



LCC INTERNATIONAL
UNIVERSITY

The Giffones

*“O magnify the LORD with me,
And let us exalt His Name together.” (Ps. 34:3)*

Dear Friends and Family,

Labas! We are excited to share what God has been doing this month.

HIGHLIGHTS

- On December 6, I (Benj) had the honor of speaking at a men’s event hosted by Resident Life on the topic of personal integrity and relationships. I spoke about—among other things—the destructive effects of pornography on one’s relationship with God and on relationships with women, and explained that only the work of Christ and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit can enable us to live lives of purity and integrity. I saw several familiar faces, but also many young men whom I had not seen at previous spiritual events on campus. ***Pray that the young men of LCC would know and experience the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, and learn from the examples of godly men (and women) on our staff and faculty.***
- The last week of classes (December 7-13) was a busy one. We celebrated [Benj’s thirtieth birthday](#) with a small party on Sunday and cookies in his classes on Tuesday (his actual birthday). The students gave presentations in both classes, and it was encouraging to hear all that they had learned this semester through their term papers. It is especially rewarding for Benj to hear students speak of discovering the grace of God in the Old Testament. ***Praise God for thirty years of His faithfulness to Benj, and for fulfilling Benj’s dream of teaching the Bible.***
- On Friday of that same week, Corrie directed the women’s choir and the handbell choir at the LCC Christmas program. Many people from the community and the university family saw the students act out a narration of the Christmas story and heard the good news of the Savior’s birth. The funds raised from sales of Christmas ornaments and refreshments benefited local charities in Klaipėda, including a homeless shelter and homes for teens. Corrie’s choir sang the Getty hymn, “Joy Has Dawned,” as well as a piece by her father entitled, “Gloria In Excelsis Deo.” This was an especially rewarding experience for Anastasia, a Ukrainian student, to whom Corrie gave special singing instruction outside rehearsal. Anastasia was so grateful that she invited Corrie and Daniel to her birthday party in early December. ***Pray for the students and members of the Klaipėda community who heard the good news of Jesus Christ at the LCC Christmas event, that the gospel message would take root and bear fruit in their hearts.***
- Finals week was also quite busy, as students visited on Tuesday and Thursday for dinner. When we were students, our university typically hosted an “Eleventh-Hour Breakfast” on Tuesday of finals week at 11pm; we decided that was too late for our kids, but we nevertheless enjoyed a “Sixth-Hour Breakfast for Dinner” on Tuesday with about fifteen students (see pictures). On Thursday, Benj’s Hebrew students came over after their final for some traditional Hanukkah foods and songs. It was a wonderful blessing to celebrate a semester of learning and building relationships. We are sad to see the study-abroad students return to their home institutions, but grateful to now have more friends (and Christian brothers and sisters) scattered across Europe and North America. ***Pray for the students as they travel to their homes for Christmas, and for the students who resume at their home institutions next term.***
- Benj will help lead the music at church on Christmas Day service, singing in English and Lithuanian and playing piano (in Hebrew). City Church has not often had Christmas services in years past, because many Klaipėda residents visit their extended families “in the villages.” ***Pray that families who attend the Christmas service at our church and in churches all over Lithuania would be blessed by the message of Jesus’s arrival.***

CULTURE AND LIVING

- We are about as far north as the southernmost tip of Alaska, so in December the days become very short and the sunlight is precious. The [shortest days of the year](#) were December 21 and 22, when sunrise was 9:03am and sunset was 4:04pm. We enjoy our big windows that capture every bit of sun, but the weather has been mostly rainy and overcast, a few degrees above freezing. It is difficult to be apart from extended family this first Christmas in Europe, but we can truly say that our lives are brightened by the joy of Christ's advent, celebrating together as a family, and by our new friends here at LCC. We will have good Christian fellowship every day the week of Christmas. And frankly, being somewhat cut off from giving and receiving Christmas gifts (we've gotten creative) has taken the focus off of shopping and put it back on Christ and the church, where it belongs—so, that has been spiritually refreshing.
- Our Russian and Ukrainian students continue to feel the effects of political instability and Western sanctions on their finances. From January to July of 2014, the value of the Russian ruble hovered around 0.0275 to 0.0300 US dollars, but since then it has lost over half of its value. Ukraine's hryvnia has likewise lost half of its value relative to the US dollar since this time last year. Imagine your retirement savings or your child's tuition money losing half of its purchasing power in six months or a year! That is the situation that many of our students—none of whom are wealthy—are facing, and many may not be able to come back to LCC next term. Our finance department is doing all that we can to help these students. If you would like to make **a special year-end donation** to help these students, please visit the [LCC giving webpage](#), and indicate "Russian/Ukrainian Student Scholarship" in the memo of your check or online donation. Even a few hundred dollars will make the difference for many of our students. *Pray for peace, justice and stability for the people of Russia and Ukraine, and for our students.*
- Speaking of currencies, Lithuania prepares to transition from the litas to the euro next week in the new year. The litas has been successfully pegged to the euro for several years now, and prices have been listed in both currencies since July. Aside from the irrational fears stirred up by populist politicians in the lead-up to the changeover, joining the eurozone represents to many Lithuanians one more step in the broader cultural changes that have come from closer ties to Europe. Lithuanians are glad for the assurances that come from being part of NATO; however, free migration within the EU has led to a "brain drain" of the young and educated moving to more prosperous parts of Europe. These are complex issues with social and economic costs and benefits, but there is a sense of uncertainty right now. *Please pray that the transition would be smooth for the good of Lithuanians as Europe watches closely next Thursday.*
- The weekend after Christmas, we plan to drive to Northeastern Poland and Southeastern Lithuania for a little vacation. We have some information on the Polish towns where Corrie's great-great-grandparents lived, so we hope to see those towns and also spend two nights at an indoor water park in a Lithuanian resort town near Belarus. *Pray for a safe, refreshing family trip!*

SUPPORT

Thank you for your generous care for us. We are reaching out to churches in the USA and planning visits for the summer of 2015. If you think that your church might be interested in having us visit, please put us in touch with your pastor or missions committee. We would love to visit and tell stories of how God is using LCC in this part of the world. *Pray that God would continue to meet all our financial needs.*

Thank you all for your prayers and support. Stay tuned for further updates; be sure to [follow us on the web](#) and join (and share) our [Facebook group](#). To receive monthly updates about happenings at LCC, you may wish to [sign up for the university's newsletter](#), *Transformations*.

In Christ,

Benj and Corrie Giffone (for Daniel and Elizabeth)





