

Ukraine Sisters' Weekend February 2005

We're pleased to report another dynamic sisters' weekend in Eastern Europe. Over 3 days, over 40 sisters and a few local brethren gathered for a truly memorable and inspirational gathering. It was wonderful to see the world-wide involvement in this gathering. Robin and Steve Jones from Australia were present, and Robin spoke to the theme 'The women in the genealogies of Jesus'. But just as importantly, she brought with her news of the Hurstville ecclesia's sisters' class, photos of the sisters, and koalas and bookmarks from the Hurstville sisters for them.



Photo:
Ukrainian Sisters with Australian koalas



Photo:
Ukrainian sisters looking at the photos of the Hurstville, Australia sisters' class, and receiving bookmarks from them, also reading a letter from Bodalla, Australia



Photo:
Sis Robin giving a class, using her carefully prepared chart [in Russian] of the genealogies of Jesus

The other speakers were Sis. Ludmila Chernyakhovets, on 'The possibilities for women in the ecclesia', and Sis. Cindy Heaster about 'The implications of Eve for Christadelphian sisters today'.



Photo:
Sis Ludmila giving a class

Cindy's presentation involved discussion groups, which worked very well. The facility we used was very poorly heated, and the Winter this year is very cold. So the sisters sat in their fur coats and hats throughout, with a great warmth and fire for the things of the truth.



Photo:

Discussion group. Note the heavy coats even indoors- the room was very poorly heated

On the Sunday, Duncan gave a study about Mary the mother of Jesus. A highlight of the weekend was the baptisms of another 3 people: VITALY, boyfriend of one of our sisters, along with TANYA and ELEANORA. We truly rejoiced with them, and had a happy time welcoming them into fellowship, with skits, charades, presentation of Christadelphian books, words of encouragement, etc.

Although Ukraine now has a pro-EU president, poverty and corruption are rife. Health care must be paid for, and very few of our sisters can afford it. One sister told us in tears how she has had to mortgage her home in order to get the money to pay for a life-saving operation for her 27 year old daughter [also a sister]. Robin & Steve recorded her testimony on video. Another sister showed us photos of how a sudden rise in temperature had caused a huge snow melt, resulting in flooding which washed away part of her mud-built home.

Apart from giving welfare, we're seeking other practical ways to help. Those who know English are benefitting from the medical self-help book *Where There Is No Doctor* which is being distributed by the Christadelphian Advancement Trust. Seeing they often can't afford to go to a doctor, the sisters are turning to each other and to traditional remedies for help. One sister has a blood pressure measuring device and she was able to take the blood pressure of the sisters and advise ways of more healthy living; heart attacks and strokes are very prevalent here.



Photo:

A Ukrainian sister testing the blood pressure of another sister

Through the kindness of a British sister, some reading glasses were brought over, and distributed at the sisters' weekend.



Photo:

Sis. Zoya with her new glasses provided by sisters from England

The accounts were very meticulously kept by Ludmila and Valerij. We were invited to audit them, and were impressed with how there were receipts for everything down to even \$1.



Photo:

Ludmila and Valerij preparing the accounts

After the Sisters' weekend, a pastoral visit was made to the many brothers and sisters in Ukraine not affiliated with the CBM. There is a great zeal to preach, and we're continuing to provide Bible Basics in both Ukrainian and Russian to these wonderful brethren and sisters. Sis Ludmila runs a pet food shop in the centre of her town, and already over 25 people have been baptized over the last few years from picking up the Bible Basics brochures she displays there. They then receive the lessons and bring her in the lessons next time they come past the shop.

One feature of the brotherhood in Ukraine is that out of the 130 or so Christadelphians in Ukraine, probably over 100 are sisters, and the brethren are often sick or elderly. The sisters are generally younger and able to be more active, especially in converting other women. They're not in the least 'radical feminists'. Sis. Ludmila's talk about 'The possibilities for women in the ecclesia' made this very clear. The sisters are in a position where they are in a large majority within the Christadelphian community in Ukraine, and seek to proactively care for each other, study together and spread the Gospel, in a way in keeping with Bible precepts. You will soon be able to hear Sis. Ludmila's talk by clicking the 'Audio' area on www.carelinks.net.

The repeated question was: 'When can we have another such gathering?'. Our answer basically was: 'Any time. But we need to gather the funds first!'. So we do invite your support in the following ways:

- Please pray for these wonderful sisters in their desire to have another sisters' weekend and to serve their Lord more actively
- Would any sisters be willing to come over and give some talks?
- The cost of these gatherings is around 1000 GB Pounds [around US\$1900]. If we invite more sisters from neighbouring countries like Moldova, Belarus and Central and Southern Russia, where there aren't enough sisters to hold specific sisters' gatherings, then this cost would rise. The sisters try to pay all or part of their travel expenses but not all can pay. And we provide the meeting facility and food.

In the meantime we thank God for this wonderful and dynamic group of sisters, working so hard to spread and live the Truth, in great economic difficulty especially this Winter.

With love in the truth,

Your brothers and sisters of the CCM