

Baltics Trip Report

Team: Vadim (name changed for safety, Monty Tuttle, Jim Black, Lanny Tucker



*The Baltic Brothers – Gulf of Finland,
Estonia Lanny, Vadim, Jim, Monty (L to R)*

The Baltics

Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia are commonly referred to as the Baltic countries. The Baltic Sea borders them to the West and to their east are Russia and Belarus. Together they have a population of just over 6M and all are members of NATO and the European Union. Although each is a sovereign country, the three governments frequently cooperate in foreign policy, defense, energy, and transportation initiatives. Collectively, the Baltics make up about 68,000 square miles of territory which is roughly equal to the size of Oklahoma or Colorado. As a whole, the Baltics have a GDP of 158B which is similar to Hungary or Slovakia. Although each country has its own unique history, the Baltic states were each under Soviet rule for nearly 50 years, ending in 1991. (Source: Wikipedia, Blomsterhagens, ec.europa.eu/Eurostat)



Lithuania 🇱🇹

Religious background:

According to the 2021 census, of the 2.83M population, 74% identify as Roman Catholic, 4.4% as Eastern Orthodox, 4.4% Protestant, and 13.7% do not identify with any religion. (Sources: worldometer.com, populationpyramid.net, operationworld.com, wikipedia.com)

“Exiles in a New Land”—Vilnius, Lithuania

On our first night in Vilnius, Lithuania, we visited Dimitri and Irina (names changed), Belarusian refugees living with their three children. In 2020, after yet another fraudulent election by Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko, peaceful protests broke out across the country. Dimitri and Irina joined the movement—and paid a price.



Irina felt called by God to encourage imprisoned protesters and began writing them letters. The authorities found out and came looking for her at Dimitri and Irina’s home. Though Irina wasn’t there, officers threatened to arrest Dimitri and take their children. Miraculously, Dimitri remained calm and deescalated the situation. Instead of arresting him, they handed him a card and told him to have Irina call. Yeah, right.

That night, Dimitri and Irina made the painful decision to flee. With only what they could carry, the family began a long journey through Armenia, Georgia, Turkey, and Italy before finally reaching safety in Lithuania.

They are just one of a multitude. Since 2020, around 6,000 Belarusians have become documented political prisoners, and between 250,000–500,000 have fled the country—about 55,000 to Lithuania alone.

Now settled in Vilnius, Dimitri and Irina serve at Pilgrim Church, a Russian-speaking congregation reaching fellow Belarusian exiles. Many refugees struggle with bitterness, trauma, addiction, and despair. But this couple shines with peace and purpose.

During a Bible study in their apartment, Irina was telling her story. Suddenly, one of the women said, “You’re the woman who wrote the letters to the prisoners? I received one! Thank you! Thank you! You have no idea how much that meant to me.” Hugs and tears all around.

Dimitri and Irina also genuinely thanked us for providing Bibles in their heart language through EEM. For these exiles, seeing and receiving a Belarusian Bible in a foreign land is an unexpected and beautiful comfort.

Their story reminds us: suffering for Christ is not theoretical for everyone. The teenage son of one of our Belarusian partners was arrested, beaten, bloodied and then hospitalized just because they assumed him to be an opponent of the regime. “Nothing was broken in his body,” the father said, “but his heart was broken.” That young man is still grappling with the pain, still sorting it all out.

All of our lives of faith are lived out in a present reality, in a broken world. And it’s messy. It’s complicated, difficult, stressful, and just plain mean. And that’s ok. Jesus knows how difficult this is. And we know this—the grace and the love of our Great God is wider, longer, higher and deeper than any of us ever knew, and it pours out in times of suffering and difficulty.

Dimitri and Irina are living out their faith as exiles in a foreign land, and EEM is honored and blessed to come alongside them and provide Russian and Belarusian Bibles free of charge to support their new mission among Belarusian refugees in Lithuania. Once again, our ministry partners inspire us, encourage us and convict us.

Sometimes our ministry partners are public school systems which are requesting tens of thousands of Bibles, maybe even a hundred thousand, for their schools, and sometimes our ministry partners are a family of five—exiles in a foreign land—who request a few dozen Bibles for their fellow exiles.

“Here’s to the Prodigal”

Bible Study Center—Klaipeda, Lithuania



In the heart of downtown Klaipeda, an office building buzzes with eternal purpose. On Sundays, the upper room fills with worshipers from all walks of life. Below, the Bible Study Center welcomes seekers and skeptics throughout the week, offering prayer, conversation — and free Bibles!

At the heart of this ministry are **Illia and Kestutis**, two men whose lives have been radically changed by the Gospel. Neither ever expected to be preaching the Good News of Jesus. Illia once lived as a self-described “hooligan” in Soviet-era Vilnius. Raised atheist, constantly in trouble, he accepted a friend’s invitation to church only out of curiosity. He came with doubts—but stayed because of the kindness he found. A missionary there patiently answered his many challenges—always turning to Scripture. One month and many questions later, Illia became a Christian.

Kestutis far from God, lived a life of empty indulgence. His younger days were spent in and out of bars. One day, exhausted, broken, and at rock bottom, a missionary knocked on his door and offered him a Bible study. That moment changed everything. “Life turned upside down,” he recalled. He found that his desire for alcohol began to disappear, but it didn’t happen overnight. He told of one evening, early in his journey, when he was at a bar with a drinking buddy after an afternoon of reading his Bible.



“I was at the bar with my friend,” he says, “and I shared the Prodigal Son story that I’d read that morning. We both teared up. Then we looked at each other and raised a toast, ‘To the prodigal son!’”



That was thirty years ago. Today, both men serve faithfully in the church, welcoming anyone who seeks God and helping distribute EEM Bibles.

“Only the Word of God can change people,” Kestutis reminded us. “If you don't read the Bible then everything else will just be a failure... (The Bible) is what can change a life.”



Latvia 🇱🇻

Religious background:

As of 2021, Latvia's 1.85M population includes 37% Lutheran, 19% Roman Catholic, and 13% Latvian Orthodox Christians, with 30% unaffiliated. The greater number of Lutherans is longstanding and unique to Latvia. (Sources: worldometers.com, stat.gov.lv, populationpyramid.net, operationworld.com, [wikipedia](https://wikipedia.org))

M4 Ministry—Liva Fokrote—Plant One Church A Day in Europe

Of all our visits in the Baltics, meeting with Liva Fokrote and learning about M4 Ministry may hold more potential than any other partner. Liva is COO for M4, a ministry aiming to *plant one church each day in Europe*. She is a relentless “outside the box” thinker and doer. Even now, she is creating a new role for herself in strategic research & development.

M4 operates on an invitation basis and currently works in 19 European countries. Their good reputation often leads them into new countries. Obviously, M4 has a God-sized vision and is already impacting many people for Christ. Vadim plans to meet and talk further with Liva to see how we can provide Bibles through M4.



Liva teaches at the Latvian Bible Center as well.

The Family Business—Riga, Latvia



Kaspers and his sons, Arnis and Janus, are entrepreneurs—but their greatest venture isn't in renting warehouses or producing eggs and mustard powder. It's in spreading the Gospel across Latvia. For years, they've poured profits from their businesses into printing and freely distributing over 20,000 Latvian-language Bibles across the Baltics. Their passion? That every person should have access to the life-changing

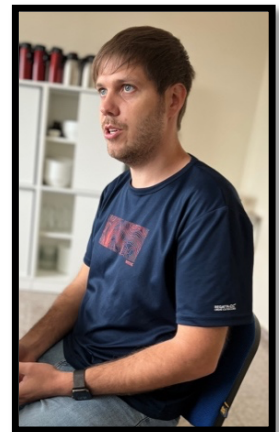
power of God's Word. Their network of churches and mission organizations continues to grow and shows no signs of slowing down.

At their office/ Bible distribution center outside Riga, Latvia, we saw a ministry built on love, faith, and bold generosity. Arnis showed us a remarkable collection of antique and modern Bibles, each a testament to the power of God's Word to transform lives. They shared stories of the impact this ministry has had.

One man, a believer for over ten years, wept as he received his first-ever Bible. Another, once part of the mafia and known for harassing preachers, broke down in tears when handed a copy of the Scriptures—and later, gave his life to Christ.

"We give the Bible, and God does His job," they said simply.

EEM is looking for ways to partner with Kaspers and his sons in distributing not only Latvian, but also Russian-language Bibles throughout the region. We may never see all the fruit that grows from these seeds being sown by this "family business," but we know God will bring the increase. (1 Corinthians 3:6–7)



Svetlana: Former Witch, Now Follower of Christ

After a Sunday worship service in Daugavpils, Latvia, church member Svetlana asked if she could share her story. In a quiet room, she spoke for an hour about how God is rescuing her from a life of darkness, tragedy, poverty, and near death.

Svetlana was a third-generation witch. Her mother and grandmother practiced witchcraft so widely that people came from other countries to seek their help. Following in their path, Svetlana also practiced witchcraft but it drove her into deep spiritual and financial poverty. "I didn't know God. I didn't even know that witchcraft was evil," she said.

Tragically, her husband took his own life by jumping from a rooftop. She fell further into darkness. Soon after, she was hit by a truck. Doctors found 19 bone fractures and a crushed bladder. She lay in a coma for two weeks. When she woke up her doctor said, “You should have died, but you’re alive. Somebody helped you.” He encouraged her to seek God—but she didn’t know how.

Svetlana began having vivid visions. In one, she was flying; in another, she saw a bright, shining man in a cape who placed a hand on her shoulder. She cried out, “Please help me,” but the vision ended.

Later, she had a vision of two men—one radiant, one dark. Each held a book. The man in white had a golden book with glowing names. Her name wasn’t written there. But in the black book there was a horrible dragon, and there was her name: “Svetlana—Witch.”

While recovering in the hospital, she heard Christians singing and sharing their faith in the hallway. She listened to them and **started to move toward God, reading the Bible for the first time.** She said, “I read that God and Satan were fighting over me. The darkness was not good, and I was in the darkness. God started to clean me.” It was a hard two-year “cleaning process.”



Three more times, the man in white came to her in visions. The first two times, her name remained in the black book. But in the third, it appeared in the white one. She saw it written there, but it wasn’t glowing, so she asked why. He answered, “You do not know me very well. You need to know me more.”

The man of light told her to burn all her tarot cards and witchcraft tools, so she did. People still came to her for her witchcraft services—but she resisted. Yet, Satan was still fighting to keep her in bondage. After the accident, she struggled with drinking and smoking, and even tried to take her own life—twice. **She began reading the Bible, and God saved her from Satan.** With help from the church, God got her through all these trials, and she began to heal. Slowly but surely, God was utterly transforming her life.

It was 1992 when Svetlana began seeking God, then she became a follower of Christ and was baptized. “Witchcraft is not true. It is from Satan. I am completely free from it now,” she said. Two of her children now follow Jesus, and she prays the other two will soon. When asked about a favorite Bible verse, she smiled and said, **“The whole Bible is my strength.”**

To those struggling with suicidal thoughts or dabbling in witchcraft, Svetlana warns, “Witchcraft is really hell! Satan makes it look interesting, but it’s a lie.”

What a victory God is working in Svetlana, breaking the curse of three generations of witchcraft. God has led her through unthinkable trials and sorrows, but now there is no doubt: Svetlana’s name is shining brightly in the Book of Life. As Jesus says in Revelation 3:5, *“All who are victorious will be clothed in white. I will never erase their names from the Book of Life...they are mine!”*

Svetlana's story testifies to God's incomparable power to rescue a person from despair, darkness, and generational bondage. Her testimony brings real hope to those battling suicidal thoughts or held in darkness by witchcraft and all the other schemes of Satan. Jesus has died so that all can have their name written and shining brightly in the Book of Life!

Estonia 🇪🇪

Religious background:

As of January 2025, Estonia had 1,369,995 residents, down 5,000 from 2024. Approximately 58% claim no religious affiliation (up 4% from 2011 to 2021), while 29% of Estonia's population is religiously affiliated. Another 13% declined to answer when asked about faith. The largest religious group is Eastern Orthodox (16%), followed by Lutherans (8%) and Catholics (0.8%, up from 0.4% in 2011). Religious affiliation varies among ethnic groups, with Estonians predominantly identifying as Lutheran and Russian-speaking minorities more likely to be Eastern Orthodox. Sources rank Estonia as either 3rd or 5th globally for no religious affiliation (atheists or agnostics). (Sources: Pew Research, CEOWORLD Magazine, Estonian World, state.ee, The Baltic Guide, Wikipedia)

Baltic Languages Bible Translation Note:

EEM has good relations with Latvian Bible translators, which allows us to provide Latvian-language Bibles alongside Russian-language Bibles in Latvia. However, Estonian and Lithuanian-language Bible translators are not currently partnered with EEM, which largely limits us to Russian-language Bible distribution in Estonia and Lithuania. Pray that these Bible translation societies will see that partnering with us will ultimately help create even more demand for Bibles in their countries rather than fearing that EEM's distribution of free Bibles will undercut commercial sales of Bibles they provide.



Peipsi Jarv, Estonia—looking east toward Russia

