

## Various Updates, December 2007

Firstly, we'd like to draw attention to a wonderful index to first principle Bible doctrines which has been collated by our Carelinks fellow workers in the USA. We highly recommend it as a thorough job very well done; much of it is the fruit of many years work by a recently baptized brother who kept careful notes throughout his search for Bible Truth. You can view it at <http://www.carelinks.net/books/refsindex.htm> . There's also ordering information there- Brother Tim Galbraith is currently printing the booklet in India.

### IRANIANS IN TURKEY

As reported recently, a visit was made to support Brother Ali and to baptize MASOD in Turkey. Brother Masod has written and explained how he has changed his asylum basis from political to religious reasons. He was formally a Communist, but has now rejected all that for the cause of Christ. He writes:

*"I am very happy and excited about my new life and deeply appreciated from brother Ali who introduced me and you that came all this long way for my baptism. I am going to have my first interview with UNHCR next month and I have to tell my lawyer that I am not Communist any more and I am a new believer to Jesus. If it is possible I want to ask you to send me document like proof of baptism to support my claim. Thanks again for all your help and support. Your brother in Christ, Masod"*

Brother Ali also needs our prayers. He writes:

*"At 07/12/2007 I had another interview with UN. If you remember, when I was living at Ankara I told you and sister Liz that I had some emotional shock during my escape from Iran and my interviewer noticed that during my interview and send me to doctor and prescribed some medicine and said that he is gonna talk to my interviewer ... weather is getting colder and colder and electricity is very expensive here and we need financial assistance for our daily expenses..."*

We need to remember that each case of persecution involves huge emotional and mental scars. Please pray for our brethren who have suffered in these ways, and for our efforts to help them.

### WITNESS IN LATVIA

We're delighted to report that our outreach to hearing impaired people in the Russian speaking world is continuing. On Saturday, many hours were spent discussing the Bible readings with four deaf brothers and sisters; and on Sunday we were delighted to baptize NADEZDA, who is hearing impaired and unable to speak very much. We're so encouraged by the response to this outreach, and by how much our deaf brothers and sisters read and study and try to share with others, that we're giving over New Year's Eve to a special gathering for lonely deaf folk in Latvia, who'd like to celebrate New Year with others and also have the Gospel explained to them in sign language. Please pray for these initiatives and for those deaf brothers and sisters, as they are often deceived of their wages, and work for about 2 US\$ / hour. Our new sister NADEZDA is unemployed and asks us to pray she'll find work.

Sis Nadezda [2nd from left] giving her confession of faith to brothers and sisters of the Riga ecclesia



Baptism: Sister Nadezda {centre} just after her baptism by sisters Lidija [left] and Cindy [right]



.. and our new sister Nadezda taking her place in the ecclesial breaking of bread service



## CARE IN LATVIA

Recently Brother Eric McKee paid a surprise visit to Latvia and was able to help in the building work on the home we're reconstructing. We desperately need more workers... so here's his report, which we hope will be an inspiration to anyone able to help out!

Greetings in Christ's Name! I have returned from my brief, but wonderful trip to Latvia and thought I would write a few of my thoughts and impressions. First, I have heard from many of you and thank you so much for encouraging me with your words and prayers. Sister Joanne Rivard wrote to me and let me know she had prayed that God would use her words (after her trip to Latvia) to motivate someone else to action. Thankfully Sis. Joanne, I can at least attest that your prayer was answered on me! Therefore, my prayer is now that someone else may find the encouragement to step forward to be an active working tool for work supporting the brotherhood and spreading the gospel, wherever needs may be.

Thanks be to God that we are never asked to make decisions based upon worldly wisdom of whether things make total sense or not. What we are asked to do, we learn as a child of God, is to "trust in the Lord with all your heart". So there I found myself several days later sitting in a car with Bro. Duncan at the airport in Riga, Latvia – trusting in God, because this was a cold, wet, bleak land that I could not identify with at all. My trip began with a prayer by Bro. Duncan. After picking up his wife, Sis. Cindy, we headed to the "home" – an approximately 400 year old building about 2 hours to the North. I learned that the brotherhood out there prayerfully hopes to hold their Bible schools at that location and/or perhaps to even have lodging for some of the elderly brethren, or both. They had hoped to use it for Bible School this year but vandalism held back the project.

Having planned this trip all out (like a good western entrepreneur), the greatest need during my trip was going to be having the stamina for the physical work required around the home... or so I thought. Thus I started. I stayed at the home and began working on various projects. I worked from the time I woke to sometimes after midnight. My health and strength kept up. There was so much that needed doing, it became obvious that these two hands would only make a dent. One morning I woke up and had stomach cramps which lasted all day, but fervent prayer was answered and I never got sick. I never slipped on the ice and had no threats to my safety. I didn't starve either. I did bring home some type of stomach/intestinal "bug", but the symptoms didn't hit me until after I returned home from Latvia (Thanks be to God for that!).

With regards to the projects I got much accomplished, or so it felt like. I was able to work on a little concrete projects , a little plastering, some brick work around one of the fireplaces, help maximize the efficiencies of the fireplaces and do some electrical work. I should mention the

one thing that I told Bro. Duncan I probably shouldn't dabble in is the electrical. However, thanks to an excellent lesson (20-30 minutes or so) in basic wiring 101 over a cell phone by my dear Bro. Dave from the UK (He's the retired Professional Electrical Engineer who designed the original electrical plan for this home), and with me writing notes furiously by flashlight in the 2nd story window box, I was able to take his instructions and accomplish quite a bit of electrical work (for me that is) as well – with no shocking news to relay afterwards at all. My two hands though were not enough to get all the work done. There's plenty left to do.

Also interesting to me were all the many things which happened on this trip that I didn't expect. Mainly I got to know another family of the flock of Christ and I did it without speaking hardly any Latvian, and two others (I had never met Bro. Duncan and Sis. Cindy either). When I decided to go do this trip, I went to give - not to receive. However, this family of believers opened their home to me and taught me a new level of Giving. They gave to me with such abundance. They cooked wonderful meals and the 11 year old daughter, Anna, even baked me two cakes. Most of what I learned from the family was around lunches and dinners – each of us pouring over Latvian/English language books and using a lot of sign language and drawing pictures. I was amazed that we were able to converse quite well about our families, the struggles of life for believers in both Latvia and America, the hope of Christ and his return, my home ecclesia, and the struggles of raising all of our children in the truth in this world today. At one point, Sis. Liga looked me in the eye and announced to me that her family would keep my family in her prayers and told me that my family needed to pray for her family. She wanted to make sure I understood. I did. Each meal (and each cake), she asked for me to pray for them, though no one could understand me. Especially, little David (their youngest son of 2.5 years old) who once sat on my knee (while I prayed) and repeated after me making a cute soft bubbling sound because that's what English sounded like to him. I experienced far more on this trip than would be practical to write but suffice it to say that the end of my stay with the family was emotional, but wonderful. Since my return to the States, Bro. Raimonds and Sis. Liga have been in my family's prayers daily. My wife has begun to write to Sis. Liga through Sis. Cindy who has offered to translate the letters.

It's hard to live in a country where we have so, so much and then to – just for a little bit – experience the very poor (in possessions only) opening their hearts to you. Their hospitality was nothing short of a demonstration and example of Christ's love.

Regrettably, there was no time for me to meet some of the other brethren scattered throughout the region and it was a hard pull for me to leave so soon. I spent the last evening in the warm home of Bro. Duncan and Sis. Cindy's and still full of emotions for the brethren out there, I know I once again prayed myself to sleep. I spent much time talking with God and Christ on this trip.

Now that I have returned to the "West", many have asked what this and the other families in that area need. My thoughtful answer is that the most obvious thing your brethren need out there is active personal missionary support. A recent Carelinks has asked for monetary support to help bring families to the upcoming Bible school and we all intuitively know that funding is necessary to help support missionary efforts. But it does seem to me that finding brethren able to take that leap of faith and make a commitment to go over and support the brethren in this region would even be even more helpful.

I am well aware that brothers and sisters from abroad certainly help with donations to the brethren out here (and they all seem so grateful). However, living with a family for even this short time, I began to glimpse new kinds of trials, especially the extreme isolation that these brethren

experience. Yet despite being alone, poor, hungry and cold, many seem to the cling on to the hope of Christ with vigor. When you read the Carelinks newsletters you get just a small taste of how many of these brethren are virtually in isolation and how many are elderly or don't have reliable transportation. Just coordinating meetings or getting to the Riga ecclesia seems a huge chore, much less supporting the needs of the elderly and getting around to minister to those who can't get out easily. God willing, it seems as if I was a small link in the chain, but the Latvian brethren certainly need more laborers in the Vinyard.

Hopefully my experience might help to minimize any doubts you or others may have about going ahead and just trying it. Get that plane ticket (call Carelinks' first of course so they can pass the exciting news around that you're coming and can build an itinerary for you). Certainly, young couples or retired couples with grown children who could spare a little bit more time than a week or two would be so welcome. I guarantee you'll be busy. As I wrote initially, the list of "buts" and "why it doesn't make sense to go's" are always going to seem more persuasive if we listen to them. So pray for Godly wisdom when you are considering these directions.

I would guess most all missionary efforts are out of our own personal comfort zone. Please know that I share my short experiences and thoughts with you here for your edification only - to no glory of my own. Consider how our service pales to those many brethren of old. For me, I had to prayerfully put into perspective my "obstacles" vs. those the brethren in Latvia face daily to get my obstacles to fade quickly. I thank God for his strength and willingness to allow me to go over. Now, my prayer is that it may be God's will for me to be able to return again, but this time with my wife, so that our family can perhaps be better able to support those wonderful brethren in Latvia and elsewhere. God's will be done.

*Bro. Eric McKee, Virginia USA*

Eric bricking the fireplace- it needs finishing!



Santa colouring in her picture of Ruth

