

12 October 2020

Reports from the churches in the Nordic-Baltic countries

The Nordic countries refer to the five countries of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden in Northern Europe. The Baltic States are also in the north but towards the east in Europe. They are composed of three countries: Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Currently, there are lampstands in all these countries, except Iceland, with about 100 saints in the Nordic countries and 150 saints in the Baltic States. A number of saints in the US, UK, Norway, and Sweden have been praying for Iceland and contacting open ones there.

The eight countries in the Nordic countries and Baltic States each have their own language. Russian is also spoken in the Baltic States. Thus, there are nine languages used in our region. But praise the Lord for the blending among us. We have two conferences a year for all the saints in our region to gather to enjoy the ministry and to be blended for the building up of the Body of Christ. The first one is the Nordic Conference in July every year, and it has been held for the last ten years. The churches in Sweden and in Norway take turns to host this conference. This year, because of the global pandemic, the conference was held online as a virtual conference. It was a rich time of fellowship and building. The second blending conference takes place at the end of January each year. For a number of years, it was held in Uppsala, Sweden, but since 2019 the church in Tallinn in Estonia has had the blessing of hosting this conference. In January 2021, this conference will be held online and the Baltic churches have accepted the responsibility for the arrangements, and we look forward to a rich blessing from the Lord.

In addition to the two conferences, every six months the responsible brothers from the Nordic countries and Baltic States meet together for fellowship and prayer. In each of these brothers' gatherings we have the practice of inviting two leading brothers from other regions to join us for mutual learning and encouragement. The last time we met was in February 2020 in Copenhagen, Denmark. Because of the restrictions imposed due to the current pandemic, we have not held joint brothers' meetings since then. Instead, we encouraged all the responsible brothers in our region to participate in the semiannual ITERO and to join the UK online brothers' meetings. These wider fellowship times in the Body have been very profitable.

During the current pandemic, church meetings are conducted according to the guidelines provided by the local public health authorities. In many churches in our region, most meetings and fellowship times are now held online. Nevertheless, the church life is active and enjoyable. The online format actually allows more saints to participate in more meetings, and a few scattered saints in cities without a local church are able to join online meetings at a locality and participate in the church life just like a local saint. Also, saints are able to join online conferences organized by other churches, which they previously could not attend because of travel costs and time constraints. Campus gospel and small group meetings are mostly also conducted online, and there are a number of one-to-one online weekly fellowship times between the saints and new ones. Praise the Lord that He is able to flow over any hindrances and frustrations! He will still gain what He desires!

Below are some detailed reports on the churches in our region. Please continue to pray for us, and please also consider joining us for the online Baltic-Nordic Conference that will be held in the last weekend of January 2021.

Report from the Church in Copenhagen, Denmark

The Lord's table meeting in the church in Copenhagen was formally established in a regional conference following the 2017 ITERO in Leipzig, Germany, and now the church has about 17 saints, including a few saints from Lund, Sweden, who travel to Copenhagen for weekly church meetings. The local saints are mostly expats ranging in age, from late 20s to 50s.

Due to the current global pandemic, the saints are meeting online for the Lord's table meeting and prayer meeting. For the Lord's table meeting, saints also meet in person once a month together. An encouraging fact is that there are more people participating in the prayer meeting now than before, due to the online arrangement. The saints have also been answering the global call for 21 days of unceasingly pray, even after this designated period (from the beginning of April to the end of May) is over. In addition, some saints are pursuing the Life-study messages together with the church in Uppsala, Sweden, in the online Wednesday night ministry meeting.

The meetings in Copenhagen are in English. However, a Danish hymn book has been translated and set in an electronic format so the saints can learn to exercise their spirit in Danish.

Also, in coordination with the nearby localities, we plan to have Bible distributions in Copenhagen in the coming year. Please pray that the saints will exercise to preach the gospel in one accord and gain local people for the Lord's move in Denmark. Please pray for the growth in life in all the saints.

Report from the Church in Helsinki, Finland

Some saints in Finland came into contact with the ministry in the late 1970s and early 1980s through their contacts with the churches in Sweden, California, and Germany and began to meet as the church in Helsinki. The church was very much affected by the turmoil among the European churches in the late 1980s. Nevertheless, a small number of saints stood firm with the ministry and were much supplied through the visit of saints from the US, who used Helsinki as a transit point to bring Bibles and Christian literature into the former Soviet Union.

Some saints and families moved to Helsinki from abroad to join the church life throughout the 2000's. There were also some exchange students who joined the church life over the years. Therefore, the church meetings were more and more established. Now, we have five regular meetings every week. Besides these times, we also get into the messages of the seven annual feasts. We can tell that the more we spend time in fellowship, prayer, and enjoying the ministry, the more we love the Lord Jesus and the Bible, and the more we are saved from ourselves and our situation and become blended and built together.

Some local open ones have begun to meet with us through home meetings or church meetings. In order to take care of them more effectively, we are praying to have a group meeting in the Finnish language. We pray that they would see and enjoy the riches of the ministry and become remaining fruit in the church life. Some seeking believers in other cities in Finland were also contacted by us over the years. Mainly we maintain our relationship with them by sharing our enjoyment from the ministry through phone calls and email. We are praying to enter into deeper fellowship with them.

Since 2010, the church in Helsinki had more blending and fellowship with the saints in Scandinavia and the Baltic States through two regional conferences every year. Through these conferences, the saints were encouraged and the church life and the Lord's move

here were strengthened. Some local saints picked up the burden to translate the hymns and the Rhema sets (3 booklets and 4 books) into Finnish intermittently over the past years. They are now in the final step of typesetting. We thank the Lord for finally completing this project. And we pray that the Lord will raise up more translators, so that more ministry books would be translated into Finnish.

Concerning reaching the open ones, the saints preach the gospel personally and by distributing tracts corporately. We also started to distribute the free Recovery Version New Testament in English over the last two years. Usually, we do this around the city center and the universities in the summer and autumn. There is not much positive response so far; yet, we continue the labor by trusting in the Lord and His word. We are praying that the Lord would bring us the open ones, and we expect His blessing of increase.

Due to the pandemic, we have transitioned our meetings to online meetings since the 15th of March 2020. We also received some face masks from the saints overseas. We thank the Lord for the fellowship and support in the Body. We are looking forward to meeting in person again soon.

Praise the Lord that the church in Helsinki follows our dear Lord and His Body. May the Lord bless His testimony and strengthen the lampstand in Helsinki.

Report from the churches in Norway

In Norway there are two lampstands, one in Grimstad in the very south of the country, and the other in Oslo, the capital of Norway. In addition, there are saints in a few other places in fellowship with the saints through Skype or phone. The churches in Oslo and Grimstad have intimate fellowship with each other, and the brothers had monthly joint meetings at a location about half-way between the two cities, but in recent months the joint brothers' meetings are held online.

Church in Grimstad (& Kristiansand)

Grimstad is a small university town located in the south coast of Norway, a three-hour drive from Oslo. We are about 20 saints and seven children. All the saints are encouraged to practice weekly mutual shepherding, using the ministry and through prayer. We also spend time to get into the vision and practice of the God-ordained way. Blending is also seen as very important and is much encouraged.

The church is branching out to the nearby city of Kristiansand, located a half-an-hour drive south of Grimstad. Kristiansand is the main city in this region, with approximately 10,000 university students. Two families (including four children) now live close to the university campus. We have started to reach out to the students with tracts and the New Testament Recovery Version. Two students are now connected to us weekly. We hope to solidly gain some students that can take over our distribution of Bibles on the campus, where the Lord has opened a door for us.

Concerning our general church life, the focus is to continue:

1. Hymns: edit new ones and polish existing ones
2. Translation of HWMR and ministry books: a weekly effort
3. Small groups: saints are encouraged; use of new material from Amana Trust
4. Gospel preaching: increase in burden; need for more tracts.
5. Truth pursuit: weekly ministry meeting on the *Life-study of Romans*
6. Weekly young people's meetings and children's meetings.

The weekly prayer meeting is now in two locations, one in Grimstad and the other in Kristiansand. The joint brothers' meeting is every Monday; in this meeting, the Lord is training us on exercising the spirit, experiencing life, and entering into genuine fellowship for His move. May the Lord train us and gain us fully for His move and purpose!

Church in Oslo

The saints in Oslo took the ground of the church in 2011, and the attendance now is about 20 in the Lord's Day morning meeting.

University campus work

There was an advance in the campus work on the main campus in the University of Oslo in the autumn of 2019, with the establishment of a Bible Study Group (BSG) on campus. We started the semester by distributing around 150 Bibles along with an invitation to join the BSG. The group met once every third week in the autumn and spring semesters.

About ten new ones came to the group times. We made a power-point presentation on the Gospel of John, and as they were listening and asking questions, we tried to answer as best as we could. We also had home meetings every Saturday where the students came to dinner and fellowship in the saint's homes. Some students invited their friends to come to our home meetings as well, so often there were four to six new ones every time. We also tried to shepherd the students one-to-one as best as we could.

With the start of the pandemic, the students under the saints' care have been meeting regularly on Skype. We held a webinar in June on the subject "The Lord's Return", with very good attendance from the new ones. The student's group is continuing steadfastly every Thursday on Zoom.

Young people's work

The saints in Oslo have had a burden for several years for the work among our own young people. Some of the young people have recently become university students, but we still have three young people and some of their friends to shepherd. The young adult saints have the burden to shepherd them. We also have the burden to enter more into one-to-one shepherding with the young people.

Every six months, in between the two large conferences for young people in Europe, we invite the young people in the Nordic countries and Baltic States to come to Oslo for a weekend of blending and mutual encouragement. The Lord has been richly blessing these young people's gatherings. This meeting is not possible at this time because of the pandemic.

Meetings

The responsible brothers have weekly brothers' meetings. The sisters also have their meeting once a week. There is the prayer meeting on Tuesdays and the Lord's table meeting with the prophesying meeting. We have been meeting on Zoom since March, except for a few months when the pandemic was under control in Norway; however, now all the meetings are on Zoom again.

Burden for spreading

The saints in Oslo, together with the saints in Grimstad, are much burdened for the spread of the Lord's recovery to two cities in the near future (Bergen and Kristiansand), and we are led by the Lord also to pray for ten other cities in Norway with a long-term perspective.

Please pray for the Lord's move all over Norway, especially for His gaining many university students and young people for the building up of His Body. Please also pray for all the readers of the ministry and the New Testament Recovery Version that have been sown by the saints all over Norway during the last decade, and that there will be a harvest among these readers.

Report from the churches in Sweden

In Sweden there are two lampstands: one in Stockholm, the capital of Sweden, and the other in Uppsala, a university city an hour's drive from Stockholm. In addition, there are saints in Boden up in the north and in Lund down in the south of Sweden, who are in regular fellowship with the saints in Uppsala and Stockholm.

A number of Swedish saints have labored over the years to translate the ministry into Swedish. There are 15 books and 27 booklets now available in Swedish. Some of them are marketed to the general public for purchase through our online bookstore, and others are distributed freely by Rhema. We believe everything is in place for the Lord to bring this ministry in Swedish to all His people in Sweden, but this needs our cooperation in prayer.

The saints in Sweden are burdened for blending with all the churches. In addition to participating in the seven annual feasts and the European-wide conferences and trainings, we actively support the two annual regional conferences among the churches in the Nordic countries and Baltic States and the additional fellowship times among the responsible brothers in our region.

Church in Stockholm

The church life in Stockholm started in 1980, when the saints took the ground in this city, which is the country's capital. In a small church life with about 20 saints, everyone's portion and function are vitally crucial. For many years, we have had the burden that the Lord would add new ones to us. This has led to much desperate prayer among the saints. We pray that the light of the gospel will shine in the hearts of people so that they would come to know the true God.

We are regularly carrying out Bible distributions in different locations throughout the city despite the pandemic. Although we distribute an average of 10 Bibles each time, it is difficult to establish contact with the recipients for follow-up appointments. We are looking to the Lord for His guiding us on how to connect with and shepherd these people and how to bring them into the church life.

Recently, four brothers have started to meet online for prayer and coordination on a weekly basis. We praise the Lord for this positive development.

Because of the pandemic, the church has continued to have online meetings and also participate in the online conferences arranged by other churches. It has been a vital lifeline for our going on in the Lord.

Church in Uppsala

Blending with other churches

In addition to participation in the seven annual feasts, European-wide conferences, and Nordic-Baltic Conferences, the saints in Uppsala have picked up the particular burden to blend with the saints in Copenhagen. They take turns with the saints in Norway to visit the church in Copenhagen every four or five weeks.

Every month, the saints in Uppsala and Stockholm come together to have a corporate Lord's table meeting. The brothers in Uppsala and Stockholm also come together once a month for ministry reading, prayer, and fellowship for the advancement of the Lord's move in Sweden. Since the pandemic restrictions were advised by the government health authorities, we have temporarily suspended the joint Lord's table meeting; however, the monthly joint Stockholm-Uppsala brothers' meetings have continued on Zoom.

Bible distribution and caring for new ones

Since the announcement of the pandemic restrictions in Sweden, we have not been going out physically for Bible distributions, but we have requested to participate in a social-media advertisement of Bibles for Europe targeted at four major Swedish cities—Uppsala, Stockholm, Lund, and Lulea. We look to the Lord for new open ones that He will bring to us to take this way. We have continued the weekly one-to-one shepherding of new ones that we have by Skype or over the phone.

The saints are also in close fellowship with the saints who live in Lund, which is in the south and in Boden, which is in the north of Sweden. We continue to pray for the spreading of the gospel of the kingdom in Sweden and for the shepherding of the new ones that they may become remaining fruit.

Brothers' and sisters' meetings

Every Saturday morning over the past eight years, the saints in Uppsala have a brothers' and a sisters' meeting. They fellowship, pray, and read the ministry together for mutual shepherding and building. In addition to prayer and fellowship, the brothers also take the time to fellowship about the direction and current focus of the church life and practical church affairs. These meetings are now taking place on Zoom, because of the pandemic. Nevertheless, the enjoyment of the Spirit and the reality of the kingdom has been the same every week. All the saints feel that this practice over the years has helped with the growth of the saints unto the building up in love.

Ministry meeting

On Wednesdays over the past number of years, the saints in Sweden held a ministry meeting in Uppsala that is streamed through the Internet to all parts of Sweden. Because of the pandemic, the Wednesday meetings in Sweden have changed. We started by dividing the saints into groups, where we read the *Life-study of Matthew* together on Skype. After we finished the *Life-study of Matthew*, we have continued with the *Life-study of Romans* and further adjusted the meeting format based on the fellowship from all the saints. We now meet using Zoom, and during the first part of the meeting, one brother will share from the *Life-study of Romans* in Swedish for about 30 minutes. Then, in the second part, the saints are divided into groups for fellowship for about 45 minutes. Our burden is that these groups would develop into proper group meetings where we can shepherd and nourish one another in mutuality. With this new way, we ensure that the ministry is presented in Swedish to the Swedish speakers but keep the small groups for shepherding.

We need much prayer that the Lord would continue to strengthen and energize the saints in Sweden for His interest and His move on earth.

Report from the churches in the Baltic States

The Baltic States are three former Soviet Union republics that have gained independence from Russia in the early 1990s. These states include Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. All three have their own distinct unique languages. Because of the Russian influence, most

of the meetings are conducted in Russian, but the saints are trying to gradually reach out to the local people and speak the local language.

The churches in Lithuania

There are three churches in Lithuania. The capital city Vilnius has about ten saints. Some of the meetings are conducted online, and some of the meetings are in-person. Recently, a family moved there from Seattle, USA, for the work and we believe this would be a strengthening of the church there. Another locality is Šiauliai, with about eight saints meeting there. The meetings are conducted in-person. The third locality is Jonava. It used to be the biggest church in Lithuania, but many saints have migrated abroad from there. At this point, there are between two to four saints in the meetings.

The churches in Latvia

There are two churches in Latvia, and also a number of other places where some saints are living. Riga, the capital of Latvia, has about 40 saints meeting. The other locality is in Līvāni, with about five saints. Both places have had in-person Lord's table meetings since July. The attendance in the prayer meeting has increased since it became online. The saints read the Life-studies together, try to preach the gospel to their friends, and take care of the young people.

The churches in Estonia

Estonia has two churches, one in Tallinn, the capital city, with about 12 saints meeting, and another in Narva with about 4 saints. Estonia recently received Rhema books in Estonian for mass distribution. Saints are actively preaching the gospel. Recently, they baptized four new ones.

All the Baltic brothers are going through weekly brothers' perfecting trainings. They include six brothers in Estonia, eight brothers in Latvia, and five brothers in Lithuania.