

## **Wonderful fellowship in Latvia, August 2007**

It's been a special Summer in Latvia. Over 25 brothers and sisters, and additionally some of their children and relatives, have converged upon an old house in northern Latvia to rebuild and decorate it. It's been a Bible School with a difference. So often we sit and study Scripture, but this was an opportunity to be up and doing, gathering together each evening for Bible study to keep us motivated for the next day's work. It was an amazing experience to have brothers and sisters from Australia, Canada, Latvia, Lithuania and the UK all working together at close quarters.

Locals observed that this is the house built by women, children and pensioners- and, we might add, professionals and amateurs all mixed up together. Young women passing by looked amazed as they saw our young sisters in their 20s bricklaying and even using an angle grinder and welder to make handrails. Middle aged men looked twice as they saw men in their 70s struggling with floorboards and a middle aged woman operating a cement mixer, grandmothers strained their eyes for another look as they saw sister Suzanne on her hands and knees pulling up huge weeds in the yard. Our unity made an impact.

The following report by sister Joanne Rivard of the Niagara ecclesia in Canada is a challenge to us all- we don't need to say more:

**"When I first read in a Carelinks newsletter in spring 2007 that painting and gardening help was needed to prepare a house for a newly baptized family with 7 children who had to relocate due to persecution resulting from their decision to convert from their family's religion, I thought, "Oh! I can paint and do gardening! I'd really like to do that!" Immediately began the struggle in my head: "That's just silly! I have plenty of painting and gardening to do at my own home that is long overdue – why should I travel half way around the world to do these simple chores for someone else when I haven't taken care of my own responsibilities? And besides, where would I find the money to travel that far? I don't even have a passport and they need the help soon! And what about my business? Who would take care of the dog? Just forget about it, it's a crazy idea! BUT...I've always wanted to see if missionary work was something for me, BUT...this is not REALLY missionary work, it's just painting and gardening BUT...it's something I know I can do and it's needed, BUT...there are plenty of brothers and sisters who live much closer to Latvia than I do who I'm sure will step up and do it, I'm just too far away to do this and still be practical. I'll let someone else do it. Besides, I have a few health issues- I probably won't be able to handle the jet lag and change in food and water anyway. That's it, it's settled. Just forget it.**

**I read the next Carelinks newsletter a few weeks later. The pleas were stronger – "Please, will anyone come who can do anything at all. We're really in need here!" The struggle in my head resumed intensely. "How can I not respond when I KNOW I can help? Besides, I remember being encouraged by a Sister a few years ago to do something really special when I turned 50 (as all women should, she believed), and I'm turning 50 in a few months. Going to Latvia would be REALLY special, and I could visit my oldest brother (in the flesh) and his family in Norway on the way home! Dear Father in Heaven, if You want me to go to Latvia and serve you there, please remove the roadblocks that I see. I will go forward as if You wish me to go, and assume that You will make Your will clear to me along the way."**

**My passport came in less than 3 weeks. I remembered that I had a good chunk of money stashed away for next year's tax bill – just enough to cover the trip. Could I use that and assume that God would prosper me financially to be able to replace it all before the tax bill**

is due next spring? I can call my main business customers ahead and work extra hard to make sure they're all supplied well before I go. I found a very responsible person to dog sit, and my own painting and gardening are still left undone.

I booked the airline ticket in early July, just before my birthday, and received many financial gifts in birthday cards to help pay for the trip (plus a digital camera to record it!) I was scheduled to be in Latvia for 10 days, then visit Norway for 4 days before heading home. Another struggle - "Could I work at such physically demanding work for that many days in a row without hurting my back, or becoming too exhausted to be able to have some energy left to visit my family in Norway?" I would have to depend on God for that, and co-operate with Him by taking really good care of myself physically before and during the trip. I will try.

I am writing this on Aug. 30 as I prepare to fly from Riga Latvia, to Oslo, Norway. The last 10 days have been very busy and so very satisfying. I have met wonderful brothers and sisters from Latvia, England and Australia. I have painted non-stop for 8 ½ days (1/2 day of shopping for paint and tiles) and am tired and a bit stiff, but not exhausted or disabled in anyway. I am very thankful that God has blessed me with this wonderful experience and the knowledge that I have made a difference where a need was made known. I also feel that I have had the privilege of representing my ecclesia in Canada in this country so far away, by bringing the many gifts of curtains, sheets, and money that they sent along with me for the needs in Latvia.

There is more than half of the house left to paint, as well as more plastering, tiling, cleaning, electrical, landscaping, etc. to do. If God allows, I hope to return to help some more. If not, He will bless others as He has me by calling them to the work. Maybe you? With God, all things are possible – Don't be afraid to go through the struggle in your head – instead, go forward, asking God to show you His will for you the matter, because as He says, " I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare, and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jer. 29:11)".

Photo: Sis Tatyana was bedridden with a bad back for 2 months last year. But here she is plastering



Photo: Sis. Irma, a retired university lecturer, found a new occupation in painting



Photo: Sis. Ludmila, just finishing her degree in accountancy in Vilnius, spent a few days plastering



Photo: Sis Liga and her children were painting up to 2 a.m.



Photo: - with little Daavids looking on at his mum and big sisters



Photo: Cindy made all good people turn their heads with her bricklaying (thanks to Brother Michael Goddard for his patient teaching us so many things!)



Photo: Andy took a break from schoolteaching in the UK to come and plaster



Photo: Joyce quit her computer programing to get her hands dirty on the site



For all involved, this has been a stepping out in faith to do what is against our immediate comfort zone. Do come and join us- there's a huge amount of work still to do. We plan on having another working bee in October- can you in any way support? Whatever, please do pray for this ambitious project as in faith it comes together.

