

FIRST UPDATE 2012

Dear former students.

It is hard to believe that the seventh day since my departure from Kelowna has just dawned here in Kiev. Slowly, I am transitioning back into this culture that I have come to love so much. In many ways, this feels like my second home.

Latvia provided a gentle transition back into the Slavic culture. It was just the right pace and the wonderful host family made me feel comfortable. Truly an artistic family. Olexandr, the father showed his artistic skills in the houses that he was building, including the one that I stayed in. The quality of workmanship was everywhere. Ludmilla, the mother was a seamstress and one of her daughters, Julia worked alongside her in the afternoons while spending the morning completing training as a stylist - both hair and dress making. Lisa, organizer of the event, was studying voice at the local music college.



My host family lived in Jelgava where I taught my first session on Friday night. Saturday's sessions were held in Riga, a 50 minute train ride. Although the groups were small, the level of engagement by a number of the students was high. Sunday morning I was asked to preach in the service.

While in Latvia, I suddenly felt compelled to stop and look around to try and figure out what was happening. You know that feeling when you sense that someone is staring at you? Slowly you turn around and realize that it is true - someone is indeed staring at you even though there have been no other audio clues.

Well in this case no one was staring at me. But I knew that at least one of my senses was shouting at me, "Don't you notice the difference?" It took me a while before I realized that it was my ears that were trying to have my mind engage. And so I listened. Listened and heard the void, the hollowness, the silence, the reverberation of big spaces with no carpeting and minimal furniture, the lack of all the sounds that are present on even the quietest day in Kelowna. As I listened, I realized that I was also hearing a similar void in the life of the people around me. Their eyes, the way they spoke - often quietly and reflectively, the way they moved - all influenced by economic hardship, by family members travelling to other countries to work, by a minimal survival approach to life.

And when I listened and heard sounds, I realized that other things were different. The sound of the cars, the sound of walking, the sound of a fridge and appliances, the sound of water running. But mostly silence. Occasionally the silence was broken by three huge geese in the neighbouring yard; then by the dog, the cat, the train.

With that background the joy, warmth, hope and friendship of the Christians sparkled like a diamond on display against the black velvet background in a display window. And their hunger for teaching! What a privilege to be here.

The receptivity and hunger for knowledge was magnified by the 14 students that I have interacted with for more than 8 hours in the past two days since flying on to Kiev. Students from the Christian Music Academy in the fourth year of the modular program

FIRST UPDATE 2012

responded well to a very intensive study of Colossians 3:15-17 and Ephesians 5:15-19. After an extensive lecture, we moved to higher levels of thinking - application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. This is not as common here as in Canada. On the second day as I pushed for answers one student suddenly said, "Our heads are burning." But it was expressed with deep appreciation as the same student said. "At first your presentation seemed so obvious and application so easy, but there seems to be no limit to where this is going." At that point I knew that the material was connecting and would have a life of its own.

All this because you are praying. Thank you. Praise the Lord for good health and creativity in teaching. Please pray for more of the same.

In two hours I leave for Zaporozhye. For my friends on Facebook check out a Russian description of the seminar held there.

In His Service,

James

=====

James D. Janzen, MMus, Dip FA (Cond)
Worship, choral, instrumental, music education
3531 Athalmer Rd
Kelowna, BC
V1W 3R5 Canada