

## **Celebrate!**

About 20 people were walking on the forest path, all quiet, listening only to the sounds of the distant sea and birds in the forest. And listening to God. I looked at a young lad going in front of me and suddenly remembered.

It was 2 summers ago, during the youth camp, when we walked the same path with him and unexpectedly stumbled into open discussion about addictions he battled with and thought he'd never overcome. I remembered his anguish, shame and eyes, that could not meet mine; the silent sadness all over him. And I remembered the rage inside me looking at young life that instead of blossoming was silently robbed away.

This young man in front of me now, had peace and freedom written all over him. There was this silent smile in his look and voice, and from several different events, where we had served together others, I was aware of the deep calling, gifts and love the Lord had filled him with.

Our goal was to listen to God about hope and young people on that pilgrimage, and here in front of me was walking a living proof of the liberating, hope giving power of our God!

It was Saturday before Pentecost, May 26th 2012 and SU Estonia's 20th anniversary. Also the 10th anniversary of our camp-work. We had new european secretary, Monika Kuschmierz celebrating with us and almost 60 friends, volunteers and workers gathered together. Throughout the preparation period I had prayed, that on this day the name of the Lord would be honoured, would be in the centre of all events, that it all would not be so much about the people, but Him who is doing amazing things in our midst. And He was with us! From the first sounds of music by the camp team and through the Bible discovery at the thanksgiving service in church, to the reports, greetings, and fellowship at the main meeting. And now He was showing me the bigger picture on this forest path.

He was the One who had allowed to start SU in our country, He had carried, inspired and blessed the work, and His Name was filling many hearts with praise on this day. I love to celebrate like this!

Very often SU work seems like lonely struggle with results one can never really know about - because most of the changes will happen in human hearts and people do not tell about it.

Looking at this young man ahead of me, I was also reminded about those many hundreds of volunteers involved in our activities throughout the years. When I printed out the document with their names I was amazed how many of them had been involved and still are, how much love, dedication and faithfulness have been given to us. But when I realised it was thousands God had touched in our country through them, I was really awed....

There have been about 150 volunteers involved only in our radio authors team. This team and radio notes started in 1995 with 4 authors and ever since SU daily Bible notes, by local authors, have been 2-5 times on the air every day, reaching more than 20 000 people.

There were close to 100 names in camp team list and the second generation is entering the team now; the children of the first team members being among the campers. And throughout these 10 years, every year it has been with trembling and prayers we have prepared the season, asking for the themes, opened scriptures, inspired leaders, guidance in actions and above all His presence to fill the camps. And every year it has been given to us - from the themes and crazy ideas to the full programs, exact number of the team, finances, food, helpers! There is a full list of miracles, prayer answers and amazing encounters to report from every year. By some divine math the numbers of team and campers have matched; there have been enough food, enough financial support, right

sponsors and equipment from stationery and musical instruments down to horses, boats and lorries. But the main reason PLL (Bible Reading Camps) are so highly valued among young people and their parents, why the team has been willing to dedicate their hearts through all these years - has been experiencing God's transforming presence in every camp. This most precious, undeserved gift of His grace and powerful love has healed, changed and upbuild so many shattered hearts, that only God knows the real number. And we yearn for more, more Love, more of Him who is Life and in this hunger there is no difference between the leader, teammember or the camper.

SU is a family and being probably smallest movement in SU Europe Region I have numerous times been overwhelmed by the love, support and care from other movements internationally. There has been John Stott conference for all Baltic movements and churches in Latvia 1997, Bible Bus (Bible Express) coming down from Norway in 1999 - our first possibility to enter the schools; continuing financial support from Nordic movements; publishing help and aid from SU England and Wales; amazing international support to start GAFA (Global AID for AIDS) that has now developed into independent NGO SEOS Estonia and impacted more than 5000 students during last 2 years; international trainers coming to help our note writers, radio authors, sundayschool workers, camp team, leadership trainings, strategic reviews, international exchanges etc. And always this encouraging fellowship, genuine care and sharing. We have learned so much in this family - maybe the most important has been the need to prepare everything in prayer and the blessing that comes from sharing. Even if you are the smallest and not resourced movement - you have always the same possibility to pray. And we have learned that things are prepared in prayer first, in heavenly realms and only through prayer can we "get down" the real thing that makes the difference. That every prayer counts and is so much more powerful and important above anything else. By the example of SU Finland we established our prayer team in 1997 - 98. It has never been big, about 15-20 people, called by God, several of them old and unable to leave their homes, but also young people - praying every week for people, projects, needs. Witnessing their faithfulness in this invisible work is humbling.

Walking that forest path, I wonder what were the dreams of Danilo Gay for this country, when he arrived here in 1992, right after the borders have been opened and communist regime collapsed. But I realise that from the beginning each journey, each project had started from the vision, that had been put to somebody's heart, the journey however has usually taken very different shape from expected "normal". The first board aimed for publishing as main area of work - first for children and young people, because churches were flooded by people and there was lack of any sort of christian literature- especially for young. The first publications were out already at the same year. But then in 2003 we had to stop publishing as main activity, switching over almost fully to direct approach. Families and work with them have "wondered" from camps, trainings and seminars, to publication and 3 year radioprogram in popular secular channel - and right now held in "stand by". Helping to format the theology of a child and publish sundayschool materials has been constant demand, but our supply varies from year to year. With the help of partnerships we still have been given the grace to publish something every year and there has been noticable shift in teacher's approach to children

The other aim - reach the schools - was there already in 1992, but was truly realised almost 15 years later by SEOS.

In leadership - we started with 3 part-time staff filling 100%, to 2,5 staff capacity and now back to 1 staff member. From founding members there are still 2 in the board and 20 who have been in the board during various periods.

What seems to be essential is to keep the focus on God (who knows and rules the times) and not on projects; listen and apply the Word and follow the Spirit. And be ready for totally different journey for God's ways are not our ways. Most of our starts have been small and insignificant, usually with vision impossible and resources only for the next step and perhaps that was the reason why my heart sang and eyes were filled with tears on this forest path - because through this little we've had to offer, He had changed lives, transformed hearts and given hope; multiplied the blessings to thousands! Praise be to His Name!

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National leader of SU Estonia