



Dear Friends,

I found this poem on internet which for me says a lot about Christmas and what it should mean to all of us. Too often it has become about everything except Jesus. May the true meaning of Christmas give you hope, comfort and joy this Christmas time.

THE TRUE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS

Jesus Christ was born this day
So many years before
He came a servant to the lost,
Though he was Lord of Lords

We celebrate this joyous time,
Reflecting on His birth
Not born in a mansion, but a stable
As if He had no worth.

He came so He could identify
With the human heart of man
And gave His life as a sacrifice,
Offering a better plan

A plan that reconciles us back
To our loving Father God,
Bringing hope and redemption from
Sins ruling, iron rod

For this is the only reason that we
Should celebrate this day,
To become focused on anything else,
Would take the meaning away

So let's arise with joy in our hearts
And share it with everyone
The meaning of Christmas will always be
The Birth of Jesus – God's son.

M.S. Lowndes

Blessings to you all,

Clair

TEC Children's Ministries News

NEWS FROM THE FINLAND UNION CONFERENCE

Eliisa Saarinen, Children's and Family Ministries Director, Finland

HOW ARE YOU? YOU ARE IMPORTANT!

This year things have been a little different. We wanted to focus on things like: how we could affect our volunteers, our families and children and youth that we could really let them shine and encourage them to use their talents in a different way. Our dream is to help local congregations and families to grow together in faith and have a stronger spiritual bond.

We wanted to make more personal contacts with our target group. So we have collected all the families' names and phone numbers through the whole country and we contact every child, youth and parent personally. We want to hear how are they, what their needs are and what things they would like to see or do in our congregation.

I think we have forgotten how important a personal contact with people is. We get so busy arranging big events, camps and other programmes. When thinking how Jesus mingled with people and let the children and everyone feel they were the most important to Him. I want to follow His steps in this programme and be more involved in peoples personal lives.



TEC Children's Ministries News

FAMILY CAMP

Article by Faith, 6 years old, Kittilä, Finland

"Last Summer I went to the family camp in Kallioniemi with my dad. Thank you, Jesus, because I made new friends forever: Vera, Petra, Matilda, Oona... Petra who is much older than me made a nice gift for me. It was so sweet of her! Oona who was watching over me several times a day was very nice to me too. She took good care of me. She played with me and drew several beautiful pictures for me. I still have them on my wall in my bedroom.



Faith (on the left) and Petra



There were so many cool activities. I played treasure hunt at the playground with all the other children. I liked it very much because there was treasure to find and we did find it!!! I did crafts too. I remember melting marshmallows at the bonfire by the lake in the evening. It was so much fun! Also I went to the sauna with my friend, Matilda. There was an old grandpa having his time.

He was old but so strong and sweet to the children. He was putting so much water on the hot stones!

I liked listening to the songs sung to Jesus very much. Here is the list of the songs that I liked: "Jumalan kämmenellä", "Anna anteeksi", and "Milloinkaan en käänny pois". The ladies leading the music were great.

For sure I'm going back to the Family Camp next Summer."

TEC Children's Ministries News

CHILDREN'S WEEKEND

This year we had a theme on a children's weekend: Password = Pray!

Grandpa-Markku, who is our pastor, has had different adventures in his life – at sea and also in South Africa. He has learned that he has always needed prayer for everything. Prayers are needed when you need some kind of help for something. Grandpa-Markku was talking about the meaning of prayer through the creative stories where children could be a part of the story.

We had also different kind of action workshops about the theme of prayer: "Teddy-bear" hospital, crafts, sensory-workshop, prayer track, a pet-workshop, creative prayer room and so on.

When the weekend came to an end, we had a Heaven festivity! All the volunteers were dressed up like angels, there was an angel-band, angel-waiters and they decorated the hall imagining what it would look like in heaven! We had a good praise time, talents, dreaming what we would like to see in heaven and of course we had heavenly food!

I hope all the kids and their parents will remember what amazing things with even just a little prayer can do in the lives of the families.



MESSY CHURCH IN LIEPAJA, LATVIA

During these days I am looking back to this year, and thinking about what has been done, what has been reached, what needs to be done better, and because of that I want to share some memories with you about Messy events in Liepāja.

This was the year we ended our fourth season and started fifth. At the end of the May we held the Children's Health Expo for our Messy Church in the city park. The team was brave to do something like this for the first time, kids were happy to take a part in this journey about healthy life style, citizens were surprised that someone is ready to do something like that on behalf of the kids and parents.

Talking about the Messy participants, there are those who are with us from the first day, there are those who come irregularly, there are new members, there are families, there are single mum families, there are some coming with grandmas, there are some coming alone, there are from orphanage, we are from different places, but we are the Messy community. Kids are around 42-90/100, parents around 30, the team around 20 members.

We have celebrated Christmas and Easter together, we have learned about how God has spoken in past to faith heroes and how He does this today to us, we have explored parables and all of it has led us to spiritual growth.

Being in the Messy community has been a real blessing, we have bonded with different people, we have practiced our talents, we have developed our communication skills, we have become more responsible and brave, we have set focus on family values, on personal relationships with God, we have given significant role to the prayer in our lives.

Now it is time for some great changes in my family life, but still somehow the Messy Church is very close to my heart, but my role is different now.

-Līvija Baltrušaitė-Karzone, Messy Church leader in Liepaja

