



SHARING JESUS WITH THE WORLD

Testimonies and Stories from Eastern Territory Officers/Lay Personnel serving Jesus outside the Territory

January 2017



Majors Evelyn & Timothy Clark serve as the corps officers of the Tallinn Kopli Corps in Estonia's capital city.

The Majors write... In many ways, the ministry is similar to that in any Salvation Army corps.

We have Sunday worship with 60-80 people each week (including men from the Army's drug and alcohol rehabilitation center). There are prayer meetings, Sunday school, two women's ministries groups, band, songsters, a teen program and a pensioners' club. We take joy in all of the corps activities, but the pensioners' club, with up to 32 seniors attending, is one of the bright spots of the week. It is at 2:00 on Wednesdays, and we often say it is on the center of the day in the center of the week, making it the center of our corps! They come for a warm, home-cooked meal, fellowship, and a devotional time. Each week we leave feeling loved and encouraged by our pensioners.

There are also many ways in which being corps officers in Estonia is different than any place else we have served.

Language is the biggest challenge. Evelyn speaks Estonian (the national language) well enough to preach and do programs without translation. Tim is still learning, and can have simple conversations with others in Estonian. Due to the Soviet occupation, 30% of the national population speaks Russian as their mother tongue. In our corps, over 40% speak Russian, which means that our Sunday worship is in both languages.

The logistical challenges are many: the song words in the Powerpoints need to be in both languages, the scripture needs to be read in both, and there always needs to be translation into one language or the other. When Evelyn speaks it is simpler because the translation is only into Russian, but when Tim speaks it means having two translators, since he preaches in English, which triples the time it takes to say anything!

Due to the history of Estonia, language has often divided people, since it serves as a reminder of the past. We still see this frequently. But we have also seen unity growing in the corps as Estonian speakers and Russian speakers get to know each other better. This is a work only God's love can bring about. We have seen natural growth around language as well.

Last year our women's club was in both languages. By the summer there were so many women attending that it was decided to have two clubs, one in Estonian and one in Russian, when programs started again in the fall. Both groups continue to grow; Estonian speakers will attend the Russian club, and vice versa, depending on which meeting time is

best for them, and everyone is welcomed warmly regardless of language. This is a work of God helping others to overcome the past and join together.

Estonia is also one of the least religious countries in the world, based on recent surveys. People are openly skeptical of faith, and will question your mental well-being if you say that you are a believer. This poses unique challenges, as people are less receptive of the Gospel.

Because we grew up in New England, Estonia feels like home in many ways: the cold and snow in the winter and mild summers, the withdrawn demeanor of Estonian people, the trees and countryside that are similar to Maine. But because we are so far north, the winters are much longer. On the shortest day of the year, the sun rises after 9:30 and sets before 3:30. Most winter days are cloudy, with an average 30 minutes of sunshine each day. Summer, on the other hand, has days of 18+ hours of sunlight and mild weather—the reward for the Estonian winter!

We thank God for allowing us to be a part of His ministry here. Through the opportunities and the challenges, we see His hand at work.



Soldier & Adherent enrollment.



Some young people during teen night



Some of the pensioner at the Pensioners Club



Evelyn leading Pensioners Club



Sharing Thanksgiving dinner with Russian – language Women club



Children during Sunday School



Regional youth night

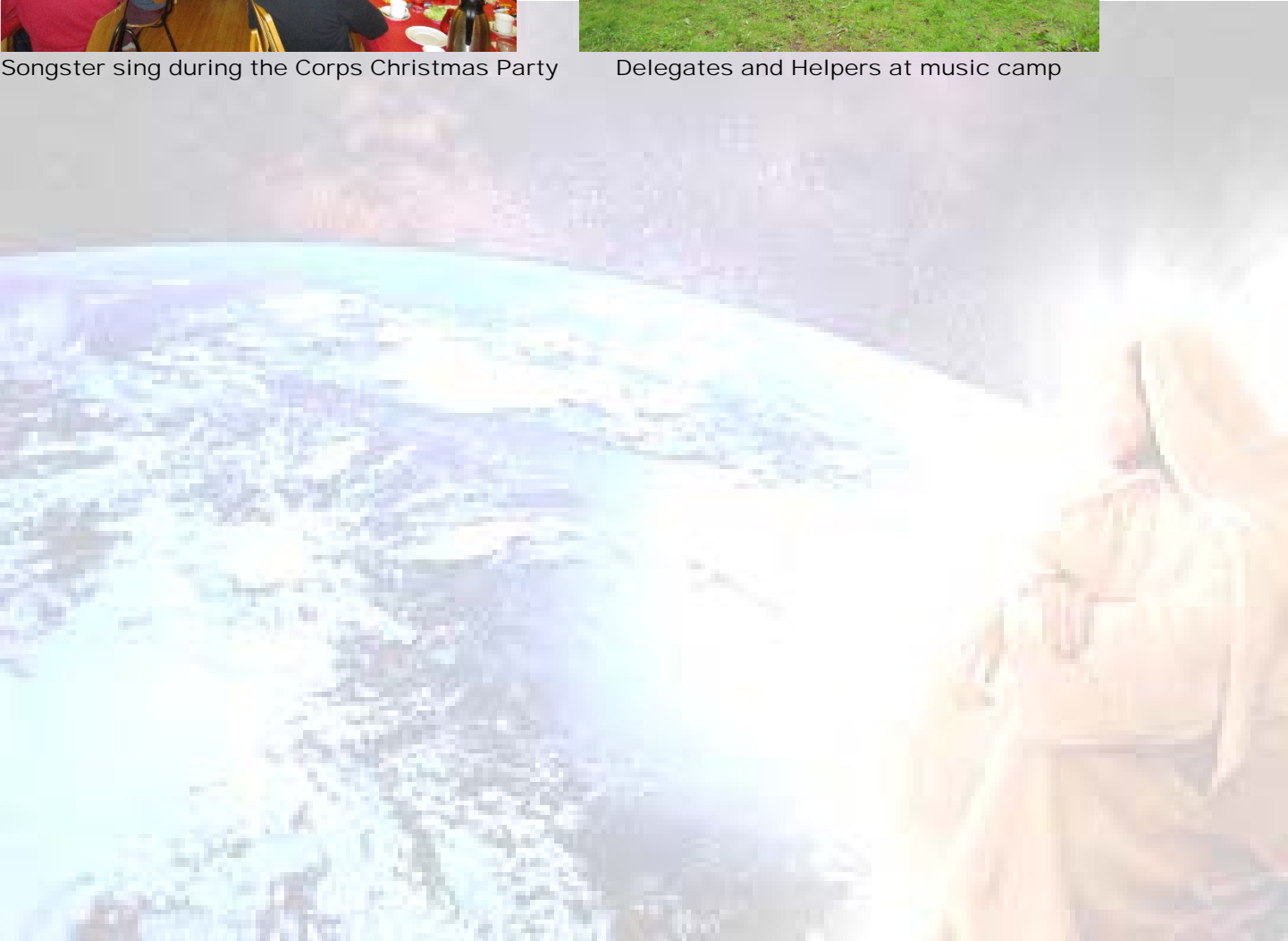
The corps also helps people with food and clothing, as we share any donations we receive. We also partner with the local food bank to distribute food packets every Friday. In the summer, we are also able to lead camps at the Army's house in Loksa, on the Gulf of Finland. It is an old wooden house that can sleep up to 32, and although it is quite rustic, it provides a great opportunity for people to get away. This past year we led a music camp and a corps discipleship camp.



Songster sing during the Corps Christmas Party



Delegates and Helpers at music camp



Psalms 31:24: Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord