

Wednesday, June 24

I can't believe that it's over. We are officially done with the kids here in Lithuania, and I feel like I could stay here for another week. Being here is so different than working in Russia. At first I was hesitant to embrace the culture and the kids here, because it was so different, but yesterday I realized that this is where God has placed us, and we have a lot of work to do here!

In Russia, you connected to the kids instantly through a hug. Here, we only saw the kids a few hours a day, and we actually had to make an effort to connect and form relationships with the Lithuanians. In the end though, we still made friendships, and I still didn't want to leave. I feel like we're on a roll, and we could keep working with the high schoolers, but I also have to remember that we have done our job, and God does the real work.

Yesterday we had a crazy day in Latvia. We drove to another church by the sea in Latvia, but it was rushed and we got lost on the way and wasn't exactly what we expected. We only had time for David's lesson and then hung out in the countryside of Latvia for a while. Two good things came out of the trip: we learned a new game from Romas called "Lion, Samurai, and 'funny old person,'" and we spent time at a beach on the Baltic Sea.

When we got back in Klaipeda, we went to a bar/restaurant with live music in celebration of the summer solstice. It was a really fun evening, and our translator came out with us as well.

Today I taught my lesson, did two crafts, taught kickball, passed out shirts, took lots of photo, and gave hugs. Everyone is begging for us to come back next summer, and we definitely want to!

Tuesday, June 23

My legs are sore from all the walking we did yesterday! We had our second day of VBS, and I think it is going really well. We're teaching better, and the kids are interacting more in the context of our lessons, which is what we want. To begin our day, we made lunch for any of the kids who wanted to come earlier in the day. So we went to the store on a mission to feed maybe 15 people? We decided that to use an Appold recipe that David has made for me before. But when we got to the church, there was about 30 kids there! So we frantically made up some peanut butter and jelly sandwiches as an American sidedish, and we ended up feeding everyone, and everyone really enjoyed it, especially us Americans who are only used to the Lithuanian food of meat and potatoes. It was nice to have some fresh food. Then Josh showed the kids how to play football, and they loved it! They were really disappointed when Josh didn't teach them how to tackle.

After the day's activities, Romas and his wife Ingrida took us to Palanga (the city which we flew into) and walked down a very touristy road that led to the beach of the Baltic Sea! If you know me at all, you know that when there's a beach around, I'm a

happy girl. David and I waded around in the very brisk water before walking on the boardwalk and then getting drinks with the group.

Dinner was on a patio of a really nice restaurant. I had salmon with fresh veggies and it was delicious. I also ate a fish eye. Gross, I know. It was peer pressure and I folded.

On the way home from Palanga, we walked SO MUCH. Although my feet felt like they were going to fall off, I don't think I have laughed so much in a long time. Between Joe's colloquialisms and Romas's sound effects, Christa, David, and I had the worst case of the giggles. Then we stopped by this lookout to watch the sunset over the sea. It was absolutely beautiful. All in all, I'd say it was a great day.

Monday, June 22

Yesterday was our first VBS day, and I think it went really well. It was a lot different than what I was used to in Russia, but it's still God working through us. Many of the kids that we worked with are not churched, and so they either didn't know what we were talking about or just felt uncomfortable talking and responding to our questions. The few questions that we did get answers from told me that the kids know a lot of Christian buzz words, like Jesus or Bible or forgiveness, but they don't know how to use these words. It will be challenging to teach such basic level material without sounding like we're teaching little kids. On a social level, the kids seem to really like us, and they are really nice and willing to try new things with us.

Christa taught her lesson yesterday, and she did really well (it was her first time ever teaching!). She also did a presentation on the 4th of July and then we tie dyed shirts blue and red. Mine kinda turned out like a purple blob, but some of the Lithuanians turned out really nice. Most of them had never tie dyed before, but they were still very creative and crafty.

We actually had a break in the day yesterday and we all took naps. It was amazing, which was followed by an even better card game between me, David, Josh, and Christa.

Today should be nice because we're actually doing our intended schedule of VBS from 2-6. Josh and Joe are teaching their lesson and then Josh is teaching them how to play American football. Later on today we're going to drive to Palanga and walk around.

Friday, June 19

It is so surreal that today we were standing in Lithuania and could see part of Russia and part of Sweden. Europe is so cool.

The plane ride here was long, as always. The transfer in Copenhagen was a little crazy. Pastor Thoma got through the line really fast, but his scotch was taken unless he checked it. So we thought he still had enough time to go back and try and check his scotch, since

the rest of us were all in line to go through security. I'm trying to rush everyone else through line when we get down the stairs, through security, and see yet another line – passport control. At this point we had 15 minutes until our flight left, so I was kinda worried, especially when Joe realized that he didn't have his passport with him. He runs upstairs and finds it while the four of us kids are frantically trying to get to our gate. Finally we all get to our gate (it was already closed, but the plane had not left) and Pastor Thoma is nowhere to be seen. I didn't know if it was hilarious or really worrisome. Fortunately, he made it right before we left.

When we got into Palanga, Lithuania, we found out that our luggage didn't make it. How wonderful. But we had a wonderful traditional Lithuanian meal with Romas and his wife and slept in a wonderful hotel. I felt like a man during our dinner, though – it was meat, potatoes, and beer.

Today was kinda busy, but I must say, we got the hook up with this hotel. The beds are luxurious and the breakfast was great. After breakfast, we went to Nida, which is in southern Lithuania and is located on a peninsula, so it was surrounded by water. We climbed some dunes and got a lot of exercise climbing up the dunes. In the middle of our photo shoot on the dunes, David noticed that I had bird poop in my hair, but at least he was kind enough to pick some of it out. That's love right there, and everyone else enjoyed making fun of me.

We came back to the church that we'll be working in this week, and there were 30 kids there! They all seemed really nice and enthusiastic to be there. I hope that it continues, because as we find out today, a lot of the kids are unchurched.

Tomorrow is off to Latvia for a free day and more site seeing!