Most ethnic Latvians can trace their roots to Baltic tribes that merged in medieval times. In the past, the country was ruled at times by Germany, Poland, Sweden, and Russia. After a period of independence from 1918-1940, it became part of the Soviet Union. Latvia regained its independence in 1991. Riga, its capital city, is known for its Art Nouveau architecture. Yet it still contains thousands of historical buildings made of wood.

More than one-third of the nation is covered by forests along low plains. They carry the nickname “green gold” because of the abundance of money made from timber production, including oak, aspen, and birch. Indeed, timber forms the backbone of the Latvian economy. Other products include grain, potatoes, and vegetables. Winters bring heavy precipitation—so much, in fact, massive drainage is necessary to maintain agriculture production.

A nation of two million people, 80% claim Christian affiliation, while only 7% of the population attends church regularly. Recently there has been growth of ancient pagan beliefs and nature religion. Latvians value their personal space. They also avoid using hand gestures during conversations, which they consider a distraction. One-quarter or more of the people live in poverty. Ice Hockey is the most popular sport in Latvia.

Lutheran Hour Ministries conducts outreach in Latvia through mass media, technology, and interpersonal channels.

**Ministry Response**

There is tremendous opportunity to share God’s love and reach out with the Gospel in Latvia. Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM–Latvia) responds to the spiritual hunger across this Eastern European country through a variety of strategies:

**SOCIAL MEDIA.** The primary outreach in Latvia has moved to Facebook, using good picture/message posts to organically grow a Latvian audience. The Facebook page now has more than 2,000 followers. Devotions, Christian quotes, event reviews, and audio from the long-running radio devotions form the basis of content on Facebook. There is also a Russian-language site to reach out to Russian speakers.

**FILM SHOWINGS.** Film showings provide fun, pressure-free environments for demonstrating the love of Jesus to those who attend, offering more information to those who do not know Him. Our featured films promote Christian values and encourage viewers to consider their relevance to their lives. Afterward, a pastor leads a discussion among the attendees.
LITERATURE. A variety of printed resources reach individuals in their spiritual seasons of life. Topics include alcoholism, depression, forgiveness, parenting, stress, and much more, addressing these issues from a Christian perspective. We promote these materials through social media and LHM–Latvia’s spots and other venues.

BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSES. Bible Correspondence Courses (BCCs) introduce the Gospel to people who don’t know Jesus, and reinforce a biblical understanding for people growing in their faith. When someone responds to an outreach activity, LHM–Latvia will typically invite the respondent to begin a BCC as the next step in his or her spiritual journey. Courses are available for both adults and children.

YOUTH MINISTRY. Today’s young people will become tomorrow’s leaders in Latvia. LHM–Latvia’s youth outreach introduces Christianity in an atmosphere of fellowship and fun. We conduct seminars for individuals 14 to 25 years old, talking to them about the role of Christianity in everyday life, including extending care to the poor and others in need.

EQUIPPING THE SAINTS. LHM–Latvia conducts Equipping the Saints (ETS) workshops to provide new generations of Christians with practical ways to carry the Gospel into their local communities. After attending these sessions, believers feel more confident sharing the Good News with their neighbors and inviting them to local congregations. We continue to keep in touch with the participants to help them apply what they learned.

Impact

“THERE MUST BE SOMETHING ELSE”: How God Answered a Kindergarten Teacher’s Questions and Brought Her to Faith

Brigita teaches kindergarten in Latvia, where she enjoys answering children’s questions. Yet unanswered questions tugged at her own heart. “I love my job, I love my family—but there must be something else that could fulfill my life,” she remembers pondering.

As a child, Brigita had visited church, but that was the extent of her experience. She got married and had children. Life grew hectic. “I always felt like there was something missing in my life,” she says. “I always said I believe in God, but I’m not the person who will attend church on Sundays. I felt I don’t belong there.”

One day, while with a Christian friend, their conversation turned to religion. Brigita shared her lingering questions. Her friend encouraged her to seek answers. Since Brigita didn’t feel comfortable visiting a church, her friend recommended signing up for Lutheran Hour Ministries’ Bible Correspondence Courses. This would allow her to explore Christianity at her own pace.

The teacher became like a child. Brigita enrolled in the BCC program. The Lord worked on her heart and brought her to faith in Jesus. Brigita found a local congregation, which she continues to attend today. In receiving the answer to her questions, she learned one of the greatest lessons of all: “Only God can fill your soul,” she says.

LHM.ORG/GLOBAL