first was helping Emiley prepare for life back in the United States without her mom and dad and the second was preparing for the upcoming school year at Luther Academy.

Realizing that Emiley had a short time left on the mission field, we tried to spend as much time experiencing the things that Latvia has to offer before her big move. Emiley loves art so we spent a Saturday taking her to the Latvian

National Art Museum, among other things. Then, the end of July-beginning of August was spent escorting her back to grandma and grandpa's home back in the U.S. and saying our goodbyes. This is her first time away from us and I almost think it has been more of an adjustment for us than it has been for her. Yet, we take comfort in the fact that she is with family and kept securely in the hands of a loving Savior. Our hope is to be able to see her again sometime around Christmas.

As for Luther Academy, I have been involved in meetings as we prepare for another new school year. All in all, things have been going well and we continue to amazed at God's blessings.

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. 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
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